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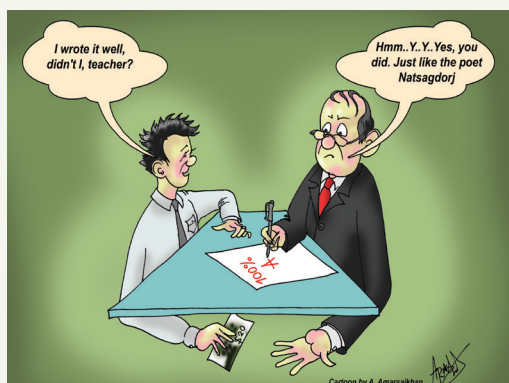
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“KINDERGARDEN REGISTRATION...”

DEPITY EDITOR I. OTGONJARGAL

With the new school year upon us, my mind turns to my own dearest little daughter, who has become two years old. As her parents, my husband and I have long waited in anticipation to see her first day in kindergarten. We wondered what will it be like.

But when the time came, it was not an easy job to find a proper kindergarten.

I once met a woman on the way home from work who told me she had worked in education for 20 years. She advised that I spend money on children only when the time comes. There is a certain standard to all public kindergartens, she said, and being with other children will make a child socially active.

August 22 2012: This date surely has had an impact on parents who have small children. This is the start of registration for kindergarten in Ulaanbaatar. These days are marked with bureaucracy, corruption and a battle for enrollment.

As for me, I went and stood queuing early in the morning in front of Kindergarten No. 156. Although I was third to stand line, I was rejected.

“Haven’t you seen the note that said we won’t accept any new children”, asked the official in charge of school registration that day. “Our kindergarten was commissioned last year. We only have the capacity to accept 100

children. Not a single new child will be enrolled. Don’t waste your time standing here”.

Parents were shouting. They said there must be children entering elementary schools. They asked where they should send their children. Alas, they had no answers for us.

I returned thinking I would send my child to a private kindergarten next to my home. Unfortunately I was welcomed by a locked door.

“It is still uncertain whether this kindergarten will get its accreditation or not. There is another one in the other apartment building. Ask that building’s maintenance office”, said a lady politely. This made me realise how hard it was to send children to kindergarten.

Such images were found not only in my living district, but in all of Ulaanbaatar. Kindergartens nearly had to hire security for registration. Many schools give excuses such as only one child from a single family can be accepted. Others said registrants were too late.

A friend of mine once told me it is so hard to send our children to kindergarten, but sending them to school would be even harder. She accused the directors of acting as if they are president or prime minister. This year, the year of the pig, the birth rate rose so high that even the media reported on it. Some joke that all children born that year will have no kindergarten



to attend.

Curiosity has led me to gather all possible information on the number of kindergartens there are in the city. Official numbers say there are 308 kindergartens active, of which 180 are public. Another 58 new private kindergartens have opened, meaning 1,200 spots are available for enrolment. Kindergarten No. 64 of Bayanzurkh District and Kindergarten No. 14 of Sukhbaatar District have built ▶



extensions, allowing 125 more children to attend.

This chaos among kindergartens has made the city crowded with people running to find jobs and universities.

"I thought the 1st of September was nearing. But I still have two weeks left because kindergarten registration has put everyone into haste", said my cousin who will soon become a student.

Z. Bolormaa, a specialist at the

city's Education Office, explained that her office has established the fourth week of every August as the time for kindergarten registration. Kindergarten admission used to take place on August 28 and 29. However, early registration this year made parents irate for a few more days. Kindergarten teachers and directors suddenly became so hard to exchange even a few words with.

My sweet little daughter (as if

she realised how hard it was to get into kindergarten) bragged to everyone that she would attend kindergarten. Yes, I finally managed to find one for her.

Unfortunately, how many parents out there had less luck than me? Hopefully by the time these children grow up, all these chaotic issues regarding education will be resolved, and children may enjoy a quality and structured education. ■

ECONOMY



The price of food tends to raise on the global market following natural catastrophes and energy shortages, according to a report by the World Bank. The Food Price Index survey of the World Bank shows that prices have risen by 10 percent in recent years.

The price increase became a critical issue to economically weak, developing countries. In June and July of this year, the price of wheat and oats increased by 25 percent. The World Bank recommended strongly that government price growth should not be carried on the back of any country. The official said Eastern Asia and African countries are suffering mostly due to the price increase because they import the majority of their food provisions.

MINING

Over 90 percent of Mongolia's exports are



mining products. Last month 44.6 percent of total exports was coal, 19.2 percent was copper concentrate and 12.1 percent was iron ore. Further, crude oil represented 7 percent of all imports and zinc ore was 2.4 percent. Only 9.7 percent of exports were from non-mining sectors.

These three minerals comprise the main income from exports, all of which prices are falling on the foreign markets. For instance, the price of iron ore now stands at the same low as 2009. The price of copper fell 3.3 percent, or USD 275.50, to USD 8,024.50 compared with the year-ago price on the London Metals Exchange (LME).

Coking coal is also falling on the world market. Researchers at the Platts Institute reported that the price of coking coal per tonne reached USD 175, which is USD 50 lower per tonne. Moreover, the price of coal remains low at the biggest coal export centre, located at the harbor of the Hebei province, China. Currently coal prices have fallen by 1.96 percent to a price of 641 yuan a ton, or approximately USD 100, reports Xinhua agency.

Diversified miner Erdene Mongol has begun drilling at three exploration prospects. The company has discovered 211,000 tonnes of molybdenum and 258,500 tonnes copper reserves from the Zuunmod project.

The company is also exploring for copper and has begun drilling at Khuviin Khar. At Altan Nar, located 40 kilometres from Zuunmod has uncovered gold and silver mineralisation. Drilling is currently ongoing there to determine the resource volume.

ENERGY



Government has established a price of MNT 109 per tonne of diesel fuel for a total of some MNT 30 billion in spending to the budget. Business profits will decrease 5 percent to a 5 percent profit margin. Domestic retail prices, however, will not change. The government hopes to stabilise fuel prices, which have remained stable since February of this year.

