



ASEAN STATE OF EDUCATION REPORT 2013



one vision
one identity
one community



ASEAN STATE OF EDUCATION REPORT 2013

The ASEAN Secretariat
Jakarta

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Foreword

ASEAN's recognition of the pivotal role of education in the ASEAN Community building process was manifested right at the time of its establishment in 1967, where two of ASEAN's seven founding aims included assistance to each Member State through educational training and research facilities as well as promotion of Southeast Asian studies.

Since then, ASEAN cooperation in the education sector has taken on more wide-ranging measures to develop the human resources in the region and to empower the peoples of ASEAN, strengthening the prospects for the ASEAN Community by 2015. ASEAN's sustained commitment is further enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint (2009), the Cha-Am Hua Hin Declaration on Strengthening Cooperation on Education to Achieve an ASEAN Caring and Sharing Community, and the ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015).

With a little more than two years before the establishment of the ASEAN Community in 2015, ASEAN publishes this first ASEAN State of Education Report to provide a comprehensive assessment of both national and regional education initiatives against ASEAN's regional strategic objectives. Notably, the Report corroborates the important role of education in narrowing the development gap in ASEAN.

The Report provides the benchmark that can be used to monitor the progress in the state of education over time. It is hoped that the Report will also stimulate discussions among education officials, policy makers, experts, and partners seeking to address the challenges faced by ASEAN education. With the Report, ASEAN should be able to pursue concrete ideas that will enable our educators to prepare ASEAN citizens to become professionals, skilled and vocational workers, and life-long learners indispensable in our pursuit of a politically cohesive, economically integrated, and socially responsible ASEAN Community by 2015 and beyond.



Le Luong Minh
Secretary-General of ASEAN

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| ASCC | ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community |
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| ALMM | ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting |
| ASEAN-6 | Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand |
| AUN | ASEAN University Network |
| AUN-ACTS | AUN-ASEAN Credit Transfer System |
| AQRF | ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework |
| CLMV | Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam |
| EFA | Education for All |
| EHEA | European Higher Education Area |
| EQAR | European Quality Assurance Register |
| EU | European Union |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| HDI | Human Development Index |
| IAI | Initiative for ASEAN Integration |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technologies |
| IEA | International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PIRLS | Progress In International Reading Literacy Study |
| PISA | Programme for International Student Assessment |
| PPP | Purchasing Power Parity |
| READI | Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument |
| SEAMEO | Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation |
| TATF | ASEAN-US Technical Assistance and Training Facility |
| TIMSS | Trends in International Mathematics and Science Education Study |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| UMAP | University Mobility in the Asia-Pacific |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| UIS | UNESCO Institute of Statistics |

Executive Summary

In 2009, at the 14th ASEAN Summit in Cha-Am Hua Hin, the ASEAN Leaders adopted the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint that proposed 28 action lines relevant to Education, for implementation by 2015. Separately, the Leaders also declared that Education had a significant role to play in contributing to the three pillars of ASEAN, namely, the political and security, the economic and the socio-cultural pillars.¹ On 17 July 2011, at the Informal ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting in Bali, Indonesia, ASEAN Education Ministers requested an assessment of ASEAN's progress in the field of Education, having regard to the *ASCC Blueprint*. In 2011 an *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)* incorporated to a large extent the provisions for Education in the *ASCC Blueprint*. The *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)* listed four priorities and 20 specific programmes for implementation by 2015.

Having regard to the *ASCC Blueprint* as well as the Education indicators developed as part of the ASCC Scorecard,² the request by the ASEAN Education Ministers, and the *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)*, this Report assesses ASEAN's progress in the field of Education. As it is a first-ever assessment of this nature, it will also serve to provide a baseline against which the future performance of ASEAN in the field of Education can be benchmarked.

Development of the Report began early in June 2013 with a comprehensive review of the literature on education systems across the ASEAN region. Then, on 25 June 2013, senior government officials from the ASEAN Member States, together with representatives from the ASEAN University Network (AUN), the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO), the EU Delegation to Indonesia, ASEAN and Brunei Darussalam, the ASEAN Secretariat and the two experts, met in Jakarta to clarify expectations about the Report and to approve its structure. From 26 June 2013 to 16 July 2013, the two experts responsible for drafting the Report conducted in-country consultations across the ASEAN region. On 12 September 2013, a draft Report was considered at a follow-up meeting in Bangkok of senior government officials, together with representatives of the ASEAN Secretariat and SEAMEO Secretariat. The ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Education (SOMED) gave the Report in-principle endorsement on 20 September 2013.

The Report is presented in three parts. The first addresses briefly the context for the Report. The second reviews progress made by ASEAN in the field of Education. The third provides a profile of Education in each of ASEAN Member States.

The two reference points in assessing the progress of the Education sector in ASEAN are the *ASCC Blueprint* and, more importantly, the *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)*. The four priorities identified by the ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015) were as follows: (1) Promoting ASEAN Awareness; (2a) Increasing Access to Quality Primary and Secondary Education; (2b) Increasing the Quality of Education-Performance Standards, Lifelong Learning and Professional Development; (3) Strengthening Cross-border Mobility and Internationalisation of Education; and (4) Support for Other ASEAN Sectoral Bodies with an interest in Education.

¹ Through the Cha-Am Hua Hin Declaration On Strengthening Cooperation on Education to Achieve an ASEAN Caring and Sharing Community.

² The ASCC Scorecard lists a series of indicators across six key characteristics identified in the *ASCC Blueprint*.

Priority 1

Significant progress, as documented below, is occurring in relation to Priority 1.

- The Ministries of Education across the ASEAN region are aware of the ASEAN Curriculum Sourcebook as a tool to advance an understanding of ASEAN identity and to develop in young people a better understanding of the diversity of cultures across the region.
- ASEAN Day is widely celebrated, and ASEAN corners are being created in schools in some countries for the purpose of stimulating an interest in the other countries that comprise the ASEAN Community.
- The recently developed ASEAN Studies courses for undergraduates and ASEAN Studies programmes for postgraduates are achieving considerable interest within a short space of time.

Progress in terms of the wider adoption of the Curriculum Sourcebook will require, however, that the document be translated into selected local languages. Progress with the teaching of ASEAN languages across the Member States is slow – English being the generally preferred second language of instruction.

Priority 2

Priority 2 has two elements, the first of which concerns the need to increase access to quality primary and secondary education across the ASEAN region. Progress, as documented below, is occurring in relation to the first element of Priority 2.

- The recent ASEAN Statistical Report on the *Millennium Development Goals* shows progress being made in relation to its objectives.³
- Across the ASEAN region, net enrolment rates in primary education are improving, though not all ASEAN Member States may achieve universal basic education by 2015.
- Youth literacy rates are improving, and by 2010 an estimated (98.5%) young people aged 15 to 24 years of age were functionally literate.
- Gender parity in primary education is being widely achieved.

Of note, though, is that in secondary education, and even more so in tertiary education, the advantage in many ASEAN Member States is now swinging in favour of girls.

The second element concerns the need for an improved quality of education, including higher performance standards, more opportunities for lifelong education, and the more widespread provision of professional development support. Progress in relation to this element is less even. Of the five ASEAN Member States to participate in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey, only Singapore has achieved excellent results. On the positive side, however, most ASEAN Member States are investing heavily in improving the quality of teaching, with a view to replacing modes of teaching that encourage rote learning with those that encourage independent learning and the development of problem-solving skills and a capacity for creativity. Progress is also being made regarding the development of an ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRFF), which will be a significant initiative for the region.

³ ASEAN (2012). ASEAN Statistical Report on the Millennium Development Goals. Jakarta.

TVET is an area of particular concern. Shortages in the supply of skilled labour are becoming more common across the ASEAN region. While the move to an ASEAN Community in which skilled workers will have greater cross-border mobility is envisioned, it may result in skilled labour shortages in some Member States.

Priority 3

Priority 3 concerns cross-border mobility and the internationalisation of education in the ASEAN region. Progress, as documented below, is occurring in relation to Priority 3.

- The AUN continues to make a significant contribution to cross-border mobility and the internationalisation of education. Its immediate impact is not confined only to its 30 member universities but notably made wider to non-member institutions through an increase in academic and non-academic activities.
- SEAMEO is also making significant contributions, by providing support for particular initiatives cross-border mobility and the internationalisation of education across the ASEAN region.
- Recent initiatives to address the non-comparability of academic and professional accreditation standards and to promote robust standards across the region by establishing a Qualifications Reference Framework demonstrate progress.

Of note, though, is that there is little systematically collected data available about the extent to which cross-border mobility occurs across the ASEAN region, except for successes recorded by the AUN and certain SEAMEO initiatives. Obstacles include differences in national qualification structures and standards, and the general absence of international credit-transfer arrangements across the region.

Priority 4

Priority 4 concerns the provision of support for other ASEAN sectoral bodies with an interest in Education. Progress, as documented below, is occurring in relation to Priority 4.

- Various professional groups are contributing to the development of regional frameworks for the recognition of qualifications in areas that include engineering, nursing, architecture, surveying, accountancy, medicine, dentistry and tourism.
- There is cooperation between the ASEAN Education and ASEAN Environment Ministers in approving the establishment of an ASEAN Environmental Education Action Plan (AEEAP), which has now embarked on its next phase.

Of note, though, is that the question of whether or not ASEAN should follow the model of harmonisation provided by the European Union (EU): this has only been relatively lightly addressed; harmonisation along the lines of the EU model is possibly not as yet a top priority for ASEAN Member States.

Country Profiles

The Country Profiles documented in the third part of the Report provide an overview of the legislative and administrative frameworks, the *ASCC Scorecard* for Education data, the system structures and significant challenges being faced by the education systems across the region. The country profiles provide a significant insight to the extent of regional diversity in the field of Education and may also serve to promote a deeper understanding of the various education systems.

Common across all of the systems is a strong commitment to the importance of education, both for its contribution to nation-building and for its importance in developing the intellectual and moral fibre of future generations. Education's role in promoting political and social harmony is widely valued. There is a shared commitment to expanding the range of educational opportunities available to all young people, having regard especially to the *Millennium Development Goals* set down for achievement by 2015. Education is widely seen as being foundational to a more economically integrated ASEAN region. There is, however, a developing sense of concern about the need to develop opportunities for training through TVET.

Differences between the various education systems may to a large extent be seen as reflecting differences in the stage of economic development achieved by each of the ASEAN Member States. Language differences do not, of course, relate to economic development, but the role now being played across the region by English as a common language, especially among young people, is striking. There are also differences that relate to the historical development of each of the ASEAN Member States. Higher education systems across the region most obviously reflect the signs of the different national legacies.

1. Introduction

Purpose

This Report has been prepared in response to a request by the ASEAN Education Ministers. Its purpose is to provide an assessment of ASEAN's progress in the field of Education, having regard to the aspirations for Education expressed in both the *ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint* and the *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)*. As the Report is the first-ever assessment of the field of Education across the ASEAN region, it also provides a baseline against which the future performance of the ASEAN community in the field of Education can be appraised. The European Union (EU), through the Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument 2011-15 (READI), has supported preparation of the Report.

Organisation of the Report

The Report is presented in three parts. This first part addresses briefly the Report's development and outlines ASEAN engagement with the field of Education. The second part reviews progress made by ASEAN, having regard especially to priorities for education documented in the *ASCC Blueprint* and the *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)*. The third part features individual country profiles that present key characteristics of and significant challenges being faced by education systems in ASEAN.

Development of the Report

The project commenced in June 2013. Senior government officials from ASEAN Member States met in Jakarta on 25 June 2013 to participate in a Workshop organised by the ASEAN Secretariat, with support from the Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument (READI). Representatives from the ASEAN University Network (AUN), the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO), and the EU Delegation to Indonesia, ASEAN and Brunei Darussalam were also in attendance, as were the two experts principally responsible for the development and writing of this Report. The Workshop's purpose was to introduce the project and approve the structure and scope of the Report. The Workshop also provided an opportunity for further discussion of the *ASCC Scorecard for Education* developed by the ASEAN Secretariat.

Following the Workshop, the two experts proceeded to conduct in-country consultations with senior government officials across the ASEAN region and the leading Division (see Appendix A). The experts developed a draft Report that was considered at a follow-up Workshop in Bangkok on 12 September 2013. Senior government officials from ASEAN Member States were again in attendance, as were members of the ASEAN Secretariat, the two experts responsible for writing the Report, and a representative from SEAMEO. The final Report was delivered in late September 2013.

ASEAN's Commitment to Education

Since the time of its establishment in 1967, ASEAN has been supportive of regional cooperation in the field of education. However, it was not until the 4th ASEAN Summit in Singapore in 1992, that ASEAN leaders specifically addressed the need to focus on an initiative in this sector. Their deliberations resulted in the establishment in 1995 of the AUN, comprised at the time of 11 member universities.