Although the price of diesel fuel increased drastically in this year's first quarter, it fell in May and June. The government decided it will not tax imported fuel.

BANKING AND FINANCING

Funds at the Development Bank of Mongolia will be invested as bonds from the Central Bank of Mongolia, and as savings at commercial banks for between one

and six months. The Development Bank currently holds USD 600 million, USD 580 million of which carries a 5.75 percent interest rate from its debt offering earlier this year. The bank currently must pay around MNT 20 billion in interest.

STOCK MARKET

U.S. investment fund manager Firebird Management will manage four Mongolian companies listed on the Mongolian Stock Exchange (MSE). It currently owns shares of mining firm Sharyn Gol and regulates its management, allowing it to perform additional exploration and establish a resource count in line with JORC standards. Firebird also owns shares of Berkh Uul and will handle its management. Firebird



aims to attain a JORC resource measurement for its assets too.

James Passin, fund manager, has demonstrated that it is possible to invest into Mongolian companies, manage them, and earn profits.

BUDGET

A total of 2,749 bids of the 3,400 nationwide have been announced, contracting a total of

2,100 suppliers. The tasks of selecting bidders, evaluating, and contracting are 62 percent complete. Minister of Finance Ch. Ulaan has said at a meeting of Cabinet of Ministries that the planned activities for this year should be undertaken as soon as possible, and the selection of bidders should be performed immediately.

EUROPE

Unemployment

across the 17-nation euro zone hit a record 18 million in July, the E.U. statistics agency says. Some 88,000 more people were added to the jobless total, but upwardly revised data for June meant the unemployment rate remained at 11.3 percent. Eurostat said the some 18 million jobless total was the highest since records began in 1995.

The highest unemployment rate in the euro zone was in Spain, at 25.1 percent. The lowest was in Austria, at 4.5 percent. Compared with a year ago, the unemployment rate fell in 10 euro-zone countries, increased in 16 and remained stable in Slovenia. The largest falls were observed in Estonia (13.2 percent to 10.1 percent), Lithuania (15.2 percent to 13 percent) and Latvia (17 percent to 15.9 percent). Meanwhile, the highest increases were registered in Greece (16.8 percent to 23.1

percent), Spain (21.7 percent to 25.1 percent) and Cyprus (7.7 percent to 10.9 percent). Spain and Greece, which are struggling to tackle sovereign debt and banking crises, recorded jobless rates of more than 50 percent in the under-25 age-group.

CHINA

China has signed a deal to buy 50 planes worth USD 3.5 billion from Europe's Airbus. The agreement is part of a slew of trade deals signed by German Chancellor Angela Merkel at the start of a two-day visit to China. An agreement on Airbus plane assembly in China was also signed, according to the Xinhua news agency. Chinese

Premier Wen Jiabao said on Thursday his country would continue to invest in the European Union.

This is the first significant deal in China for Airbus, whose parent company is EADS, since a dispute between the country and the European Union over the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). Effective from January 1 this year, the ETS charges airlines for the carbon they emit. China and other countries say the system is not fair, as it charges airlines for the full journey, not just over European airspace.

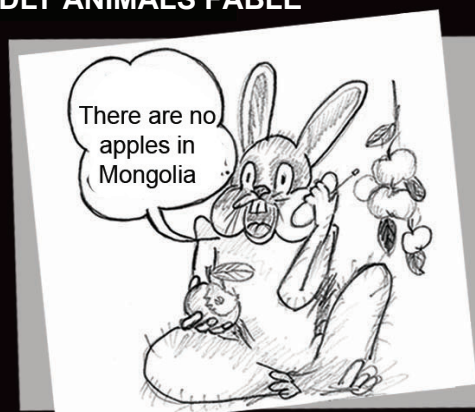
Following this in March, EADS chief executive Louis Gallois said Airbus was facing "retaliation measures" by China. According to him, China had blocked



firms from buying planes made by Airbus. Beijing did not comment on the allegation.

Merkel is in China for the second time this year, as she tries to improve relations and drum up business for European companies. She is being accompanied by several ministers, as well as top German executives. Bilateral trade between Germany and China totaled about \$180 billion last year. That is nearly double what it was five years ago. On Thursday, the two countries signed 10 further agreements, in the sectors of

THE FOUR FRIENDLY ANIMALS FABLE



Cartoon by A. Amarsaikhan

STAND STILL OR MOVE FORWARD

Instead of mining, it is intellectual citizens, an inexhaustible treasure of Mongolia, that will bring development to this country.

BY I. OTGON

Although the first day of school was a Saturday this year, opening ceremonies for the new school year were still held. Government officials attended some of these ceremonies. Prime Minister Norov Altankhuyag attended the opening ceremonies of two secondary schools and that of Kindergarten No. 35.

Such kind visits gave the public the impression that the new government might bring sweeping change to education, a great obstacle to Mongolia's competitiveness. In order to encourage this breeze of change, *Mongolian Economy* devotes this first edition to September to Mongolia's education sector.

Mongolian Economy highlights issues on reform and policy missing in this sector as well as the need to develop human resources. According to last year's research from the Economic Policy and Competitiveness Research Centre (EPCRC), apart from highway, railway and airway, infrastructure education and science, too, add to the nation's competitiveness. This so-called soft infrastructure is just as vital as any other.

For that reason, this edition tries to identify the issues plaguing the education sector, such as corruption and money-driving motives that have spread across the nation over the last 20 years.

This edition also attempts to present solutions to these problems as well. Discovering the true colours of the current under-qualified education system seems to be an issued that is ignored in Mongolia. What should be done for all those universities that are charged with training professionals. Graduates who fail to meet the requirements of the labour market have added to the nation's 10 percent unemployment.

Dozens of enterprises and organisation dream of hiring skilled professionals. A silent war has been declared within the labour market. It is a fight to attain skilled employees at all cost. Unfortunately, the freshly graduated work forces does not come even close to meeting the requirements set by employers. Herders, who have sent their children to the city to study, once could rest assured that their children were attending university. Today, parents advise their children not to go to private universities if they are not accepted to a university. Instead, they beg their children to attend vocational training centres.

They have the right to say this because, for the last 20 years, the education sector has produced more waiters, bartenders and cashiers than white-collar professional.

Many find it a bit reassuring that at least someone of competence has been appointed as the minister of education and science.

"I asked for this position", said Minister L. Gantumur. "I am completely sure that I can do this job well".

His words make the breeze of change blow a bit harder.

The previous government called for a ban on big, expensive cars to public officials. Government's approach to save state budget expenses has met praise from its citizens. Society would happily support initiatives that aim to mend the faults of the education sector and erase its corrupt sides.

Well, *Mongolian Economy* is breaking the ice. Instead of mining, it is intellectual citizens, an inexhaustible treasure of Mongolia, that will bring development to this country. ■



EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Photo by B. Byamba-Ochir

STRANGLING EDUCATION

The ministry of education is seeking reform in all the wrong places.

BY B. ENKHMART

Education seems lost in all these Cambridge, American, Japanese, Chinese, and Russian education schemes. In the 1980s, education administrators used to

say Russian schooling is the only and best way to educate. However, between 1990 and 2000 it ordered Mongolians should be Mongolian. Instead of teaching Russian

language, they extended Mongolian language class and taught the classical script.

Since 2000, education officials have championed the Japanese »

► and Chinese education systems as the most suitable options for Mongolia. In this globalising world, Mongolians are sure to travel to other Asian countries, they said, so students must acknowledge the traditions and cultures of these societies.

Yet, some high schools last year introduced American and Cambridge systems.

It would be a disappointment if the Cambridge system was necessary to change and save Mongolia's education sector, bringing it to the international stage. Instead, Mongolia should try to find its own solutions by establishing relationships between teachers and students and motivating their intellectual creativity.

The issue has divided education experts. While one side will not support introducing another country's education system, the other insists on having a standard that meets global education criteria.

A Ministry without Goals

"The education system in Mongolia has a great vision for what could be accomplished", said N. Oyuntsetseg, director of the Professional Training and Research Centre. "According to the current education law, an important goal has been set to bring Mongolia's education system to international standards. However, its final results are very different from what originally was sought".

She added that education should focus on imparting knowledge, ethics and the ability to work and live independently "with a sense of humanity". However, she warned Mongolic could not realise this goal as things stand.

Minister of Education and Science Luvsannyam Gantumur defended the proposed system, noting, "It is unfortunate that young



people think of education only as a piece of paper, called a diploma. This shows how devalued it has become".

"The three main characteristics of education are morality, knowledge and ability. All this chaos will be eliminated with the help of a revised policy. Mongolia's education sector will have the right structure and strong fundamentals in the next four years. The Cambridge system will continue as planned".

Parliament has enacted many regulations and systems of standards for education in the last two decades. After each election, the new minister of education promises change, but the final results always remain the same.

Many people wait in anticipation for Minister L. Gantumur's attempt to reform the education system. But, in addition to reforms, education needs joint policy and purpose. The developers of Mongolia's education system tend to forget that their main concerns should be teaching students practical skills. Research shows that education today only provides lessons with nothing but monotone instruction, with some teachers even demanding their

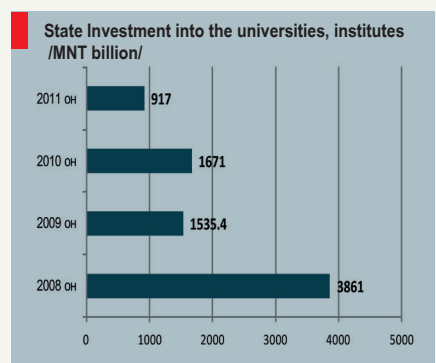
students learn books by heart.

"There should be space for students to learn and think on their own. Their intellectual and practical abilities must be observed especially", said Darma Batbayar, a state recognised author and lecturer at Ikh Mongol College

"Doing so would allow them to develop further. If a child wants to draw a flower in black and white, let him or her be. Instead of allowing that, Mongolian teachers demand that they draw flowers with green leaves".

Choices

While in Mongolia lectures are the golden standard, it is quite the opposite in foreign countries. ►►



▶ Teachers listen to what their students have to say and answer their questions. This allows them to liberate their students' minds and develop their skills. It also helps strengthen speaking skills.

Students and parents are lost in translation with all these Cambridge, American and Mongolian education theories. They don't know how to distinguish between them to decide which are good or bad.

Many have only heard about the Cambridge system. Some say, however, that it does not suit the aptitude of Mongolians. But others, such as Director of Elementary Education Centre D. Erdenechimeg argue to the contrary.

"This reform is the result of research that has been conducted over the last 20 years", she said "There is no experimentation. The system allows us to go get a more comprehensive, suitable and useful education. Every aspect of this system is clear: the implementation, the scale and its directions."

Erdenechimeg said that Mongolia will have fully prepared schools for the transition in 2015, with the transition to be complete and meeting standards by 2017. Although bringing primary education to international standards is praiseworthy, some worry its is only a tactic to homogenise populations.

It is also apparently flawed, with foreign press reporting that the American education system that receives praise in Mongolia is

considered out dated in the United States. Both teachers and students have demanded reform to education there as well.

The Cambridge system will not bring education in Mongolia up to international standards all at once. The first changes must be introduced with the relationship between teachers and students.

There is also a lack of confidence and trust among education representatives.

"In a small-populated country like Mongolia, the education system must be very specific. In densely populated countries, the government must run a policy to educate people in general. But in our case, we must focus on each and every individual person", said Olonlog University Director D. Bayarjargal,

"Enforcing a system that fits a greater audience in Mongolia might become a major force pushing the sector to fall. Eliminating the standards that have been enforced for so long to shift to a whole new system automatically is very wrong. The number of private schools with Chinese, Japanese and American systems has increased. As a result, Mongolia's young people don't know or don't understand the culture and traditions of their home country",

Making Policy

There is plenty to correct and adjust in the current education policy.

The government has plans for this. In its programme, the government states "Competitiveness and the quality of the education system will be improved. The government will support actions to enhance the standard and requirements that would upgrade education. Certifying and reducing disqualified school would be a priority".