In 2005, at the 11th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, ASEAN leaders again took the initiative by calling upon the ASEAN Education Ministers to focus on enhancing regional cooperation in education. In response, the Ministers identified four priorities, namely: promoting ASEAN awareness among ASEAN citizens, particularly young people; strengthening ASEAN identity through education; building ASEAN human resources in the field of education; and strengthening ASEAN university networking.⁴

On 15 December 2008, when an *ASEAN Charter* came into effect, one of the purposes of ASEAN declared to be is: "To develop human resources through closer cooperation in education and life-long learning, and in science and technology, for the empowerment of the peoples of ASEAN and for the strengthening of the ASEAN Community" (Article 1).

In 2009, the 14th ASEAN Summit in Cha-Am Hua Hin declared that various actions needed to be taken by 2015 to strengthen the role of education in building the ASEAN Community. Education was seen to have a significant role to play in contributing to the political and security, the economic and the socio-cultural pillars supporting ASEAN. Strengthening the political and security pillar was agreed to require that the school curriculum across the ASEAN region should: (i) promote a better understanding of the ASEAN Charter; (ii) advance principles of democracy and of respect for human rights and peace-oriented values; and (iii) provide a better understanding and appreciation of different cultures, customs and faiths in the ASEAN region. To strengthen the economic pillar, it was agreed that there should be: (i) a national skills framework in each of the ASEAN Member States, as an incremental step towards the establishment of an ASEAN skills recognition framework; (ii) conditions supportive of greater cross-border mobility for students and skilled workers; (iii) an ASEAN competency-based occupational standard; and (iv) a common set of competency standards especially for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as a basis for benchmarking with a view to promoting mutual recognition. A stronger socio-cultural pillar was considered to require: (i) common curriculum content provided about ASEAN for use in schools and as a reference for teacher training and teaching; (ii) graduate course on ASEAN arts and cultures in universities; (iii) ASEAN languages offered as optional foreign language subjects in schools; (iv) regional outreach programmes to raise ASEAN awareness among young people; (v) support provided for ASEAN community-based volunteer programmes that provide educational support for rural communities and indigenous peoples; (vi) an ASEAN education research convention; (vii) lifelong learning in support for Education for All (EFA); (viii) the celebration by schools of ASEAN Day and the establishment of ASEAN Green School awards; and (ix) a regional education development fund established by ASEAN Member States.

The 14th ASEAN Summit also adopted the *ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint*, committing ASEAN to the strategic objective of: "ensuring the integration of education priorities into ASEAN's development agenda and creating a knowledge based society; achieving universal access to primary education; promoting early child care and development; and enhancing awareness of ASEAN to young people through education and activities to build an ASEAN identity based on friendship and cooperation."⁵ It urged ASEAN Member States to promote lifelong learning and to

⁴ See: <http://www.asean.org/communities/asean-socio-cultural-community/category/overview-24>

⁵ EAN (2009). *ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint*. Jakarta, p. 2.

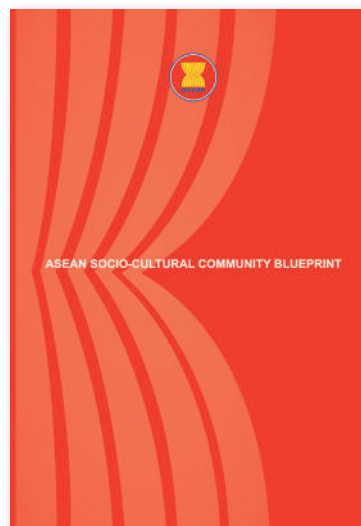
support research and innovation, and it endorsed the importance of introducing ICT at all levels of education and of initiating its use at the primary school level. A total of 28 relevant actions for education in the *ASCC Blueprint* were listed (see Appendix B).

In 2011, the *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)* was adopted. It addressed the importance of universal access to basic education of high quality, provided by teachers who are well educated and able to teach knowledgeably about the history and heritage of their nation. It also addressed the need for TVET to be responsive to economic needs, and for higher education to focus on delivering worldclass teaching, learning and research. *The 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011- 2015)* identified four main priority areas and 20 specific programmes for implementation by 2015 (see Appendix B).

2. Assessment of Progress

Progress with the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint

The 28 specific action lines proposed by the *ASCC Blueprint* for advancing and prioritising Education cover a wide range of areas. Some, such as “achieve universal access to primary education across ASEAN by 2015 with priorities to eradicate illiteracy and to ensure compulsory primary education for all and gender equality in education, through advocating for equal opportunity in education regardless of social class, geography ethnicity, background or physical disabilities, with 70 per cent target benchmark achieved by the end of 2011”, are consistent with targets expressed in the Millennium Development Goals. Others, such as “exchange of cultural performers and scholars among Member States through education system to give greater access and understanding of the different cultures of ASEAN Member States”, are much more specifically focused on the attainment of aspirations for the development of an ASEAN Community.



In the *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)*, the action programmes proposed by the *ASCC Blueprint* were regrouped within four priority areas and 20 specific programmes. An assessment of progress with the *ASCC Blueprint* will, therefore, be merged with an assessment of progress with the *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education* – to be presented later in this part of the Report. Of note at this juncture, however, are some general points about the data, and about the ASEAN context.



The *ASCC Scorecard for Education* (see Fig. 2.1) provides a comprehensive basis for assessing the performance of the ASEAN Member States over time in the field of education. Performance data for as many indicators as possible are reported in the country profiles included in Part 3 of this Report. The data are, however, incomplete, with only a few countries able so far to provide a near-complete set of relevant statistics. Details regarding the meaning of each of the indicators are presented in Appendix C. Fully completed by all ASEAN Member States, the *ASCC Scorecard for Education* will provide a rich and informative profile of progress across the ASEAN region in terms of educational attainments.⁶

⁶ Of note here is that SEAMEO has initiated a comprehensive survey that will provide more up-to-date education data for a SEAMEO Database on Education that will be available by the end of 2013.

Figure 2.1: Education indicators in the ASCC Scorecard for Education

| General |
|--|
| Total adult literacy rate (%) |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), male |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), female |
| Ratio of student to teacher (primary) |
| Ratio of student to teacher (secondary) |
| Ratio of student to teacher (lower secondary) |
| Ratio of student to teacher (upper secondary) |
| Human Development Index: Mean years of schooling |
| Expected years of schooling (school life expectancy) |
| From primary to tertiary (years) |
| In tertiary (years) |
| Net enrolment rate (%) |
| Primary education |
| Secondary education |
| Secondary education – lower secondary |
| Secondary education – upper secondary |
| Tertiary education – gross |
| Survival Rates (%) |
| Primary education |
| Lower Secondary |
| Upper Secondary |
| University Qualifications |
| Education Attainment of the Population aged 25 years and older (%) |
| Primary |
| Lower secondary |
| Upper secondary |
| Tertiary |
| Post-Secondary (Non-Tertiary) |

The profile provided by the *ASCC Scorecard* for Education will not, however, be sufficient for the purposes of assessing all aspects of progress in relation to the *ASCC Blueprint*. The data will need to be supplemented with qualitative assessments, along the lines of the in-country consultations with senior government officials that were conducted for the purposes of developing this Report. These consultations, which in most cases were of two to four hours in duration, enabled the experts to gather a wealth of additional insight about progress in terms of the *ASCC Blueprint*. A wider survey of educational institutions is also seen as desirable, though the scale of such an undertaking, given the large number of students, teachers and educational institutions across the ASEAN region, might be very challenging.

A contextual consideration of immense importance to an appraisal of ASEAN's progress in the field of education is the extent of diversity within and between the Member States. This diversity extends to political, social, cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic, geographic and economic circumstances. Table 2.1 provides a glimpse of the extent of it in relation to size, population levels, GDP per capita levels, poverty levels, and levels of educational expenditure. These differences relate to a theme in the literature on ASEAN concerning the existence of a 'development gap' between the ASEAN-6 group of countries (Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore

and Thailand) and the CLMV group of countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam).⁷ While this gap is closing, it remains noticeable, as can be seen from the data presented in Table 2.1, that the CLMV economies generally have lower levels of financial capacity than do the ASEAN-6 economies, and poverty levels in the CLMV countries remain generally higher – though Viet Nam stands out as an exception, while at the same time the Philippines is an ASEAN-6 economy with a relatively high poverty level, one that is equal to that of Lao PDR and is marginally better than the levels for Myanmar and Cambodia.

Table 2.1 ASEAN: Territory, Population, Economy and Educational Expenditure 2011⁸

| Country | Total Land Area (Sq. km) | Population (Million) | GDP per capita (US\$) | GDP per capita (PPP\$) | Population below National Poverty Line (%) | Govt. Spending on Education (% of total Govt. expenditure) 2012 | Public Spending on Education (% of GDP) 2012 |
|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--|---|--|
| Brunei Darussalam | 5,765 | 0.423 | 38,703 | 52,059 | n/a | 16.9 | 3.3 |
| Cambodia | 181,035 | 14.521 | 879 | 2,287 | 26.1 | - | 2.6** |
| Indonesia | 1,860,360 | 237.671 | 3,563 | 4,736 | 13.3 | 20.2 | 2.8* |
| Lao PDR | 236,800 | 6.385 | 1,279 | 2,824 | 24.0 | 13.2** | 3.3** |
| Malaysia | 330,252 | 28.963 | 9,941 | 15,955 | 3.8 | 21.3** | 5.1** |
| Myanmar | 676,577 | 60.384 | 875 | 1,393 | 25.6 | 6.1 | 0.8* |
| Philippines | 300,000 | 95.834 | 2,341 | 4,289 | 24.0 | 12.3*** | 2.7*** |
| Singapore | 714 | 5.184 | 50,130 | 50,744 | n/a | 21 | 3.1 |
| Thailand | 513,120 | 67.597 | 5,116 | 8,907 | 7.2 | 29.5* | 5.8* |
| Viet Nam | 331,051 | 87.840 | 1,403 | 3,440 | 13.1 | 19.8**** | 6.6** |

n/a means 'not applicable'

* 2011, ** 2010, ***2009, ****,2008

Education plays a significant role in narrowing the development gap in the ASEAN region. In a recent publication, entitled, *Narrowing the Development Gap in ASEAN: Drivers and Policy Options*,⁹ the field of education was selected as one of the main outcome indicators for measuring the size of the development gap, consistent with the UN's Human Development Index (HDI). The evidence shows that the gap between the ASEAN-6 and the CLMV countries in terms of the HDI has been decreasing over the past decade. At the same, the current size of the gap remains of concern. Children in ASEAN-6 countries generally stay longer in school, and more of them are able to finish their basic education, than is the case in the CLMV countries. The mean years of schooling in the ASEAN-6 countries is now about 8.1 years, whereas in the CLMV countries it ranges from only 4.1 to 5.9 years. Expected years of schooling in the ASEAN-6 countries is 13.5 years, but the expected years of schooling in the CLMV countries is about 3 years less. *The Narrowing the Development Gap in ASEAN: Drivers and Policy Options* book proposes, amongst other things, the need to focus on education sector initiatives for the purposes of improving the education and training outcomes for young people and adults. It proposes also the need to improve regional education cooperation, sharing best practices to minimise dropout rates and retain students in the ASEAN education systems.

⁷ McGillivray, M. & Carpenter, D. (Eds.) (2013). *Narrowing the Development Gap in ASEAN: Drivers and Policy Options*. London: Routledge

⁸ ASEAN Secretariat (2012). *ASEAN Community in Figures 2012*. Jakarta. Also World Bank (2013). *Data Bank*. See <http://data.worldbank.org/> indicator (with minor corrections based on more recent documentation supplied by national government officials)

⁹ McGillivray, M. & Carpenter, D. (Eds.) (2013). *Narrowing the Development Gap in ASEAN: Drivers and Policy Options*. London: Routledge.

Initiative for ASEAN Integration

The importance attached to education in narrowing the development gap in ASEAN is particularly evident in the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (or IAI) Work Plan II (2009-2015). The Work Plan specified 182 actions to assist ASEAN's newer Member States (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam) to succeed in narrowing the development gap. These actions addressed all three of the ASEAN pillars, and almost one-half of them concerned capacity building in the form of training courses, workshops, attachment programmes, language training, and academic scholarships. Actions specifically focused on building the ASEAN socio-cultural community included measures to conduct a programme for training in the management of higher education in CLMV countries, to hold a seminar by 2009 on strategic planning for skills development, to implement capacity-building programmes to increase ICT literacy and improve ICT infrastructure in CLMV countries, and to design activities to improve the capabilities of CLMV countries to undertake collaborative research and development in enabling technologies. Projects implemented to support these prescribed actions have included a flagship project whereby CLMV diplomats and officials are being supported by Japan and Brunei Darussalam to have an attachment to the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta for periods of up to one year to enable them to learn more about the work of ASEAN and then bring back home skills and lessons learned from their experience. Other on-going and up-coming IAI projects include the provision of support by various ASEAN Dialogue Partners to establish or refine policies for a National Qualifications Framework to harmonise recognition of qualifications across ASEAN Member States, with particular support provided for the CLMV countries. The United States, through the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI), is also pursuing a comprehensive programme in support of education and the IAI. This programme is intended to build educational ties and cooperation across the LMI subregion by supporting bilateral and regional initiatives that improve English language capacity, increase technical and teacher training, and foster greater regional cooperation. Specific areas of focus include: increasing English language and technical English capacity, promoting technical training and networking opportunities among experts, broadening opportunities for sub-regional exchanges of experts as well as with the United States, supporting ASEAN integration in the education field by focussing on policy areas such as equivalency and accreditation at the tertiary level, and encouraging regional cooperation on educational reform.¹⁰

Progress with the ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)

This review of ASEAN's progress in the field of education takes account primarily of the four priorities expressed in the ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011- 2015). These priorities subsume most of the actions proposed earlier in the *ASCC Blueprint* and are broadly inclusive of the full range of ASEAN's aspirations for education systems across the region.