The government should focus on improvement and qualification. Some education workers have proposed to eliminate literature class from the secondary school curriculum. Meanwhile, they complain about insufficient budgets for reform.

Nagoya University gets USD 1 billion for its annual budget. It is not much compared to the annual budgets of the Universities of Tokyo and Kyoto. Around 7 percent of the budget comes from the tuition fees paid by its students. In Mongolia, the annual budget of the National University of Mongolia is USD 17 million, 92 percent of which comes from tuition fees. With this in mind, it seems Mongolia's own education ministry has no right to set such high requirement for school officials.

The new education minister once said in an interview that the education sector does not need money for reform or to maintain a satisfactory education system. It just needs the right teaching methods.

If so, then the only hope left is that the Sincere Mongolian Individual programme is a success. ■

Expenditure on educational sector

Indicators	2008	2009	2010	2011
Expenditure of General Government budget, mln.tug	2466774.4	2336629.7	3080685.1	4792030.9
Expenditure on education, mln.tug	414243.6	430533.9	523949.6	636720.3
Expenditure on education as percentage to total expenditure of General Government budget	16.8	18.5	17	13.3
Per capita educational expenditure, thous.tug	156.7	160	1803	228.5



EDUCATION

Photo by E. Zorigt

UNMARKETABLE STAFF

Are students failing teachers or teachers failing their students?

BY KH. ANAND

Words like “lecturers don’t have any knowledge or ethics” or “students are uneducated, because their lecturers are too” have become the talk of the town.

The Education Evaluation Centre organises annual standardised tests among general education students. Last year, around 6,000 pupils from 184 schools were tested. Of those tested, 45 percent barely passed while the remaining 55 percent failed outright.

Who should be blamed for such disastrous results? Should we blame students for failing to study or the lecturers for failing to teach their students?

Encouragement Makes Abilities Shine

All schools have agreed to release reports that show the effectiveness of class hours every semester. According to the report, each and every lecturer has managed to achieve 100 percent effective results. However, in reality over 70 percent of students do not exercise the profession they studied for, waiting tables, operating cash registers or washing cars instead.

Countries such as Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong have enforced a system that allows their most effective lecturers to benefit from

salary bonuses. In those countries lecturers who use their teaching hours most effectively can lead satisfactory lives living on their bonuses while saving their salaries. The amount of money a lecturer receives depends on how the students benefit from his or her teaching and how well the teacher is evaluated by their students.

Lecturers who do not receive a bonus for a pre-determined number of consecutive semesters are considered incompetent and may be required by the school to attend extra trainings. This system enables teachers to compete with each other in a creative and engaging way that makes them more responsible towards their ▶

- ▶ profession. It is also a way to add to their wages.

According to a survey from the Monitoring, Analysis and Evaluation Centre of the Ministry of Education and Science, the skills of 80 percent of Mongolia's 40,000 lecturers do not match their salaries. Thus, introducing a rewards system that when monitored would bring effective results, say education experts. Director of the Olonlog private school D. Bayarjargal said, enforcing such systems has become key to developing successful classes.

"There are thousands of skilled and educated lecturers in Mongolia. However, there are some who don't have any abilities, knowledge or ethics", said education and psychology lecturer at the University of Humanities B. Javzan.

"Professional lecturers deliver good students. Thus, teachers should be trained at foreign schools and universities. In addition, student-centred education should be enforced. Also, lecturers should interact with each other and exchange their knowledge and experiences".

The education sector needs some serious changes made to it. Lecturers and professors have said the era of socialist society is over. However, in reality such attitudes continue to impact education.

Some schools and universities do not even have full-time lecturers. Adding to this, there are employers who do not understand or exercise their responsibilities. One of the main factors for developing education is bringing quality foreign education techniques as well as resources back home from abroad.

Lecturers lack competitiveness. They lack the motivation to mold students who are able to compete on the global stage. In fact, they do not even have the time to do so. Lecturers run from salary to salary, trying to manage a life free from debt. They lack the spare time to think about anything other than their daily lives. Last year's teachers' demands for salary raises was indicative of this problem.

Google—Better than Any Teacher

In Mongolia, around 38,000 trained staff graduates annually. Of these around 6,000 students graduate to be teachers. According to research from the National Statistics Office, only 2,000 were employed that same year.

"The education system in Mongolia is a failure in itself. No matter how hard lecturers try to deliver effective work, they will only receive negative results", said G. Bat-Erdene, lecturer at the Department of Mongolian Language and Literature at the National University of Mongolia. "Directing the education system towards the right path should be a priority. Then we can talk about the quality of education".

He added, "The right path should be keeping a balance between demand and supply. The biggest hindrance to the development of the education sector is the supply has exceeded the actual demand. If this problem is not fixed, the current failures of the education sector will get even worse".

Bat-Erdene recommended admission scores be set higher and stricter enforcement of requirements. He also suggested better monitoring as well as programs that follow more in line with employment requirements.

Echoing that thought, director of the General Education Office at the Ministry of Education and Science, D. Ganchimeg said, "Universities and high schools should be shut down. Future education policy should focus on having a few national universities with branch schools in rural areas. Only a number of private universities that meet standards would be allowed to operate".

"Doing so would prevent disqualified students from graduating. Professions like teachers and lecturers would require stricter criteria. To introduce such a system, we must stick to the right policy".

Those who are eager to learn and study would be able to attend university and those who cannot would have to attend vocational training centres. However, all these changes will take time. Will Mongolia continue delivering

unskilled, so-called professionals until these changes can be implemented?

Currently, the country has nine state universities and 98 private universities and colleges. The public's expectation for the Ministry of Education and Science is high. They hope Minister Luvsannyam Gantumur brings an end to the countless numbers of unskilled professionals. A diploma from one of these institutions has become a useless piece of paper that can be bought. But combative measure are available.

According to the minister of education and science, implementing a policy that reduces the number of universities is necessary.

"It is a fact that teachers and lecturers have insufficient knowledge and professional skills", said Gantumur. "However, from this year onwards, we will urgently focus on improving their knowledge by proving opportunities for training in foreign countries".