Priority 1 – Promoting ASEAN Awareness

There seems little doubt that awareness of the ASEAN motto, 'One Vision, One Identity, One Community', is a strong driving force across all ASEAN Member States. Discussion with senior government officials across the ASEAN region confirmed this point. Events such as the ASEAN Games, and events within schools such as the ASEAN Quiz, are popular and powerful instruments in raising ASEAN awareness and in bringing an ASEAN identity to the attention of national populations.

Awareness of ASEAN is being especially well inculcated through the curriculum in schools, especially in primary schools. Across nearly all ASEAN Member States, there is a general awareness of the ASEAN Curriculum Sourcebook – a resource designed for educators and curriculum developers,

¹⁰ See <http://lowermekong.org/pillar/education/background-and-approach/education-pillar>

and implemented by the ASEAN Secretariat in collaboration with the ASEAN-US Technical Assistance and Training Facility (TATF), with the support of SEAMEO. The Sourcebook was officially launched during the 7th ASEAN Ministers of Education Meeting (7th ASED) in Yogyakarta on 4 July 2012, and it is consistent with a need expressed by the *Cha-Am Hua Hin Declaration on Strengthening Cooperation on Education to Achieve an ASEAN Caring and Sharing Community* to develop common content on ASEAN for schools as a reference for teacher training and pedagogy. It has chapters that are organised by themes, and within each chapter, by level and subject matter. Each chapter is prefaced with overview materials, including several overarching concepts decided upon collaboratively by ASEAN Member States as being the most essential points for learners to learn, understand and be able to act upon. In addition, essential questions, teaching activities and lesson outcomes are listed so that ASEAN national curriculum developers and educators are better able to translate the material into actual classroom instructions. The Sourcebook embodies goals articulated in the *ASCC Blueprint*. It focuses on the themes of understanding ASEAN, valuing identity and diversity, connecting global and local, promoting equity and justice, and working together for a sustainable future. A constraint to date on the impact of the Sourcebook has been that it has only been available in English. National educators are now translating it into local languages, which will greatly increase its adoption. An online version of the ASEAN Quiz is being developed as a tool to promote the Sourcebook. The Quiz, when fully developed, will provide a common reference point for assessing student progress in mastering relevant curriculum content.

Progress in promoting ASEAN awareness through the teaching of ASEAN languages in schools has, however, been much more restricted. There is little to suggest that school systems across the region have achieved much success in raising the extent to which ASEAN languages are being taught. As indicated in the individual country profiles presented later in this Report, the second language prescribed across nearly all school systems in the region is English, and not another ASEAN language. The obstacles to teaching different ASEAN languages in schools across the region are formidable. A significant challenge is the shortage of trained teachers and of useful audio and printed resources. There are also challenges arising from the fact that some ASEAN languages are tonal, while others are not. Another challenge is that within many ASEAN countries there are different languages spoken, and dialects employed. The prospect of a spread of knowledge of ASEAN languages across schools in the ASEAN region is, therefore, not bright. All the same, the *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)* prescribes that there should be more teaching of ASEAN languages in schools across the ASEAN region, and so national school policies do need to be developed to provide a framework for this development. It is not at this stage evident that many ASEAN Member States had developed relevant policies.

Priority 2A – Increasing Access to Quality Primary and Secondary Education

The recent ASEAN Statistical Report on the Millennium Development Goals provides a comprehensive overview of the success of ASEAN Member States in providing young people with access to a quality education.¹¹

Important points from this document are that:

- across the region, net enrolment rates in primary education have been slowly improving, but not fast enough to ensure that the target of universal completion of a primary school education across all ASEAN Member States is achieved by 2015 – the countries that may need to improve are Myanmar and the Philippines;
- youth literacy rates have improved remarkably across the region, and in 2010 almost all (98.5%)

¹¹ ASEAN (2012). ASEAN Statistical Report on the Millennium Development Goals. Jakarta.

young people aged 15 to 24 years of age were literate – the countries lagging to some extent in 2010 were Cambodia and Lao PDR;

- there is a distinct improvement in gender parity in primary education, but boys continue to have more access to primary education than girls – the countries where more improvement is required are Cambodia, the Philippines, Lao PDR and Viet Nam;
- there is considerably better gender parity in secondary education, with girls and boys in 2010 having almost equal opportunity to attend a secondary school – interestingly, in Thailand, Myanmar and the Philippines, girls were even more likely than boys in 2010 to be attend a secondary school; and
- across the region, women are becoming much more likely than men to participate in tertiary education – in 2010, there were 120 women for every 100 men attending tertiary education institutions, the only exceptions being Lao PDR and Cambodia.

More recent patterns are reported in the country profiles, but recent data are not available across all of ASEAN Member States. Countries making particularly strong progress appear to be the Philippines and Viet Nam.

Priority 2B – Increasing the Quality of Education - Performance Standards, Lifelong Learning and Professional Development

The *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)* attaches particular significance to the importance of developing the quality of education at all levels of education across the region – basic education, TVET and higher education. Though what is meant by ‘quality education’ is not specified in the *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)*, it is reasonable to presume that it refers to an educational standard that is consistent with international benchmarks of best practice. Evidence of this nature is not routinely collected across the ASEAN region, but Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand have all participated in either the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey or the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), developed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), or both. Singapore achieved excellent results on the PISA survey in 2009 – to the extent that its education system is now regarded as being one of the world’s most successful,¹² with much of this success being attributed to Singapore’s investment in the quality of its teachers. For Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, however, performance levels achieved on PISA were below OECD averages.

A challenge across much of the ASEAN region is that of replacing teacher-centred modes of information dissemination that encourage rote learning by students with approaches to teaching and learning that encourage greater engagement and student learning autonomy, and that focus on the development of problem-solving skills and a capacity for creativity. The reform process in this regard is well advanced in ASEAN Member States such as Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia and Singapore.

TVET is an area of particular concern for the ASEAN education sector. As the economies of many ASEAN Member States continue to expand rapidly, shortages in the supply of skilled workforces are becoming more common. The effects of this situation will become more problematic for many Member States once the ASEAN Economic Community is established and skilled workers are able to move more freely within the ASEAN region. To date, ASEAN has tended to focus mainly on higher/tertiary education cooperation, as, for example, through the establishment of the AUN

¹² World Economic Forum. (2013). *The Global Competitiveness Report 2012-2013*. Geneva, p. 319.

in 1995. As documented in various of the country profiles presented later in this Report, there is also a tendency across the region for parents to favour university studies over trade training for reasons of social status. Issues related to TVET were robustly discussed during the ASEAN Plus Three and East Asia Summit (EAS) Education Ministers Meetings in July 2012. There was a strong inclination expressed by EAS participating countries to facilitate regional cooperation on TVET. Several projects have been identified in the EAS Education Plan of Action 2012-2015, including the development of a regional TVET quality assurance framework, the development of a network of TVET providers in the EAS, the facilitation of TVET teacher and student mobility, and the conduct of a feasibility study to establish a register of TVET providers in the EAS.

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) is another initiative of note. It will eventually enable a comparison of qualifications across participating ASEAN countries. The AQRF will be an enabling mechanism that will assist in supporting the recognition of qualifications, the promotion of credit transfers and the advancement of student/worker mobility. It should also support a standardization of qualifications that will assist with the economic changes to occur in 2015 in relation to cross-border labour mobility in the ASEAN Community. A Task Force consisting of representatives from ASEAN Member States with experience in national qualification recognition, plus independent experts to formulate the document itself, will develop the AQRF. The AQRF will articulate principles to promote integration and harmonisation of qualifications in both the TVET and the HE sectors within the ASEAN.

Priority 3 – Cross-Border Mobility and Internationalisation of Education

Mobility of students and teachers between ASEAN Member States is strongly endorsed in the *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)*. The programmes proposed include: “share knowledge of regional resources and interconnectedness of AMS;” “strengthen activities that support student exchanges and scholarships at all levels;” and “develop a regional action plan to internationalise higher education with a focus on regional strategies.” There appears, however, to be scant information available about the extent to which cross-border mobility occurs. Except through the AUN and through certain SEAMEO initiatives, there is not much evidence of the existence of a “regional action plan to internationalise higher education with a focus on regional strategies”. Bi-lateral exchanges, negotiated between national governments, or, more likely, between individual schools, colleges and universities, do occur, especially between Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore and Thailand, and bilaterally between Lao PDR and Viet Nam. Obstacles include differences in national qualification structures and standards, and the general absence of international credit-transfer arrangements across the region.

The AUN is a significant and important ASEAN instrument contributing to crossborder mobility and the internationalisation of education. The establishment of the AUN in 1995 was in response to a growing awareness of the need to strengthen the quality of human resource development and higher education across the ASEAN region by promoting scholarly cooperation across the region, fostering research and teaching in priority areas identified by ASEAN, and serving as a policy-oriented body for higher education in the ASEAN region. It is a highly visible organisation with a membership of 30 government-nominated leading universities from across ASEAN Member States. An expansion of its membership has been made periodically to complement the mandate of the ASEAN leaders and to promote higher education for regional development. Continuing to expand its membership increases its scope, but it might also undermine its status, and hence its impact and effectiveness.

The success of the AUN may be seen across a number of initiatives, including: the promotion of youth mobility through the provision of scholarship programmes, cultural and non-academic programmes, and an internship programme; the facilitation of academic collaboration through the establishment of thematic networks that are of scholarly interest; and the establishment of

standards, mechanisms, systems and policies for higher education across the region – including the establishment of an AUN Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) process. Another important initiative has been the AUN-ASEAN Credit Transfer System (AUN-ACTS), which exists to support students from member universities who seek credit transfer for courses completed at one of the other Network partner higher education institutions.

The AUN gives effective expression to ASEAN aspirations through the influence it has on its member universities. Its achievements in areas of ASEAN awareness, scholarships and cross-border mobility, and access to quality education relate directly to values espoused in the *ASCC Blueprint* and *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)*. It also has a wider impact. Other higher education institutions across the region are, for example, adopting design features of the AUN-QA and the AUN-ACTS. The success of the AUN might also eventually inspire the development of similar cross-national networks, in areas that might include technology universities, teacher education universities, distance education providers, and so on.

There are many other opportunities provided for students from ASEAN countries to obtain scholarships to pursue postgraduate qualifications, but the number of these scholarships that are available exclusively for study in an ASEAN Member State is small. Singapore's ASEAN scholarships stand out as being the exception, because these are restricted to citizens of other ASEAN countries and are for studies in Singapore. The vast majority of postgraduate scholarships available do not require the studies to be undertaken in an ASEAN country, and it is widely agreed that most students wishing to pursue postgraduate qualifications prefer to go to countries that include Australia, South Korea, the UK, Canada, Japan or the United States to undertake postgraduate training programmes.

Priority 4 – Support for Other Sectoral Bodies with an Interest in Education

As indicated earlier, ASEAN Leaders adopted the *Cha-Am Hua Hin Declaration on Strengthening Cooperation on Education to Achieve an ASEAN Caring and Sharing Community* on 24 October 2009. The Declaration highlights some key actions of educational cooperation in contributing to the establishment of an ASEAN Community that is people-centred and socially responsible, with a view to achieving enduring solidarity and unity among the nations and peoples of ASEAN. Among these were some important commitments that relate specifically to strengthening the economic pillar underpinning ASEAN. These were agreements to:

- develop a national skills framework in ASEAN Member States as an incremental approach towards an ASEAN skills recognition framework;
- promote greater mobility of students by developing a regional catalogue of information materials of education offered in ASEAN Member States;
- support greater mobility of skilled workers in the ASEAN region through regional cooperation mechanisms among ASEAN Member States to be accompanied by efforts to safeguard and improve educational and professional standards;
- develop an ASEAN competency-based occupational standard aimed at supporting the development of ASEAN human resources that are regionally and globally competitive and that meet the needs of industries in coordination with the ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting (ALMM) process; and
- encourage the development of a common standard of competencies for vocational and secondary education as a base for benchmarking with a view to promote mutual recognition.

Cooperation on education among ASEAN Member States is fundamental to the success of these initiatives and is achieved through SOM-ED, which is the relevant sectoral body that oversees education under the ASEAN framework. Other ASEAN sectoral bodies also have a role to play. To this end, various professional groups have contributed to the development of regional frameworks for the recognition of qualifications in areas that include engineering, nursing, architecture, surveying, accountancy, medical practice, dentistry and tourism.

For the purpose of this Report, Environmental Education is highlighted as an area of continuing cooperation with other sectoral bodies with an interest in education. This area involves helping people, through formal and non-formal/informal education, to acquire understanding, skills and values that will enable them to participate as active and informed citizens in the development of an ecologically sustainable and socially just society. ASEAN developed and implemented the ASEAN Environmental Education Action Plan 2000-2005 (AEEAP), which ended in 2005. The ASEAN Environment Ministers at their 10th Informal Meeting in Bangkok, endorsed the AEEAP 2008-2012 as the successor plan and, in particular, as ASEAN's contribution to UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. The AEEAP 2008-2012 serves to realise a clean and green ASEAN, rich in cultural traditions, with citizens who are environmentally literate, imbued with environmental ethic, willing and capable to ensure the sustainable development of the region through environmental education and public participation efforts. The ASEAN Environment Ministers also approved the establishment of an ASEAN Working Group on Environmental Education to oversee and coordinate the implementation of AEEAP 2008-2012. The *ASCC Blueprint* also guides the Working Group.

Role of SEAMEO

SEAMEO is a key education stakeholder in ASEAN. Its governing council includes eleven Ministers of Education – that is, one from each of the ASEAN Member States, together with one from Timor Leste. In practice, it is a major stakeholder in ASEAN and it contributes significantly to the attainment of ASEAN aspirations. In the field of education, SEAMEO's priority areas are: 21st century skills; continuous professional development for teachers and educational personnel; Education for All; education for sustainable development; higher education; and TVET. SEAMEO has 20 Regional Centres that are focused on education, science and culture. Twelve of these are focused on educational development: SEAMEO Regional Centre on Educational Innovation and Technology (Philippines), SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED) in Thailand, SEAMEO Regional Centre on Science and Mathematics Education (SEAMEO RECSAM) in Malaysia, SEAMEO Regional Training Centre (SEAMEO RETRAC) in Viet Nam, SEAMEO Regional Centre on Technical and Vocational Education (SEAMEO VOTTECH) in Brunei Darussalam, SEAMEO Regional Language Centre (SEAMEO RELC) in Singapore and the three SEAMEO Regional Centres for Quality Improvement of Teachers and Education Personnel in Science, Language and Mathematics in Indonesia. All SEAMEO Centres serve the SEAMEO/ASEAN countries, and even beyond.

SEAMEO has been in existence since 1965. Its initiatives often relate directly to ASEAN priorities, as in Reaching the Unreached initiative, which focuses on providing greater access to quality education for disadvantaged groups across SEAMEO Member States. Ten projects are being implemented to address issues of access, equity and quality of education for pockets of learners that are in need in Southeast Asia. Among others, targeted disadvantaged groups are learners with disabilities, learners from remote communities, girls and women, pre-school-aged children, children affected and infected by HIV and AIDS, children affected by natural disasters, students at risk of dropping out and others.

SEAMEO, through SEAMEO RIHED, has implemented a Student Mobility Programme that addresses requirements for building sustainable student mobility across a volunteer group of universities in Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. The project identified the following obstacles to student mobility: difficulties recruiting students and promoting overseas study to students, differing

academic calendars and difficulties matching clashing semesters, language issues, a lack of clarity and flexibility around credit transfer, and the need for a regional quality assurance framework to ensure consistent harmonisation across programmes. These matters present challenges for ASEAN if aspirations for increased student and teacher crossborder mobility between ASEAN Member States are to be realised. SEAMEO RIHED's Student Mobility Programme has been expanded through the ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme, which through the multilateral promotion of student mobility enables students to hone their academic skills and gain intercultural understanding. It promotes regional cooperation between higher education institutions and it seeks to allow students to profit from ASEAN integration, while at the same time contributing to the development of qualified, openminded and internationalised human resources. Since its establishment, more than 450 students from 36 nominated higher education institutions have participated in the Programme.

In March 2013, the SEAMEO Ministers of Education declared that they would work with ASEAN to address the non-comparability of academic and professional accreditation standards and to promote robust standards across the region by establishing a Qualifications Framework. This project is of immense importance to the harmonisation of higher education systems across the ASEAN region.

Harmonisation of Education Systems in ASEAN

There is often mention in the general literature on ASEAN about the desirability of more integration and better harmonisation across the ASEAN Member States. The extent of harmonisation achieved by the EU is sometimes used as a model to which ASEAN should aspire. The scale of what has been achieved by the EU is, without doubt, impressive. Within the framework of the Bologna Process, for example, countries have integrated their higher education systems across 'action lines' that relate to access and equity, participation, and quality.¹³ In the area of access and equity, the main initiatives have been the introduction of a common degree structure, the adoption of a three-cycle model of bachelor, masters and doctoral degrees with common structural characteristics, the adoption of a credit transfer system to promote student mobility between national higher education systems, and the creation of more structured approaches to the delivery of lifelong learning opportunities. Regarding participation, institutional reforms are being fostered to broaden the profile of participants in higher education, to accommodate the more diverse academic and social profile of the student population, and to swing programme delivery approaches away from being teacher-centred. To raise quality and increase attractiveness, strong support is being given to individual countries to establish quality assurance agencies with responsibilities that include the accreditation of institutions and training programmes, the provision of advisory services on matters related to quality, and the provision of audit services on behalf of governments or the higher education institutions themselves.¹⁴

While there are instances of integration by ASEAN Member States in the field of education, there is little to suggest that a comprehensive harmonisation of national education systems across the ASEAN region is being actively pursued. There is a desire for integration in particular areas, such as for the establishment of a single ASEAN skills recognition framework. Particular agencies, such as the AUN, also encourage cross-border integration in areas such as qualification recognition systems, credit-transfer arrangements and benchmarking processes. The University Mobility in Asia and Pacific (UMAP) scheme is illustrative of these endeavours. In general, however, attempts to achieve more integration between national education systems have been limited in focus. While

¹³ Yavaprabhas, S. & Dhirathiti, N.S. (2008). *Harmonisation of Higher Education: Lessons Learned from the Bologna Process*. Bangkok: SEAMEO-RIHED.

¹⁴ Crosier, D. & Parveva, T. (2013). *The Bologna Process: Its Impact in Europe and Beyond*. Paris: UNESCO, p. 45

the benefits of having a common higher education space in Southeast Asia have been identified as including “greater mobility, wider access and choices, academic and research collaborations, enhanced collaboration on human capital investment and the promotion of ASEAN within a changing global higher education landscape,”¹⁵ there is nothing in the relevant literature to date to suggest that ASEAN does intend to pursue a development such as the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).¹⁶ The question of harmonisation across the national education systems in the region may, however, be one for further consideration at some time in the future.

¹⁵ Sirat, M. (2008). Towards Harmonisation of Higher Education in Southeast Asia: Malaysia's Perspective. See: <http://globalhighered.wordpress.com/2008/10/21/towards-harmonisation-of-highereducation-in-southeast-asia/>

¹⁶ Yavaprabhas, S. & Dhirathiti, N.S. (2008). Harmonisation of Higher Education: Lessons Learned from the Bologna Process. Bangkok: SEAMEO-RIHED.

3. Country Profiles

This part of the Report presents a country-by-country profile of the education systems across the ASEAN Member States. The purpose of the profiles is to provide a brief, informative and topical account of each education system for use as a reference point in future attempts to map progress in relation to the *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)*. The profiles also provide a basis for future assessments progress being made.



3.1 BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Country Background

Brunei Darussalam has a population of over 400,000, making it the smallest of the ASEAN Member States. Its per capita GDP in 2011 was US\$38,703 – the second highest for any of the ASEAN Member States (see Table 2.1). The World Bank classifies its economy as ‘high income’. The country’s wealth derives principally from crude oil and natural gas production, but supplies of these commodities are nonrenewable and Brunei Darussalam is now investing strongly in its education system with a view to securing the nation’s future in a global knowledge economy. Almost three-quarters (about 74%) of the population are ethnically Malay, and there is also a significant (about 16%) Chinese community.¹⁷ The official language is Malay. Most people also speak English.

Legislation and Administration

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for managing the education system, except for religious schools, which are administered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA). In 2009, the MOE began implementing a new National Education System for the 21st Century (Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad ke-21, or SPN21), intended to achieve a national vision whereby, by 2035, the country will be widely recognized for the accomplishments of its well-educated and highly skilled people, as indicated by the highest educational standards, a quality of life that is among the top 10 nations in the world, and a dynamic and sustainable economy with an income per capita within the top 10 countries in the world.¹⁸ The SPN21 curriculum and assessment framework is progressively introducing a new focus in the school system that is learner-centred and encourages students to build on their strengths and abilities, to pursue areas of personal learning interest, to take advantage of multiple pathways through the school system and into higher education, and to develop capacities for life-long learning. Teachers are being supported to develop more differentiated approaches to the common syllabus. They are also engaging in professional development programmes to enable them to use ICT resources more creatively. Group learning experiences requiring more socially interactive forms of classroom learning are being encouraged. Schools are also being expected to conduct annual ‘measures of proficiency’ for all students to identify needs for remedial support with literacy and numeracy. SPN21 is not, however, solely focused on the cognitive aspects of education. It seeks also to ensure that all students understand and appreciate the values and norms of Brunei Darussalam as an Islamic State with a long tradition of monarchy.

Education Scorecard

Table 3.1 presents performance indicator data available for Brunei Darussalam. The adult literacy rate (99.6% in 2012) is above UNESCO’s regional average of 94.7% in 2011,¹⁹ as are the literacy rates being achieved by young people aged 15 to 24 years (99.6% for males and females in 2012) – compared with the UNESCO regional average of 98.9%. The net enrolment rates in primary (97.58% in 2011) and secondary (91.19% in 2011) are high – the rate for secondary is well above the regional average, which according to UNESCO was 73% in 2011. The student-to-teacher ratios for primary (11.34:1 in 2011) and secondary (10.2:1 in 2011) are the best for the ASEAN region. Survival rates for the primary and secondary school sectors are very high (100% for primary education in 2011, and 95% for secondary education).

¹⁷ Khalid, O. J. (2011). The Education System of Brunei Darussalam. In C. Brock & L. P. Symaco (Eds). Education in South-East Asia. Symposium Books: Oxford, p.14.

¹⁸ Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam (2013). The National Education System for the 21st Century: SPN21. Brunei Darussalam, p.17.

¹⁹ UNESCO (2013). UIS Statistics In Brief. See: <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=198>

Table 3.1: ASCC Scorecard for Education for Brunei Darussalam

| General | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|------|
| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
| Total adult literacy rate (%) | 99.60 | 95.22 | 99.6 | - |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), male | 99.59 | 99.75 | 99.6 | - |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), female | 99.6 | 99.68 | 99.6 | - |
| Ratio of student to teacher (primary) | 11.95 | 11.35 | 11.34 | - |
| Ratio of student to teacher (secondary) | 10.6 | 10.3 | 10.2 | - |
| Human Development Index: mean years of schooling | - | 8.6 | - | - |
| School life expectancy: From primary to tertiary (years) | 15.1 | 15 | 15.1 | - |
| In tertiary (years) | 0.9 | 0.8 | 1 | - |
| Net enrolment rate (%) | | | | |
| Primary education | 97.5 | 97.36 | 97.58 | - |
| Secondary education | 89.88 | 90.11 | 91.19 | - |
| Tertiary education – gross | 17.83 | 16.84 | 20.15 | - |
| Survival Rates (%) | | | | |
| Primary education | 98 | 99 | 100 | - |
| Secondary | 75 | 92 | 95 | - |
| University Qualifications | 11 | 11 | 11 | - |

Education System Overview

As shown in Figure 3.1, Brunei Darussalam's public school structure conforms to a 6- 5-2 pattern, that is, six years of primary, five years of secondary and two years of pre-university studies. Under the Compulsory Education Act of 2011, all children aged 6 to 15 years of age must receive at least 9 years of education. Non-government schools account for about 30% of all schools, and, since 1992, with the exception of two international schools, they have been required to follow the National Education System's curriculum and program structures.

Figure 3.1: Overview of the Public School System in Brunei Darussalam

| Age | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17-18 |
|--------|-------------|---|---|------------|---|---|---|----|----|-----------|----|----|----|----|-----------------|
| Grade | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12-13 |
| Level | Pre-primary | | | Primary | | | | | | Secondary | | | | | Pre- university |
| Access | Voluntary | | | Compulsory | | | | | | | | | | | Voluntary |
| Cost | Free | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Pre-primary

The focus of pre-school education is on social and emotional development, personality development and the acquisition of school preparedness skills.²⁰ Government pre-schools admit children at five years of age, while non-government pre-schools, accounting for 72% of all pre-primary enrolments

²⁰ UNESCO (2011). Brunei Darussalam. World Data on Education, 7th edn, 2010/11. See http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdfversions/Brunei_Darussalam.pdf

in 2010,²¹ may admit children at younger age levels. Pre-school attendance is not compulsory, but, to encourage increased pre-school attendance, government pre-schools do not require the payment of tuition fees. Qualified pre-school teachers are employed and the facilities provided by pre-schools are generally of a high quality. Recent figures on attendance are difficult to locate, but the net enrolment rate for pre-school education is generally estimated to be about 50% for both boys and girls.²² Early intervention services and developmental programmes are provided for children who have special needs.