"A project called Teachers for Teachers will be implemented. Instead of bringing teachers from rural areas to the city for seminars, skilled lecturers from the city will be appointed to rural areas for exchange programmes. In addition, a mechanism that ensures student fully understand what they are taught will be introduced. Training teachers as well as students is an important method".

Sometimes the Google search engine has better skills in teaching than some lecturers who seem to have nothing better to offer than reading straight from a text.

It is high time the nation pay attention to the thousands of unemployed professionals. There are many companies eager to employ educated and skilled professionals. Mongolia's labour market is starving for a qualified workforce. However, the number of professionals who have no clue about their professions or lack the lack skills to operate equipment and resources such as computers and printers seems to grow year by year.

A survey reveals that around 35 percent of the 37,000 fresh graduates were able to find a job. It may be that the abilities of lecturers are just as responsible as the old-fashioned methods in education for this failure. ■

CORRUPTION

CORRUPT EDUCATION

Although they say the education sector refrains from corruption, people in education love to accept gifts. This reporter has experienced it herself.

B. ENKHMART

It is that time when education officials fill their pockets with thick envelopes.

Although they say the education sector refrains from corruption, people in education love to accept gifts. This reporter has experienced it herself. In addition to my own child, who is entering kindergarten, another four children from my family are enrolled at kindergartens and six others in elementary schools and universities. They all had to offer bribes for admittance.

Parents often think of education officials and workers as corrupt. But the reality is they are the ones perpetuating this system.

Corruption in elementary education

Every autumn, parents go in search for a kindergarten. Corruption in education has reached its peak and is continuing to flourish in front of our eyes. Advertisements on this matter seem to be frequently aired nowadays, vivid proof of bribery. Informative trainings on anti corruption seem to have no effect.

Sending children to the schools of one's choice inevitably leads to bribery. Otherwise, parents will be sent back told classes are full. International standards dictate that a kindergarten class must have a maximum of 25 children. However, in Mongolia that standard is at least

doubled.

Imagine a class with up to 60 children. In one hand, kindergarten directors have the right to reject the children from entering their kindergarten. This is how bribery perpetuates and kindergarten directors learn to profit. How can 60 children possibly fit in a single classroom? Those classrooms should give comfort to toddlers, most of whom are under two years old. The minister of education should immediately focus on building new kindergartens as soon as possible, or else children and teachers alike will fall on their knees begging for more space.

On the September 3, Kindergarten No. 26 of Ulaanbaatar had built a ger to receive its oldest children. This picture could only be imagined in rural areas, but, in the 21st century, Ulaanbaatar has surprised us all with this image. It is a definite reversal from development.

Next is the time to bribe the teachers with little presents as a sign of gratitude for caring for my child. Parents are concerned that their child might be left out or even beaten if they refuse. It is not that those kindergarten directors and teachers like to be called corrupt, but rather the lack of kindergartens makes parents encourage corruption. It is not only up to the Ministry of Education and Science to fix these problems, but that of the State Great Khural as well.

Greasing the Wheels

According to studies, about 62 percent of children under six years old have preschool education. The remaining 38 percent get their education at home or from their grandparents, neighbours or from other family members.

But children can't stay at home when they are old enough to attend school. They will also have to participate in bribery then, too. Nowadays, parents would give any sum to have their children attend a proper school. There is the general thought that the teacher who teaches the very first letter must be good. This thought has parents going for another quest to find the perfect teacher. Of course, if they find one, they are ready with bribes once again. Certain facts reveal that parents even battling to see who can grease the wheels best.

The days of final exams are also the days when teachers celebrate the most. Graduation ceremonies in the 1990's were priced with candies, paintings and carpets. Nowadays, notebooks, cars and even apartments have become worthy presents. Giving mobile phones, televisions, washing machines and jewellery as presents have become old-fashioned.

One ministry worker admitted that anyone hoping for a state scholarship to a foreign university or college would have to bribe in foreign currencies ▶▶



rather than the Mongolian tugrug. The enrolment of one's child into university is crucial to parents. If he or she is truly smart and can enter into his and her first-choice university, then the parents might not have any need for bribery. Unfortunately, not everyone who enrolls meets these standards.

Institutes, and universities are especially big challenges for graduates in the provinces. All parents who live in rural areas hope that their children may study in the city. They don't want to see their children breeding cattle or growing vegetables like themselves.

Yet, only eight places, or 30 percent of the 300 to 500 graduates who take their entrance exams, can attain admittance. One should also have an envelope full of money in hand for their "bonus points". Every student who fails to pass the exam arrives in the capital city with the hope of entering a state university. Their parents go to city to sell their cattle, wool and cashmere to earn enough to bribe a teacher.

There are even some middlemen

that stand in front of the state schools and universities whispering enrolment is possible, at the right price. The going rate for that kind of help is MNT 800,000 to MNT 2.5 million. Some even demand MNT 5 million. Such mediators have friends or family working for that school. Teachers work in these networks, too, and it's normal for them to facilitate the admission of up to 10 students.

The bribery issue is not finished at this point either. There is nothing without a bribe during the semester's end or at graduation exams. When the spring comes and exams are approaching, the teachers' characters change and they begin scolding more often.

The day when final marks are released is the most difficult. Envelopes soften teachers. Several cases of bribery were revealed last spring. Even after graduation one cannot leave a bribe behind. As one gets more familiar with bribery, the envelope goes further when filling out job applications or when meeting with office heads. The main reason

for unemployed graduates after having studied for years is bribery. If one wants employment from a state organisation, then MNT 2.5 million to MNT 5 million is enough.

The Highest Bidder

These dear bribes will never disappear because, although everyone talks about it, most remain silent.

An example of this is when students of one state university had to take an exam from one of the leading lecturers in Mongolia. All of the first students were failing, but started to pass after putting some money into their notebooks. One student who put money inside of the notebook ended up answering all the questions correctly. After receiving the mark the student asked for the money back. The teacher was confused. Unfortunately, these sorts of arguments are too rare, seldom like stars during daytime.

Despite claims by government ▶▶

▶ that bribes will be abolished, they continue.

“The coming four years are devoted to removing bribery completely”, said Minister of Education Luvsannyam Gantumur.

“Students are not allowed to give any flowers or other presents. It has been determined that students who don’t give presents or flower to teachers tend to think they are not

beloved because they did not give anything to the teacher. This leads to less participation in class. Therefore teachers should rid of this thinking that they should receive and students should give”.

However, as Professor at the University of Science and Technology B. Damdinsuren explains, this may be a problem that is not so easy to squash.

“Do you know what a flea is”? asks Damdinsuren. “It is a type of parasite that lives with the human body’s warmth and drinks human blood day and night. A long time has passed since the education sector of Mongolia was contaminated by fleas. It is easy to get rid of it. You just collect it and throw away. But the fleas of bribery turn into mites and worms, and don’t want to leave.” ■

EMPLOYMENT

F+

University tuition costs rise each year, but have universities gotten any better at preparing their students for employment?

BY TERRENCE EDWARDS

September 1 will mark the beginning of the new school year. First year students will be eagerly awaiting the year ahead of them as they move forward to reach their dream jobs.

Yet, not too long ago, in June, hundreds of students were just as thrilled to move on to the next step. Each weekend students gathered in their best and brightest clothes. The girls sparkle in their deel dresses, which harken back to tradition for their material and design but have a modern edge with their low cuts and and flirtatious silhouettes. The boys gathered too, decked out in western suits while sporting mohawks and hipster sunglasses.

These young men and women entered the workforce at a time when they will have the greatest impact on the course of the country’s successes or failures. With the median age for both men and women at 26, the younger generation currently sit on the sidelines waiting to take the

reigns and lead the country.

Yet many have yet to begin a job and are finding they are unqualified for the jobs they would like. Does this next generation have the skills necessary to lead the march towards a developed society, democracy free from corruption, and a healthy economy?

While the country can go far with a driven and motivated people, without the necessary skills they are fated to either taking the country off course or falling behind the rest of the world.

For many, graduation is a marker for life’s achievements, up there with marriage and the birth of the first child. But it is also the first step that can set the trajectory for happiness and comfort or a lifetime of underachievement and disappointment.

The Root of the Problem

Each year tuition rises yet the quality of education stagnates.

Tuition will rise a reported 10 percent (compared with the 25 to 50 percent hike universities requested), but there is little evidence that the education system has improved.

According to a report by Undesnii Shuudan in April, of the 40,000 students that graduated in 2011, only a third found employment.

With exception to the introduction of the Cambridge system pilot schools this year, few drastic changes have been made to education in recent years. Schools are still largely bureaucratized and resources are still few. University education demonstrates some of the strongest weaknesses in the system. Unlike most institutions in Western countries, lecturers at universities are not required to hold a doctorate degree. In Mongolia, university teachers usually have about the same credentials as primary and secondary school teachers.

Speaking with students in the weeks leading up to graduation, many ▶▶



Photo by B. Byamba-Ochir

► were unsure of their prospects. Some fourth year students were ready to pursue another degree. Many were looking abroad.

The mining sector and government seemed to represent the strongest opportunities for young people. The mining industry can pay good salaries, they said, while providing the technical training they needed to advance their careers.

What is becoming abundantly clear is how unprepared young people who have only experienced public education in Mongolia are. According to Chuluuntseren Otgochuluu, general director of the Economic Policy and Competitiveness Research Centre, the problems begin all the way back in primary school and continue through secondary, where there are no shortage of distractions.

“From October to November, students spend the most time in class learning, but then in December are shows for the holiday, and again for Tsagaan Sar”, said

Otgochuluu “Students really only have three to four months of learning in the school year.”.

The division between classes, said Otgochuluu, really shows here as parents who can afford to send their children to a private school are the ones most to benefit. Those are also the ones most likely to receive university education in a foreign country. Scholarships from the government are available but it is impossible to know if they are of any benefit to students from lower-income families because the recipients are kept confidential.

Parliament hopes the introduction of the Cambridge system will rectify these problems, but once again some students will have large advantages over others, as Kate Lapham, senior programme manager for the Open Society Education Support Program, explains in an editorial on the subject at Eurasianet.com.

“Selecting and sorting students based on narrow measures of

academic achievement, like admissions tests, tends to deepen social inequalities by favoring children who have been well prepared through preschool programs and family experience”, writes Lapham. “Thus, children living in poverty, children in rural areas without access to preschool, minority and minority-language children, and children with disabilities are at an immediate disadvantage, and certain not to test into the elite schools”.

Establishing these schools does not solve the prevailing issues that currently bog down schools, such as underpaid, under-prepared teachers and a severe lack of resources.

Instead of creating these elite schools, Lapham recommends greater equity amongst the schools in Mongolia. The elite students already have the advantage, she argues, and the system proposed by the ministry of education last year only hands out more advantages to them rather than the children that need them most. ►►

► The Dream Job vs. the Needed Job

For Otogochuluu, improving the quality of Mongolia's education system today is too tall an order. Instead he recommended government concentrate on sending more students to foreign countries for better educations. Of course, he admitted, that also runs the risk of letting go of Mongolia's most talented in its workforce. There is always the temptation for students to stay in the country they studied in after graduation, he said, rather than return home to Mongolia to bring those skills back to the homeland.

He also noted that students would have to look beyond the most popular destinations for education such as the United States and Europe. Destinations such as Russia, Kazakhstan, and Hungary, which admittedly are behind the more popular destinations in terms of quality, are alternatives and are less likely to retain students after graduation.

A lack of practical experience

is another problem. While many young people in Mongolia are very enthusiastic about their studies, they spend very little time getting on-the-job experience. Thomas Youngman of employment agency Mongolia Talent Network, has found that many of the young candidates that come to him looking for work have had extensive time in classrooms but very little experience practicing what they learned.

"The challenge is people are overqualified. They did a degree and got a Master's but they're overqualified and don't have the experience. Even in the UK, if you have a business management degree, it doesn't mean you know how to manage a business".

Youngman seemed to have the impression that a number of students were under a lot of pressure to take up a profession their parents told them they should and only realised too late it was not something they wanted to do for the rest of their lives. Others, he said, had the wrong idea of the kind of work they would be doing and decided to try something else after

working for only a short while.