Primary

The primary programme is taught bilingually. Malay is used as the medium of instruction for some subjects, including Bahasa Melayu, Religious Knowledge and Nationhood, and English is used for others, including English, Mathematics, Science and ICT subjects. At the end of primary education, students sit for the Primary School Assessment examination, which determines their readiness to progress to secondary school. The test results are also used to allocate students to secondary school courses that will best match their learning pace, ability and academic inclinations.



Under SPN21, primary school studies fall within eight key learning areas: languages, mathematics, science, humanities and social science, arts and culture, technology, health and physical education, and Islamic religious knowledge and Malay Islamic Monarchy (a core philosophy of Brunei Darussalam that incorporates love of the country, respect for the ruler, the upholding of Islamic values, a positive outlook on national development, and the development of personal responsibility as a member of society). The development of thinking skills and ICT literacy is also emphasised.



Students with special needs are supported under two plans: the Individualised Education Plan (IEP) and the Remedial Education Plan (REP). The IEP assists students whose level of need is such that curriculum modification and changes in teaching and learning strategies are required. The REP focuses more on the needs of students with learning difficulties in reading, writing and mathematics.

Secondary

All secondary school students undertake the same study programme in Years 7 and 8. Its focus is on the following: the development of capabilities in reasoning, problem-solving, knowledge application and creativity; the mastery of basic concepts across all key learning areas; the mastery of the Malay and English languages; the development of confidence in applying ICT skills in learning; the development of independent learning skills; the development of health consciousness, and of an interest in arts and aesthetic appreciation; and the development of a love for Brunei Darussalam and a better understanding of philosophy of the Malay Islamic Monarchy.

²¹ UNESCO (2012). Youth and Skills: Putting Education To Work. EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2012. Paris, p.332.

²² UNICEF (2008). See http://www.childinfo.org/files/EAPR_Brunei_Darussalam.pdf.

At the end of Year 8, students complete the Student Progress Assessment, which involves school-based assessments throughout years 7 and 8, as well as a centrally-set student progress examination at the end of Year 8. Performance based on the School Progress Assessment determines which one of the two types of 'general secondary education programme' students may undertake, that is, whether the four-year programme that enables students to sit for the Brunei Cambridge General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level Examination (O-levels) at the end of Year 10 or, more likely, the five-year programme that enables them to sit for the O-levels at the end of Year 11.



Students who are more inclined towards vocational education may undertake the Applied Secondary Education Programme. This is a five-year programme, at the end of which students have a broad introduction to the vocational sector and have developed personal skills to prepare them for the working life. These skills and attributes, coupled with basic and key skills required to meet the qualification standards, form the basis for progression to TVET studies. Within the applied secondary education program, a special applied programme is offered at Year 9.



Two other programmes of note are the Specialised Education Program and the Special Education Needs Program. The first is a five-year programme for gifted and talented students, and the second is available for students who need to continue their IEP studies from primary school.

Under SPN21, the MOE expects that 15% of all secondary students might complete the four-year General Secondary Education Programme, 30% might complete the five-year General Secondary Education Programme, 50%

might complete the Applied Secondary Education Programme, 5% might complete the Specialised Education Programme, and 5% might complete the Special Education Needs Programme.

Pre-University

Students with adequate O-levels results in relevant fields of study are permitted to proceed to two-year pre-university studies. Upon conclusion of these studies, they sit for the Brunei Cambridge General Certificate of Education Advanced Level examination (A-levels).

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

SPN21 has brought about significant changes in the organisation of TVET studies. A tiered TVET qualification system now exists, providing three certificate levels, a diploma level and an advanced diploma level – with minimum qualifications for entry specified for each level. A wide range of certificate and diploma programmes are available, including programmes in agricultural studies, aircraft engineering, building construction, business administration, hairdressing and beauty,

hospitality and tourism, and mechanical engineering. Programmes offered at advanced diploma level are available in areas that include business marketing, business finance, business accounting, information systems and technology, web computing, interior design and well engineering.

In response to the needs of a fast-changing world that requires knowledge of creative technologies, multi-media, innovation and knowledge-based industries, MOE is currently restructuring and transforming the TVET system. The aim of this initiative is to make the TVET system more effective in managing human resources and in developing an integrated approach to skills development in Brunei Darussalam.

Higher Education

There are four higher education institutions: the Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD), established in 1985 – it delivered its first PhD graduate (in mathematics education) in 2004; the Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University (UNISSA), established in 2007, which offers qualifications up to and including the doctoral level – it focuses on Arabic Language, Islamic History and Civilisation, Islamic Law and Islamic Finance; the Institut Teknologi Brunei (ITB), established in 1986 and upgraded to university status in 2008, which offers qualifications up to and including master-degree level; and Seri Begawan Religious Teachers University College (KUPU SB), established in 1975 and upgraded to university college status in 2007, which offers qualifications up to and including master-degree level. Under SPN21, the net enrolment target set for higher education is 30%, to be achieved within the next ten or so years.

Challenges

Finance

The generally robust state of Brunei Darussalam's economy ensures that the education system does not experience any serious shortfall in funding. The State provides 12 years of free public education for the children of citizens, and the children of non-citizens are required to pay only a nominal fee for attendance at a government school. Attendance at a non-government school requires the payment of tuition fees, but local government employees who send their children to a non-government school may apply for financial support from the Government in the form of an education allowance.

Financial support for education is relatively strong in Brunei Darussalam, and was estimated at 3.3% of GDP in 2012 (see Table 2.1). The Government allocates a significant proportion (16.9% in 2012) of its annual budget to the field of education (see Table 2.1).

Governance and Management

The education system has experienced significant policy reform over recent years. The context for this reform has been Brunei Darussalam's National Vision 2035 (or *Wawasan Negara 2035*), launched in 2008 and intended to provide by 2035 a first class education system capable of meeting the requirements of a changing economy. The SPN21 curriculum and assessment framework has provided the blueprint for reform. Its implications are extensive: curriculum goals are becoming more standards based; curriculum materials are becoming more varied in nature and making far more use of multimedia platforms and resources; pedagogical approaches are becoming more individualised to the needs of the students; and student assessment practices are broadening to include the more liberal use of formative assessment techniques. The SPN21 initiative is seeking to fit the school system to meet the needs of its students, rather than vice-versa, as has been the traditional approach. The implications of the new approach for governance and management continue to be considered. Much of the focus to date has been on the reform of curriculum and assessment frameworks in schools and TVET. The Ministry is continuously building the expertise

and extending the capability of its school leaders by providing leadership professional development programmes either locally or abroad.

Pedagogy

The Ministry of Education needs a highly skilled and professional teaching force to provide high quality education. Therefore the SPN21 is strongly focused on pedagogy. With this in mind, the Ministry is investing in its teaching force by providing teachers with the opportunity to upgrade their pedagogical competencies to increase students' learning outcomes. The new SPN21 is focussing on student-centred approach where teachers are moving from 'knowledge dispensers' to facilitators. The Ministry will continuously provide professional support for teachers through sustainable professional development and collaborative work, and empower teachers for their professional growth. Every teacher is eligible for at least 100 hours of professional development each year.

Research has shown that there are important connections among instruction, learning and technology, with a specific emphasis on instructional strategies for significant improvements in student outcomes. A strategic plan issued by the Ministry of Education for the five-year period from 2012 identified "strengthening competency in information and communication technology (ICT) for students, teachers and educational administrators, including the integration of ICT in teaching and learning" as one of eight key policy directions to be followed over coming years.²³ The strategic plan endorses and embraces the country's e-Hijrah (moving forward) strategy for the use of ICT resources in education, which was launched in 2011. The e-Hijrah strategy envisages the installation of a reliable and secure ICT network for all government schools by 2017, by which time the use of ICT resources is expected to be firmly embedded in the school curriculum.

Some of the objectives of the ICT initiatives are to enable the effective management of digital teaching and learning, to improve teaching practice and to improve student outcomes with good learning design. The Ministry will provide for the training and development of officers and teachers, and the development of digital curriculum materials, management practices and research and development.

However, as the Minister for Education said during the launch of the Ministry's e- Hijrah initiative, the digital values that are becoming part of Bruneians' lives should go hand in hand with Malay Islamic Monarchy philosophy. And that the younger generation should use ICT that conforms to the country's core traditional values which go well in line with His Majesty's call to balance economic development with traditional values as inherent in Brunei's Vision 2035.

Equity

Brunei Darussalam has been successful in achieving gender equity in the field of education, as indicated by parity in the gross enrolment rates of boys and girls in pre-primary, primary and secondary education.²⁴ In TVET, only about 40% of all students are female; but in higher education girls are becoming more successful than boys – in 2009, the proportion of female tertiary education graduates was higher than the proportion of male tertiary education graduates across all reported fields of study, except for engineering.²⁵

²³ See <http://www.moe.edu.bn/web/moe/resources/strategicplan>

²⁴ UNESCO & UNICEF (2012). Asia-Pacific End of Decade Notes on Education for All: Gender Equality. Bangkok, p. 6. See <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/asia-pacific-efa-goal-5- gender-equality-education-2012.pdf>

²⁵ Ibid., p.20, and p.42.

During the past two decades, Brunei Darussalam has implemented a series of initiatives concerning inclusive education. During the mid-1990s, pre-service teacher education programmes were extensively reformed to provide far greater attention to more inclusive methods of teaching for children with learning problems. In-service training programmes addressing special education were introduced, and special education study programmes have been developed. In addition, MOE has introduced a scheme to train Special Educational Needs Assistance teachers to meet the learning needs of children with special needs. Hundreds of these teachers are now working in schools across Brunei Darussalam. Notwithstanding this significant level of commitment, sustaining a supply of sufficient new Special Educational Needs Assistance remains a challenge for Brunei Darussalam's education system.

Of additional note is that the Ministry is also giving assistance to underprivileged students such as a feeding scheme (breakfast and lunch), financial support for school material, hostel accommodation.

3.2 CAMBODIA

Country Background

Cambodia is one of the least developed of the ASEAN Member States. Despite impressive annual economic growth rates since the mid-1990s, its GDP per capita was only US\$879 in 2011 (see Table 2.1). More than one-quarter (26.1%) of the population of 14.52 million were living below the national poverty line in 2011 (see Table 2.1). Almost 80% of its population live in rural areas. It is predominantly a Khmer-speaking (90%) and Buddhist (96%) nation. It is also a relatively youthful nation, with almost one-third (32%) of the population aged between 0-14 years.

Legislation and Administration

The Education Law of 2007 provides a legal framework for the education system. It seeks to “determine the national measures and criteria for establishing the completely comprehensive and uniform education system ensuring the principles of freedoms of studies in compliance with the constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia”.²⁶ The National Supreme Council of Education, chaired by the Prime Minister, has responsibility for developing relevant policy proposals and long-term strategies. It also evaluates the system’s performance and determines its resource requirements. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MOEYS) issues relevant regulations, develops strategic plans and monitors system performance.

A National Strategic Development Plan has addressed the focuses on poverty reduction, gender equity, increased real investment, institutional and human capacity building, economic reform and the attainment of economic growth. Within this framework, a five-year Education Strategic Plan guides specific developments. It seeks to ensure that “all Cambodian children and youth have equal opportunity for access to basic education, both formal and informal, without discrimination on grounds of race, skin colour, gender, languages, religion, political affiliations of parents, place of birth or social status.”²⁷ Priority strategies for 2009 to 2013 were: ensuring equitable access to education services; improving the quality and efficiency of education services; and institutional and capacity development for educational staff for decentralisation.

Education Scorecard



Table 3.2 presents performance indicator data available for Cambodia. The adult literacy rate (73.9% in 2009) was well below the UNESCO regional average,²⁸ as were the literacy rates being achieved by young people aged 15 to 24 years (88.36% for males in 2009, and 88.57% for females – compared with regional averages for 2011 of 98.9% and 98.8%, respectively). The net enrolment rate in primary school (97% in 2010) is, however, comparable with the UNESCO regional average.

²⁶ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (2013). Education Law, Article 1. See: <http://www.moeys.gov.kh/en/policies-and-strategies/73-policies/97-education-law.html>

²⁷ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (2010). Education Strategic Plan 2009-2013. Phnom Penh.