Indeed, many of the fourth year students interviewed in the days leading up to graduation were looking forward to earning a second (and for one even a third) degree rather than look for work. Also, while in Western institutions internships are often a prerequisite for a degree, it's neither required nor widely available in Mongolia, especially outside the capital.

One company that does provide internship opportunities to students is the investment bank Mongolia International Capital Corporation (MICC). Its director, Daranbazar Achit-Erdene, offers young students temporary positions as interns at his office in Central Tower to give them experience with the financial world first hand. While he received a university education from abroad, a graduate of Columbia University in New York, he sees value both in students with foreign and Mongolian educations.

"I try to get a mixture of university graduates from Mongolia and abroad," said Achit-Erdene in an email "They bring a different approach ►►

Landing the Job

Thomas Youngman of Mongolian Talent Network has helped numerous students find employment. He has found that most students fresh out of university have little direction about how to find the job they want, how to get employers to notice them, and how they can impress during an interview. The following are tips recommended by Youngman for job seekers:

Use the resources available to you: There are a number of free resources available on the internet that offer free advice and provide help to drafting a CV and performing well in an interview., said Youngman. He said he recommends people look on Google for free templates of CVs and examples of what one should look like..

What is important are the details: While the prevailing wisdom to creating the best CV is it should be no more than one-page, Youngman suggested ignoring this rule so that it may contain more details of one's experiences and successes. He suggested applicants provide quantifiable data that proves some sort of indication of improvement with the applicant's help during his or her time of employment there.

Tailor your CV for the job: Every CV should be modified, even slightly, for every position one looks to be a candidate for so that it best suits the position being applied to. Again, the more details to how one's experience fits the requirements of the job, the better.

Develop your network: "I think Mongolians love networking. "They're very good at it", said Youngman. Everyone should always have their business cards on hand and ready to trade. He also warned against making the mistake most do—that is never contacting the person after exchanging business cards. Youngman recommended a simple thank you or short reintroduction by email soon after swapping business cards.

Practice the interview: Failing to prepare for an interview is a pitfall all too common here, said Youngman. Before going into an interview, he recommends practicing giving answers to questions with friends. Common questions asked during interviews can be found easily online, he said.

"Nerves are from a lack of practice Nerves are only there because you don't know how to answer the questions"!

Furthermore, Youngman said he has noticed that Mongolian culture generally discourages bragging, but the job interview is one time when people should try and shine—so a little bragging can be forgiven.

▶ and background to work. While the Mongolian university graduates tend to be knowledgeable about finance (especially finance students) and know the life and economy of Mongolia, foreign university graduates have language skills and the ability to express themselves in writing and presentations“.

Pride also plays a factor. Many Mongolians find they want only the best and most interesting seeming white-collar jobs, said Otgochuluu. He has observed a “mismatch” between the demand for skills by employers and the kind of degrees students

graduates leave with. The result is a vast number of young people with degrees unable to find work.

“It’s a question of prestige,” said Otgochuluu. “No one wants to be a blue collar worker, but the economy cannot sustain the number of graduates who want to be doctors and lawyers”.

When Achit-Erdene was asked what he thought, as a business owner and one in tune with the pulse of the Mongolian economy, were the most valuable skills, he recommended finance, accounting, mining engineering, and geology.

“I personally like to hire liberal arts majors who have excellent grades. They tend to be more open minded and able to learn new things quickly and express themselves well in written and verbal forms, which are all valuable qualities for investment bankers.”

The decision made by today’s first-year university students will directly impact how well prepared the country’s work force is for the developing economy, begging the question, is it better to be an unemployed lawyer or a well-paid drill operator. ■

REPORT

HIGH EDUCATION IN MONGOLIA

Low- and middle-income countries in East Asia need to make their higher education systems more responsive to labor market demands and the economy as a whole to climb up the income ladder, says a new World Bank East Asia and Pacific Regional Report released in October 2011. This report contains policy objectives, which we are introducing for the new Parliament, and the members of the MP.

Despite impressive gains, higher education could contribute even more to Mongolia’s development agenda.

Mongolia is projected to be one of the world’s fastest growing economies over the next decade, but maintaining growth and climbing the income ladder will be enormously challenging without significant improvements in productivity. Higher education is critical in this regard because it provides the high-level skills and research to apply current technologies and to assimilate, adapt, and develop new technologies, two drivers of productivity. It can thus be a key driver of growth. Individuals with at least a few years of higher education score higher on measures of skill competencies than individuals with no higher education. And academic, technical, thinking, and behavioral skills and productivity are shown to be positively related. Several indicators ▶



► of innovation also support the need for higher education: an innovative firm is associated with an increase of about 25 percentage points in its share of workers with more than 12 years of schooling. And countries that have more science and engineering graduates and that engage in more higher education research tend to have better innovation outcomes.

Quality deficiencies among higher education graduates have contributed to a skills mismatch.

Employers expect workers—particularly those with higher education—to possess the technical, behavioral, and thinking skills to increase their productivity and growth. They need science, technology, engineering, and math skills (STEM). They also need problem solving and creative skills to support a higher value added manufacturing sector and the business, thinking, and behavioral skills for a higher productivity service sector.

The supply of new higher education graduates is high compared to the regional average in Mongolia, but several indicators point to gaps in these groups of skills among higher education graduates. Fairly high unemployment rates co-exist with significant time (almost 6 weeks) needed to fill professional vacancies with suitable graduates. This suggests that graduates may not have the skills desired by employers. This is confirmed by the limited range of higher education options (notably too few technical and vocational institutions) and employers and employees' complaints about skill shortages in English, leadership

and communication skills. There is a strong unfulfilled demand for technology and engineering vocational skills as employers, particularly those in the mining, infrastructure and manufacturing sectors, report to be unable to hire the skills they need. Additionally, students do not often get the education that would enable them to have broad-based knowledge, be able to make connections, to think creatively, to develop the skills to learn on their own, to be able to communicate well with others, and to be entrepreneurial in their future career.

Research outputs from Mongolian universities remain extremely limited.