²⁸ UNESCO (2013). UIS Statistics In Brief. See: <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=198>

Table 3.2: ASCC Scorecard for Education for Cambodia

| General | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------------------|------|
| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
| Total adult literacy rate (%) | 73.9 | - | - | - |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), male | 88.36 | - | - | - |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), female | 88.57 | - | - | - |
| Ratio of student to teacher (primary) | 49.08 | 48.45 | 47.29 | 48.5 |
| Human Development Index: mean years of schooling | - | - | 10.5 ^a | - |
| School life expectancy: From primary to tertiary (years) | 10.8 | 11 | 11 | - |
| In tertiary (years) | 0.6 | 0.6 | 0.7 | - |
| Net enrolment rate (%) | | | | |
| Primary education | 98.8 | 95.93 | 98.25 | 97 |
| Tertiary education – gross | 11.03 | 12.95 | 14.5 | - |
| Survival Rates (%) | | | | |
| Primary education | - | 69 | - | - |
| Education Attainment of the Population aged 25 years and older (%) | | | | |
| Primary | 20.1 | - | - | - |
| Lower secondary | 9.2 | - | - | - |
| Upper secondary | 4.2 | - | - | - |

^a2011 or the most recent year for which data are available

Education System Overview

As shown in Figure 3.2, the Cambodia's public school structure conforms to a 6-3-3 pattern, that is, six year of primary, three years of lower secondary, and three years of upper secondary studies. Children aged 6 to 15 years of age must attend school. There are about 3.1 million children enrolled in schools, of whom about 80% are enrolled in rural areas (reflecting the predominantly rural character of the population as a whole).

Figure 3.2: Overview of Public School System in Cambodia

| Age | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
|--------|--------------|---|---|------------|---|---|---|----|----|-----------------|----|----|-----------------|----|----|
| Grade | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Level | Kindergarten | | | Primary | | | | | | Lower Secondary | | | Upper Secondary | | |
| Access | Voluntary | | | Compulsory | | | | | | | | | Voluntary | | |
| Cost | Fees (small) | | | Free | | | | | | | | | | | |

Pre-primary

Pre-primary schooling is available for children aged 3 to 5 years and is not compulsory. Only a very small proportion (about 13% in 2011, and mainly in urban areas)²⁹ of children in this age group attend a formal or community-based pre-school programme – and, on the evidence available, not attending pre-school is linked to high repetition rates in grade 1 of primary school.³⁰

²⁹ UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2013). Cambodia. See: <file:///Users/mhayden/Desktop/UNESCO%20Institute%20for%20Statistics.webarchive>

³⁰ UNESCO (2012). Youth and Skills: Putting Education To Work. EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2102. Paris, p. 55.

The pre-primary sector is, however, rapidly expanding, particularly in Phnom Penh and other major urban areas where there is a higher probability of both parents being in employment. There are different types of pre-primary institutions in operation, including public, private and community-based pre-schools. Of these, the largest number of enrolments is in public pre-schools. Attendance fees for private pre-schools are higher than for public pre-schools. Pre-schools organised by local communities in rural areas generally do not charge an attendance fee.

A significant constraint on growth in this sector is the limited availability of trained early childhood teachers. This shortage impacts especially on the availability of pre-school education in rural and remote areas. It also adversely impacts on the availability of pre-school education for children with disabilities, and for children from ethnic minority groups. The pre-school system has relied significantly on NGO support since the early 1990s. A large proportion of this support has been focused on training more pre-school teachers and on developing relevant curriculum materials.³¹

Primary



Primary education is provided for children aged from 6 to 11 years. The net enrolment rate in 2011 was 97%, which is comparable with the average for ASEAN Member States, but the 'survival rate' of students to the final year of primary education was only 69% in 2010 (see Table 3.2). Of those remaining in primary school until Grade 6, the transition rate from primary to secondary education is in the order of 80%.³² Cambodia has made remarkable recent progress in expanding the provision of primary education. Between

2005 and 2012, for example, the net enrolment rate increased from 91.3% to 97%.³³ The expansion has been most evident in the more remote parts of the country, where new primary schools have been built and existing ones extended, and there have also been improvement in participation rate for girls.

There are, however, some persistent problems. One is that children do not always commence primary school at the age of six. About 10% of all children entering school for the first time are older than six years of age. Another problem is that there is a relatively high incidence, estimated currently to be about 10%, of children in the primary years who are required to repeat year levels.³⁴ A contributing factor is the need for many children in rural areas to leave school in order to help their parents with farming – as happens also in Lao PDR, Viet Nam and Myanmar. Furthermore, parents may not be able to afford to keep sending their children to school. The abolition in 2001 of primary school tuition fees greatly increased school attendance, but other financial obstacles remain.³⁵



³¹ UNESCO (2013). Education System Profiles. See: <http://www.unescobkk.org/education/resources/education-system-profiles/>

³² Hayden, M. & Martin, R. (2011). The Education System in Cambodia: Making Progress Under Difficult Circumstances. In C. Brock and L. Pe Symaco (Eds). Education in South-East Asia. London: Symposium Books, p.31.

³³ Statistics supplied by MOEYS.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ UNESCO (2012). Youth and Skills: Putting Education To Work. EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2102. Paris, p. 73.

Lower Secondary

The participation rate of young people aged 12 to 14 years in lower secondary school is currently reported to be higher than 60%,³⁶ compared with 2005 when it was only 53.6%.³⁷ Though there has been a recent expansion of lower secondary education across the country, in rural areas the lower secondary participation rates continue to lag because many rural parts of the country still do not have secondary schools. Attendance at lower secondary school no longer requires the payment of tuition fees. Scholarships to support girls and young people from very poor backgrounds are having a positive impact on participation rates, but the goal of achieving universal participation in lower secondary schooling by 2015 seems too challenging.



Upper Secondary

The participation rate of young people aged 15 to 18 years in upper secondary education is estimated to have been 27.8% in 2012.³⁸ Girls accounted for 46% of the enrolments. Admission to upper secondary schooling is determined by performance in a compulsory examination completed at the end of grade

9. Although the pass rate in this examination 2012 was high (94.8%), the proportion of grade 9 students proceeding to grade 10 was only 71.5%.³⁹ Young people from rural and remote parts of the country were much less likely to proceed to upper secondary education.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

TVET is a relatively new sector within the education system in Cambodia, and it remains small. Since 2006, it has been managed by a National Training Board, chaired by a Deputy Prime Minister, and structured to give representation to employers, employee representatives and government instrumentalities. It gives direction to the director-general of TVET in the Ministry of Labour and the Vocational Training.



There may be as many as 14,000 equivalent full-time students enrolled in TVET colleges, but statistics about TVET enrolments are not all that reliable, and, in any case, are clouded by the plethora of long-course/short-course and formal/non-formal course programmes that are available. In 2008, for example, almost 80,000 students were enrolled in short courses programmes. There may be, in addition, a very large number of students engaged informally in TVET-type programmes conducted by private providers, including non-government organisations.

Generally, students completing lower secondary education would prefer to proceed to an upper secondary school and then to higher education. TVET qualifications are not regarded as having much social prestige – a situation that is not uncommon across many ASEAN Member States, even though it is of great concern to employers.



³⁶ Statistics supplied by MOEYS.

³⁷ UNESCO (2012). Youth and Skills: Putting Education To Work. EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2102. Paris, p. 73

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

Higher Education

In 2010, there were 34 public higher education institutions (including 15 universities) and 54 private higher education institutions (including 26 universities) located in 19 out of 24 provinces and municipalities,⁴⁰ attended by an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 students. The actual number of students is difficult to determine with any precision because of discrepancies in statistical reporting and the fact that students may enrol concurrently in several institutions. Surprisingly, twice as many higher education students are enrolled in private higher education institutions as in public ones. Indeed the overall higher education sector is beginning to rely very heavily on the private sector. The government accepts that there is a need for even more private sector higher education institutions. Since 2008 it has licensed a significant number of new private higher education institutions. One of the biggest issues facing higher education in Cambodia is the matter of quality and the recognition by overseas institutions recognising Cambodian qualifications in this subsector. The top five private higher education institutions and only a few public institutions in Phnom Penh rate highly in international terms in terms of admission.



As a result of the large number of young people transitioning from schooling to employment in Cambodia, the labour market and the TVET system are facing major challenges. Currently, there is a skills shortage in the labour market: higher education institutions are producing more graduates than the market can absorb while employees still find it difficult to find professional staff with analytical and decision-making skills. Accordingly the TVET subsystem desperately needs restructuring with a focus on quality, relevance, management and partnerships⁴¹.

Non-Formal Education

Non-Formal Education (NFE) in Cambodia aims to ensure that all people, including children, young adults, adults, poor people and those with disabilities, realise their rights to basic education and lifelong learning. Another objective is to provide opportunities for young adults and adults to become literate after they have left school and access life skill. The Cambodian Government, often in partnership with NGOs, has supported various initiatives to expand the provision of non-formal education, particularly in border, remote and disadvantaged areas. The programmes provided have addressed local life skills, vocational skills and basic professional skills to meet the needs of the labour market. A great deal of the recent focus in non-formal education is upon improving adult literacy rates. ⁴²Although both enrolment in and provision of NFE has increased in the past 10 years, this subsector is facing significant challenges such as frequent migration, low staff capacity and little community support. Literacy programmes needs to be improved and there is a serious lack of human resources. Managing, monitoring and evaluating NFE by the relevant authorities needs to be upgraded and improved⁴³.

Challenges

Finance

The education system in Cambodia faces immense challenges. In many respects, these relate directly to the fact that Cambodia remains a relatively poor country. Over time, however, the economy

⁴⁰ MOEYS (2010).Background paper for High-Level Meeting on Cooperation for Child Rights in the Asia Pacific Region, Beijing, 4-6 November, 2010.\

⁴¹ UNESCO (2013).Education System Profiles. See: <http://www.unescobkk.org/education/resources/education-system-profiles/>

⁴² MOEYS (2013).Non-Formal Education. See: www.moeys.gov.kh

⁴³ UNESCO (2013).Education System Profiles. See: <http://www.unescobkk.org/education/resources/education-system-profiles/>

is making progress, and, as it does, Cambodia's budgetary commitment to education seems highly likely increase. Over recent years, there has been a steady increase in public expenditure on education, and it is projected that education's share of the total government expenditure will to 30% by 2015 – in which case it would be one of the highest levels of government commitment to education across the ASEAN Member States.

For much of the past 15 years, the focus of public expenditure has been on increasing demand for education – by removing tuition fees for primary and lower secondary schooling, and by providing scholarship support for particular categories of students. More recently, the focus has shifted to some extent towards expanding capacity by building more schools, designing more teaching materials and training more teachers. Official Donor Assistance (ODA) continues to be a very important source of finance for education in Cambodia. It account for as much as 20% of all educational expenditure and has traditionally focused more on expanding capacity.

Governance and Management

Strengthening decentralisation has been an important policy priority for the Cambodian Government. In the education sector, it has required new regulations to devolve responsibility to the provincial, district, cluster and school levels, in accordance with Education Sector Plans, which have been evolving. However, reforming a governance and management system that traditionally has been centralised in its control of finances presents challenges. In addition, there are many difficulties in developing management capabilities at the cluster and school levels, particularly as local communities have not in the past had much experience in making decisions about the application of resources to the development of their school systems. Possible unintentional misuse of funds is a related and perennial challenge.

Pedagogy

In addition to the ongoing concern about the widespread prevalence of rote learning across the education system, an issue that is currently being addressed relates to evidence of serious weaknesses in Khmer reading skills. The general abandonment over time of a phonetic approach to teaching children how to read Khmer is now seen by professionals in MOEYS as a serious lapse in enabling or pupils to read the complex Khmer script. The problems are made worse by the traditional practice in Khmer of running words together to make a whole sentence. A possible solution is for the words in written sentences to be separated (as in written Thai), thus simplifying the reading task to the application of the needed phonic skills to the decoding of a relatively short string of sounds in each separate word, rather than to a relatively long string of sounds that run the full length of a sentence.⁴⁴

Equity

Though significant progress is evident, gender equity in educational participation remains a challenge for Cambodia. The gender parity index for enrolments in primary and secondary education in Cambodia is not yet close to a situation of parity, meaning that boys are over-represented in the school system.⁴⁵ The gap is most pronounced in relation to secondary education. At the same time, however, boys appear to be more likely to drop out of school prematurely, and they are also much more likely to repeat grades.⁴⁶ There are, therefore, some contradictory trends. Also of note are

⁴⁴ McNamara, V. (2013). Cambodia: From Dependency to Sovereignty – Emerging National Leadership. Education. In L. P. Symaco (Ed.). Education in South-East Asia. London: Bloomsbury, p.35.

⁴⁵ UNESCO & UNICEF (2012). Asia-Pacific End of Decade Notes on Education for All: Gender Equality. Bangkok, p.3. See <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/asia-pacific-efa-goal-5- gender-equality-education-2012.pdf>

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 22

the huge disparities in the proportions of female primary school teachers – in Phnom Penh, it is in excess of 70%, while in many of the more remote provinces it is less than one-third.⁴⁷ Female teachers are over-represented in urban areas, and under-represented in rural communities.