Higher education also needs to do a better job of providing the type of research needed to boost innovation. Universities can produce ideas for the business community, contributing to knowledge and technological innovation through basic and applied research and technology transfer, but the Mongolian higher education system is not yet providing research of adequate quality. Even university involvement in technology adaptation and upgrading is limited. Enterprise surveys show, for instance, that universities are mentioned as having a leading role in acquiring technological innovations (in a broad sense) by only 1–2 percent of firms. Few Mongolian faculty in universities have PhD degrees, and for the large majority, their primary job function remains teaching, with no research responsibility. This is also the result of heavy workloads for existing faculty because of high

student-faculty ratios. Clearly, beyond simply providing skills, Mongolian universities need to do more to support innovation through research and technology.

Policy Priorities

For Mongolia to continue its rapid growth and achieve continued technological deepening, two immediate priorities are evident:

- addressing skills gaps by providing higher quality higher education and dealing with the quality/quantity trade-off in higher education, and
- start building research capacity relevant to economic needs in a few universities or departments

Among the policy levers the Mongolian government can use to address these priorities, it can:

- initiate or complete the process of granting further autonomy to universities and university boards;
- consider strengthening technical and vocational education and training as an alternative tertiary education;
- support stronger incentives for providing high quality private higher education;
- increase public funds for STEM areas;
- increase and better target public spending on R&D;
- encourage selected university- industry linkages to improve curriculum relevance and help with technological deepening. ■

For more information, and to download the report, please visit: www.worldbank.org/eap/highered.

¹Defined broadly to include all public and private formal institutions of learning that take place beyond upper secondary education.

²Whereas in 1992, there were only 20,000 students enrolled in higher education, this number increased almost eight-fold to 149,915 in 2007.

TUITION

UNIVERSITY PRICE TAGS

Tuition has gone 10 fold since the late 1990s with no end in sight.

B. SANJAAKHAND

Monthly statistics on the social-economic outlook from the National Statistics Office (NSO) revealed good news for August. Inflation fell to 14.5 percent compared with previous inflation of 17 percent. Although inflation rose by 0.6 percent compared with July, inflation dropped by one digit.

The sudden drop was triggered by changes in commodity prices.

“If such changes hadn’t occurred, inflation would have been much higher than the current rate”, said N. Zoljargal, the vice president of the Bank of Mongolia.

On this matter B. Badamtsetseg, deputy director of the Macro Economic Statistics Department of NSO, said “Food costs in the commodity price index have dropped. People used to spend 40 percent of their income on food, but now they devote only 30 percent of their salary to food. This shows that the structure of family consumption has changed”.

In short, a drop in the percentage of food consumption measures the development of a country. As long as inflation continues to fall, the economy is a bit safer and society can benefit.

“The current inflation rate is expected to remain stable until the end of the year. However, meat prices and school and university tuition fees will be strongly impacted”, said L. Byambaa, head of the Education Committee.

Although inflation prospects are looking positive, these two factors will have consequences on the rates. Universities and schools petitioned for as much as 50 percent. Education has become a money-driven business opportunity.

The newly installed minister of education and science, Luvsannyam Gantumur, seems to have recognised this problem and has started taking actions against all those who take advantage of the uncertain situation.

“Depending on inflation rates, this school year’s tuition fees will not increase by more than 10 percent. In addition, tuition fees should be paid partially, depending on the living standards of students, based on a mutual contract with the associated university or school administration”, said Gantumur in an ordinance.

The minister has met with several school officials to introduce this ordinance personally, but it took them quite a long time to accept it. However, they are still trying to increase tuition fees by up to 30 percent, saying they need the extra money to offer salary raises to faculty members and improve their facilities.

Both private and state universities have raised their tuition fees to up to MNT 2 million, compared with average fees of MNT 200,000 in the late 1990’s. Private schools and universities set their tuition prices depending on the tuition fees of state universities. However, further delays in making a decision preventing any progress in education.

Some private schools, as well as universities, have tacked on random fees as it suits them. It would be useless for the government try and regulate the tuitions of private schools, but those institutions should act reasonably because they are creating a huge mess for the private sector. ■



OYUTOLGOI

FRESH AIR

At 90% completion, Oyu Tolgoi is preparing for initial production.

BY B. BAYARTOGTOKH

Construction at the Oyu Tolgoi mine, which is four times bigger than Erdenet, is almost finished and its developers are preparing to deliver its first production. The Oyu Tolgoi project will begin production in September, bringing with it a breeze of social and economic change to Mongolia as well as the Oyu Tolgoi brand to foreign trade.

The Oyu Tolgoi mining company begins its production amid fears of slowed economic growth in China, a country with an economy 860 times bigger than that of Mongolia. As the main supplier of goods to China, Mongolia has reason to worry. Although the Chinese economy did not falter during the 2008 economic crisis, this time is different.

The intensive construction at the mine has made the Gobi Desert a pillar to the growth and development of Mongolia. Both Oyu Tolgoi and the Tavan Tolgoi coal projects have brightened the grey and sombre lives of those living in rural Mongolia. Khanbogd Soum is boiling with development, standing as a sign of progress.

The timeless environment of the Gobi Desert is at the centre of the development of Mongolia's mining sector. Rehabilitation and environmental issues have always been one of Oyu Tolgoi's main concerns. For this reason the company has developed five hectares of land dedicated to plant life 45 kilometres away from Khanbogd. At the greenhouses in this area are rare plants as well as trees such as saksaul, elm trees.

As production and construction speeds up, control over the environment weakens and the ecological balance there will lose its stability. Such effects can have negative consequences for any project. The developers of Oyu Tolgoi, however, understand this completely, and so have developed the very first index on the effects to nature.

"As a part of our social license, the index is one of the requirements set for foreign firms. Developing such a document is also a measurement of the assets collected", says the official Oyu Tolgoi website.

Another outcome of the effort made by the developers of Oyu Tolgoi is the plan to create a tunnel to provide passage for wild animals.

Oyu Tolgoi is certain to provide Mongolia with a leading position for global economic growth. However, sustainable development and growth will depend on the government's policies. The Oyu Tolgoi project is an opportunity not to focus on simply development—but on green economic development.

The green development of tomorrow begins today. ■