The more significant challenge, though, relates to differences between rich and poor in terms of the extent to which young people remain in the education system. The urban poor seem to be most adversely affected – which is different from the situation in other ASEAN Member States. Whereas only 10% of urban poor young people complete lower secondary education, 18% of rural poor do so. These differences are slight, however, when compared with the impact of household income levels on educational attainments: 69% of urban rich young people complete lower secondary education⁴⁸.

The availability of supplementary tuition contributes considerably to the gap in educational opportunities between rich and poor. In Cambodia, as in a number of other countries in the region, richer households are more able to access supplementary tuition for their children. Poorly paid teachers often see the provision of this tuition as a means of augmenting their family income.

Quality

In an attempt to get more reliable indicators of the effectiveness of the education system, the Cambodian Government has introduced a system of performance testing at the grade 3, 6 and 9 levels. This system seeks to avoid the distortions of gateway exams by utilizing nationwide small-scale sampling with anonymous results - that is, the testing is focused on the education system as a whole rather than on individual student performances. Anecdotal results indicate evidence of quality improvement needs in which ministry officials are now taking action.

In relation to teacher training the government is well aware of the need to address problems relating to the teaching profession. It has signaled its intention to develop performance-based pay reforms. The issue of low salary levels for teachers urgently needs addressing. Incentives for teachers willing to work in schools in remote and ethnic minority areas are currently being addressed by the government.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 36.

⁴⁸ UNESCO (2012). Youth and Skills: Putting Education To Work. EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2102. Paris, p. 25.

3.3 INDONESIA

Country Background

Indonesia is an archipelago of over 17,000 islands – a fact that presents enormous challenges for the delivery of a comprehensive and well-integrated education system. In 2011, it has a population of 237.67 million, comprised of about 300 different ethnic sub-groups, speaking as many as 700 local languages. Its level of GDP per capita was US\$3,563 in 2011, and the World Bank classifies the economy as ‘middle-income’. In 2011, almost 32 million people (13.3% of the population) lived below the national poverty line. Indonesia is easily Southeast Asia’s largest economy, and it is the only ASEAN member country to belong to the G-20 group of major trading nations. One-half of the population lives in rural areas. The two most densely populated islands are Java and Bali, which are home to 59% of the population, yet account for only 7% of the country’s land mass.

Legislation and Administration

The education system in Indonesia is based on *Pancasila* – a foundational philosophy of the Indonesian State, as set down in the *Constitution*. The goal of the national education system is to “develop capability, character, and civilization by enhancing its intellectual capacity and developing students’ human values: being faithful and pious to one and only one God; possessing a moral and noble character; being healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, and independent; and acting as democratic and responsible citizens.”⁴⁹ In other words, education is clearly seen as being concerned with more than cognitive development. It also has an important role to play in moral development and the building of a national identity.

The 1945 *Constitution* stipulated that every Indonesian citizen should have the right to obtain a quality basic education. Compulsory primary education for children aged 7 to 12 years of age was made a national policy in 1985. In 1994, Indonesia extended basic education by including 13 to 15 year olds, that is, the lower secondary years. In 2005, tuition fees were abolished under the Free Basic Education policy and block grants were made to schools to compensate. Most recently, in 2013, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) has extended the need for compulsory education to include the upper secondary years (Years 9 to 12).

MOEC is primarily responsible for the education system, though the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) retains responsibility for all matters related to Islamic Schools. Non-formal education, which is explicitly provided for in the *Constitution*, exists side-by-side with the formal education system and is a means whereby community members can supplement formal education by providing assistance with the development of marketable knowledge and skills. Since 2000, when Laws relating to financial and administrative decentralisation were implemented, provincial and local governments have been required to play a far more important role in managing the school system. Provincial and district education authorities have largely taken over from MOEC in planning, delivering and evaluating educational programmes. School-based autonomy has also been encouraged, which has significantly increased the importance of school-based management processes. MOEC continues to determine national achievement standards, the national curriculum and the national system of student assessment, and it retains responsibility for quality assurance through a national system of Institutes for Education Quality Assurance, but, in the main, provincial, district and local school management committees are significantly empowered to decide on matters of policy and resource allocation – including the employment of teachers.

⁴⁹ Mullis, I.V.S et al. TIMSS 2011 Encyclopedia. Boston: IEA, p.396.

The Education Scorecard

Table 3.3 presents the performance indicator data available for Indonesia. The adult literacy rate (95.6% in 2011) is marginally above UNESCO's regional average,⁵⁰ as are the literacy rates being achieved by young people aged 15 to 24 years (98.8% for males in 2010, and 98.7% for females). The net enrolment rate in primary school (95.55% in 2011) is almost equal to UNESCO's regional average. The net enrolment rate in lower secondary school (77.71% in 2011) is relatively high compared with the regional average, but the net enrolment rate in upper secondary school (57.74% in 2011) falls away considerably. The student-to-teacher ratio for secondary (18.49:1 in 2011) compares favourably with rates for most other ASEAN Member States. The gross enrolment rate in tertiary education (27.1% in 2011) is high when compared with rates for most other ASEAN Member States.

Table 3.3: ASCC Scorecard for Education for Indonesia

| General | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|------|
| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
| Total adult literacy rate (%) | 94.9 | 95 | 95.6 | - |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), male | 99.5 | 99.5 | 98.8 | - |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), female | 99.4 | 99.5 | 98.7 | - |
| Ratio of student to teacher (primary) | 16.79 | 18.37 | 19.68 | - |
| Ratio of student to teacher (secondary) | 15.43 | 17.24 | 18.49 | - |
| Ratio of student to teacher (lower secondary) | 14.5 | 16.78 | 18.34 | - |
| Ratio of student to teacher (upper secondary) | 12.15 | 17.82 | 18.66 | - |
| School life expectancy: From primary to tertiary (years) | 12.6 | 12.9 | 12.9 | - |
| In tertiary (years) | 1.1 | 1.2 | - | - |
| Net enrolment rate (%) | | | | |
| Primary education | 95.23 | 95.41 | 95.55 | - |
| Secondary education – net/lower secondary | 74.52 | 75.64 | 77.71 | - |
| Secondary education – net/ upper secondary | 55.73 | 56.52 | 57.74 | - |
| Tertiary education - gross | 22.64 | 26.34 | 27.1 | - |
| Survival Rates (%) | | | | |
| Primary education | 94.16 | 89.36 | 95.3 | - |
| Lower Secondary | 99.26 | 96.72 | 97.68 | - |
| Upper Secondary | 95.90 | 96.79 | 96.58 | - |
| Education Attainment of the Population aged 25 years and older (%) | | | | |
| Primary | 30.58 | 31.48 | 30.15 | - |
| Lower secondary | 14.45 | 15.2 | 15.25 | - |
| Upper secondary | 20.34 | 20.94 | 20.63 | - |
| Tertiary | 7.5 | 8.15 | 7.8 | - |

⁵⁰ UNESCO (2013). UIS Statistics In Brief. See: <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=198>

Education System Overview

As shown in Figure 3.3, Indonesia's public school structure conforms to a 6-3-3 pattern, that is, six years of primary, three years of lower secondary, and three years of upper secondary studies. Indonesia's school system is the fourth largest in the world. It has over 50 million students, about three million teachers and more than 300,000 schools. Private schools account for 8% of all primary enrolments, 19% of all lower secondary enrolments and 32% of all upper secondary enrolments.⁵¹ Over one-half of all private schools are madrasahs (Islamic school). At all levels there is a higher incidence of more expensive international schools, and of private 'national plus' schools, meaning that they go beyond minimum government curriculum requirements, especially in the use of English, or they have an internationally-focused curriculum.

Figure 3.3: Overview of the Public School System in Indonesia

| Age | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
|--------|--------------|---|---|------------|---|---|----|----|----|-----------------|----|----|---------------------|----|----|
| Grade | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Level | Kindergarten | | | Primary | | | | | | Lower Secondary | | | Upper Secondary | | |
| Access | Voluntary | | | Compulsory | | | | | | | | | Becoming Compulsory | | |
| Cost | Fees (small) | | | Free | | | | | | | | | Fees (small) | | |

Pre-primary



Recent research in Indonesia suggests that districts with higher levels of pre-school enrolment tend to have lower primary school dropout ratios. Children's participation in early childhood education and development (ECED) programmes appears to improve their readiness for primary school education by improving their overall development across a range of domains.⁵²

Indonesia has designed ECED in such a way as to target the developmental needs

of children aged 3 to 6 years of age by providing them with the educational stimuli to facilitate physical and mental growth in preparation for basic education. ECED is provided by kindergartens, playgroups and integrated care centres (providing health care services as well as playgroup opportunities).

The Government is expanding ECED services through an integrative approach and by improving good governance and accountability. Key strategies to reach the disadvantaged and marginalised include the involvement of the community in the provision of ECED and the strengthening of public awareness through social marketing of its importance. Services related to ECED are organised and delivered through formal, non-formal, and/or informal channels (including family education or education in the surroundings). Informal ECED usually complements both the formal and the non-formal modalities.

⁵¹ The World Bank (2013). Spending More or Spending Better: Improving Education Financing in Indonesia. Extended Executive Summary. Jakarta, p.6.

⁵² Bappenas. (2010). A Roadmap to Accelerate Achievement of the MDGs in Indonesia. Jakarta.

Indonesia's convergent and integrated approach in delivering ECED services has brought about a substantial improvement in the gross enrolment ratio for pre-primary education, increasing from 20.2% in 2005 to 43% in 2010.⁵³ Lack of early childhood education facilities is a major factor inhibiting participation. In 2010, 97% of all enrolments were in private kindergartens,⁵⁴ and data for 2010 suggest also that 68% of children from the richest quartile in the population attended kindergarten, compared with less than 5% of children from the poorest quartile.⁵⁵

Primary Education

Primary school education is mainly provided by the public sector. It is of six years in duration, but accelerated programmes are available to allow gifted and talented students to complete primary school in five years. About 10% of all primary school students attend madrasahs (Islamic schools).

The primary school curriculum involves the study of Indonesian, mathematics, science, social science, arts, physical education and religion (predominantly Islam). Schools may, in addition, add 'local content', whether in the form of additional languages, the study of local cultures, or additional English. The Islamic schools teach, in addition, traditional Islamic subjects. At the end of primary school education, all children sit for a national examination in Indonesian, mathematics and science. This examination serves not only to confirm student attainment of national minimum standards but also to provide a guide as to student readiness to proceed to lower secondary education. Though the incidence of students repeating grades in primary school in Indonesia is relatively small, boys are more likely to repeat grades than girls.



Lower Secondary



Lower secondary school spans 3 years, which is consistent with most other ASEAN Member States. In 2009-10, the transition rate from primary to lower secondary school was only 88.2%. Disparities between rich and poor communities, and between urban and rural communities, were evident, however, in terms of the size of this rate.

Young people finishing lower secondary school must sit for a further national examination, this time in Indonesian, mathematics, science and English. Those who are successful are awarded a lower secondary school certificate. The results in this examination determine access to the upper secondary level.

⁵³ UNESCO (2012). Youth and Skills: Putting Education To Work. EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2102. Paris, p.332.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ The World Bank (2012). The Indonesia Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) Project: Findings and Policy Recommendations. Jakarta. See: <http://www.aisaid.gov.au/aidissues/education/Documents/research-eval-randomised-cluster-control.pdf>

Upper Secondary

There are three years of upper secondary schooling. Students can attend either academic or vocational secondary schools, depending upon their aptitudes and inclinations. As indicated in Table 3.3, in 2011 the net enrolment rate dropped from 77.71% in lower secondary education to 57.74% in upper secondary education – confirming a sizable loss of students from the school system. Access is a major consideration because these schools are less widely distributed than primary or lower secondary schools. Over recent years, the Government has sought to expand the number of upper secondary schools and to provide more generous subsidies for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who are willing to remain in them. MOEC has expressed an expectation that by 2020 the gross enrolment rate for upper secondary education should reach 97%.⁵⁶

Indonesia has participated in four cycles of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey (2000, 2003, 2006 and 2009). The results have not been so impressive. In 2009, for example, Indonesia finished 57th out of 65 participating countries in terms of the overall average for literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills. More than one-half of all students completing the reading literacy test, and nearly 80% of those participating in the mathematics literacy test, scored below the official proficiency level.⁵⁷

Indonesia's similarly weak performance on the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 2007 (and in 1999 and 2003), and in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2011 (and in 2006), tends to confirm that its young people are not performing at levels commensurate with those of various other developing economies.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Vocational education in Indonesia has seen a significant expansion over the past decade, particularly in vocational upper secondary schools, where enrolments have almost doubled since 2001. This remarkable growth is due particularly to the increasing priority being given to this sub-sector by MOEC. The growth may, however, be too strongly supply-driven, that is, students want to study more in areas of personal interest than in areas of skill shortages.

Vocational education is offered through both formal and non-formal programmes. Formal vocational education is offered through vocational upper secondary schools, and, at the higher education level, through Diploma I, II, III, and IV programmes, including a three-year programme within polytechnics and academies (akademi) at the Diploma III level, or through a community college. The recent (November, 2012) adoption by Indonesia of a national qualifications framework is expected to have a positive effect on the vocational education sector because it will provide a basis for national consistency in determining comparability between formal and non-formal vocational education. The National Education Standards Board has written detailed competency standards and curriculum guidelines for vocational education, and the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration works closely with MOEC to ensure close co-operation with industry stakeholders.

Despite making significant progress in recent years, vocational education remains a second-choice option for students wishing to improve their employment prospects. More status attaches to doing academic subjects, and to going to university.

⁵⁶ The Jakarta Post, June 26, 2013. See: <http://www.asianewsnet.net/Indonesia-kicks-off-12-yr-compulsory-education-pro-48416.html>

⁵⁷ Heyward, M. & Soprianti (2013). Indonesia: The Challenges of Quality and Equity in Education. In L. Pe Symaco (Ed.), *Education in South-East Asia*. London: Bloomsbury, p.79.

Special Needs Education

This is a relatively new field within the education sector in Indonesia. Significant progress has been made in establishing a more inclusive approach to the provision of special needs educational opportunities. Provincial governments are now required to provide at least one special needs school for each form of major disability. District Education Offices are also being required to attend to special needs education in regular schools. The lack of sufficient funds and trained teachers is, however, a significant obstacle.

Non-formal Education

Non-formal education is provided via school equivalency programmes at the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels. These programmes assist in increasing universal access to education by providing education for those were missed out on schooling, dropped out of school, and are likely to be excluded from schooling. A strong push to provide literacy programmes by means of non-formal education is widely regarded as having been highly successful.

Islamic Schools

Islamic schools (*pondok pesantren*) account for about 13% of all school students. Often located in poorer rural areas, and usually directed by a Muslim scholar, these schools are attended by young people seeking a detailed understanding of the Quran, the Arabic language, the *Sharia*, and Muslim traditions and history – as well as the national school curriculum. These schools do not share a single stance on Islam, nor do they adopt a unified position in relation to secularism. Some are more traditional in their approach, stressing the importance of following the wisdom of the elders. Most are theologically moderate, reflecting the disposition of the Indonesian people as a whole. The curriculum has changed in many of these schools as a consequence of financial aid being received from international donors.

Islamic education is also provided through Islamic boarding schools, which are mostly located in rural and remote areas, and which primarily teach religious subjects. These schools are popular as a low-cost means of ensuring a religious education, particularly for children from poorer socio-economic communities. An increasing number of these schools have responded to the modernisation of Indonesian society by adding secular and more general subjects to their curriculum.

Higher Education

Higher education institutions in Indonesia currently enrol over 5.4 million students. The sector has been expanding rapidly over the past decade because of a significant growth in the number of private higher education providers. The four types of higher education institutions are: universities, institutes, academies and polytechnics. In 2009 there were 3,673 higher education institutions – including Islamic Higher Education Institutions, and there were over 5.007 million students. Of these higher education institutions, 273 were public-sector institutions, which included Islamic institutions, and they accounted for about 42.7% of all enrolments. Responsibility for management of the sector rests with MOEC, except that MORA is separately responsible for managing Islamic higher education.

The higher education sector has been identified as being important to a number of initiatives under the Master Plan for Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia's Economic Development (MP3EI) for 2011-25. This Plan is ambitious and seeks to transform Indonesia into one of the 10 leading economies in the world by 2025. A number of key policy measures adopted by MOEC include increasing access and equity by ensuring better alignment between the provision of study programmes and labour market needs; strengthening the governance of higher education institutions; promoting equal access through the provision of subsidies and scholarships for the

poorest students; and increasing institutional competitiveness. The State heavily subsidizes public-sector higher education institutions, which means that they are more affordable for students to attend than private-sector higher education institutions.

Challenges

Finance

The financing of the education system has become more complex, yet has resulted in considerable improvements, since the adoption of a policy of decentralisation in 1999, and also because of an amendment to the *Constitution* in 2002 requiring at least 20% of the total state budget to be spent on education. Government schools receive the bulk of their funds from local district governments, but some funds are received directly from the central government under conditions that may not align with district government priorities. District and provincial governments also receive funds from the central government, but conditions attached to these funds may restrict how they can be spent. Planning at every level is, therefore, a balancing act, and issues of financial accountability can be difficult and time-consuming to resolve. Further complicating matters is the fact that 85% of all public educational expenditure in Indonesia is on salaries and allowances, which means that the balance available to support significant reform measures is limited.

Governance and Management

Decentralisation has resulted in a generally beneficial devolution of responsibility for management of the school system in Indonesia. Over 500 district governments now play an important role in managing the system,⁵⁸ and school principals exercise far more responsibility as managers than in the past. As a consequence, methods of teaching are becoming more responsive to student interests and inclinations, and local languages, cultures and community needs now feature more prominently in the curriculum. At the same time, there is concern about the consistency with which national quality standards are being applied at local levels. There is also concern that funds intended for schools are sometimes diverted to support other local priorities. There is a pressing need across the country to develop human resource capacity at the district education office level, especially in the poorer regions of the country.



Pedagogy

One of the challenges for pedagogy in Indonesia relates to the very large number of local languages. While Bahasa Indonesia is the national language, a sizable proportion of the population is not especially fluent in it. This fact may explain Indonesia's generally poor performance on international tests such as PIRLS. The widespread use of multiple-choice questions in Indonesia's national examinations at the end of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schooling may also contribute to disguising the true extent of the language problem. Children in the lower primary grades are generally expected to be taught in their mother tongue, but their transition to Bahasa Indonesia as the language of instruction in upper primary school may be difficult, and their further transition to English as the language of instruction in science and mathematics classes in lower secondary schools may be especially difficult. Another challenge relates to the ubiquitous reliance

⁵⁸ The World Bank (2013). *Spending More or Spending Better: Improving Education Financing in Indonesia*. Extended Executive Summary. Jakarta, p.6.

by teachers in Indonesia, especially teachers outside the major cities, on rote learning by students. Evidence from the TIMSS survey, in particular, suggests that teachers of mathematics and science in Indonesia are more likely to be leading a class by instruction than is evident in a great many other countries.



In both developed and developing countries the issue and difficulties faced by education authorities in delivering multi-grade teaching to remote and difficult to access areas has been an ongoing challenge, and the research and methodology on this provides no easy answers. Despite the complexities faced by teachers who undertake multi-grade teaching, it has been found to be as effective as, or even more effective than, single grade teaching in terms of increasing student learning outcomes where student class sizes by age is less than 24 students. Multi-grade teaching is also cheap, and it is well suited to the needs of small schools in remote areas.⁵⁹ Appropriate teacher training is critical.

Equity

Indonesia has been successful in achieving a high level of gender parity in its education system.⁶⁰ Of note, though, is that girls in Indonesia are recording significantly better literacy achievements than boys.⁶¹

Inequity based on differences in levels of household income and wealth is more of a challenge. Household surveys indicate that considerations related to the cost of education account for more than one-half of cases where children do not send their children to primary school, or where children drop out of school.⁶² Furthermore, there are significant gaps in achievement that are related to family wealth. The PISA results for 2009 showed, for example, that whereas over 40% of girls from richer families achieved a score for mathematics at or above level 2, less than 10% of girls from poorer families achieved a comparable score.⁶³ This pattern is mirrored by statistics on enrolments in upper secondary schools: almost 80% of young people from the richest households, but only 20% of young people from the poorest households, are enrolled in upper secondary school or higher education.⁶⁴

Quality

The growth in teacher numbers during the past decade in Indonesia has been spectacular. It is estimated that, since 2004, the number of primary school teachers has increased by 30%, while the number of primary school students has remained more or less constant.⁶⁵ Whether the quality

⁵⁹ World Bank. (2010). Investing in Multi-grade teaching in Indonesia, p.1. See <http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org/EdStats/IDNbr10d.pdf>

⁶⁰ UNESCO & UNICEF (2012). Asia-Pacific End of Decade Notes on Education for All: Gender Equality. Bangkok, p.11. See <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/asia-pacific-efa-goal-5-gender-equality-education-2012.pdf>

⁶¹ Ibid. p.24.

⁶² UNESCO (2012). Youth and Skills: Putting Education To Work. EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2102. Paris, p.70

⁶³ Ibid. p.127.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.183.

⁶⁵ The World Bank (2013). Spending More or Spending Better: Improving Education Financing in Indonesia. Extended Executive Summary. Jakarta, p.18.

of education has improved as a consequence of the improvements in student-to-teacher ratios is now a matter of policy concern. Early evidence in this regard is disappointing.⁶⁶The improved student-to-teacher ratios are not happening evenly across Indonesia. The major improvements to date have been confined to Java and Bali. Teachers employed in rural and remote regions continue to be the least well qualified.⁶⁷With decentralisation, the capacity of MOEC to do much about these geographic disparities is limited.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 21.

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 26.

3.4 LAO PDR

Country Background

Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) made the transition from a centrally planned to a market oriented economy during the mid-1980s. A surge in economic growth followed during the early 1990s, but sustained economic growth has not been experienced until more recently. The World Bank classifies the Lao economy as 'lower middle income' on account of its GDP per capita level of \$1,279 (in 2011) (see Table 2.1). The proportion of the population living below the national poverty line is, however, quite high at 24% in 2011 (see Table 2.1). Lao PDR is a geographically large country (over two-thirds the size of Viet Nam) with a relatively small population (only 6.39 million in 2011). It has at least 49 different ethnic nationalities. The largest ethno-linguistic group, accounting for almost 58% of the population, is the Lao-Tai – found mainly in fertile lowland rice-growing regions of the country. Much of the country is mountainous, making agriculture and communications difficult. The ethnic diversity of the population, in combination with the remoteness of some communities, poses challenges for the delivery of education in the Lao language, following a curriculum that is relevant for the whole of the country.

Legislation and Administration

The *Constitution* of 1991 designates education, culture and scientific activities as being “the means to raise the level of knowledge, patriotism, love of the people's democracy, the spirit of solidarity between ethnic groups and the spirit of independence”. An *Education Law* of 2000 (amended in 2007) provides for the establishment of a formal education system. The Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) has responsibility for the management and organisation of the education system. A policy of decentralisation, as approved in 2002, means that responsibilities are shared to a significant extent with 17 provincial education and sport offices, which are largely responsible for secondary school and TVET, and 145 district education and sport bureaus, which are largely responsible for pre-primary, primary and nonformal education institutions. A broad policy framework for the education system is provided by the Education Strategic Vision of 2000, which committed Lao PDR to achieving universal primary education and expanded lower secondary participation by 2015. In 2006, the Government approved a National Socio Economic Development Plan 2006-2010 that emphasized the need to increase primary school attendance, improve literacy and increase access to quality secondary education. More recently, in 2009, it approved an *Education Sector Development Framework 2009-2015* and an *Education Sector Development Plan 2011-2015*, that, in addition to reaffirming the importance of attaining universal primary education by 2015, identified as priorities the need for overall quality improvement, a strengthened teacher training system, the expansion of secondary education, better sector management practices, wider access to education for disadvantaged groups, and a closer alignment between education and employment.



The Education Scorecard

Table 3.4 presents performance indicator data for Lao PDR. The net enrolment rate in primary school (96.5% in 2012/13) is very close to UNESCO's regional average of 96% in 2011,⁶⁸ and it has been improving since 2009. The gross enrolment rate in lower and upper secondary were 69% and 37%, respectively, in 2012/13. According

⁶⁸ UNESCO (2013). UIS Statistics In Brief. See: <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=198>

to LSIS 2011/12, the literacy rate for males aged 15 to 24 was 77.4% and the literacy rate for females aged 15 to 24 was 68.7%. These rates are not as high as are found in most other ASEAN Member States, but, more importantly perhaps, they point to a significant gender equity challenge. The survival rate in primary education of only 73.3% in 2012/13 suggests a relatively high loss of students from school during the primary school years. The student-to-teacher ratio for secondary (18:1 in 2012/13) compares favourably with rates for most other ASEAN Member States.

Table 3.4: ASCC Scorecard for Education for Lao PDR

| General | | | | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 2008/ 2009 | 2009/ 2010 | 2010/ 2011 | 2011/ 2012 | 2012/ 2013 |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), male | - | - | - | 77.4 | - |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), female | - | - | - | 68.7 | - |
| Ratio of student to teacher (primary) | 31 | 29 | 27 | 26 | 26 |
| Ratio of student to teacher (secondary) | 24 | 21 | 20 | 19 | 18 |
| Ratio of student to teacher (lower secondary) | 23 | 21 | 20 | 18 | 17 |
| Ratio of student to teacher (upper secondary) | 26 | 22 | 21 | 20 | 18 |
| Human Development Index: Mean years of schooling | - | 4.6 | - | - | - |
| Expected years of schooling (school life expectancy) | 9.8 | 10.1 | 10.5 | - | - |
| In tertiary (years) | 0.9 | 0.9 | 0.9 | - | - |
| Gross enrolment rate (%) | | | | | |
| Primary education - net | 91.6 | 92.7 | 94.1 | 95.2 | 96.8 |
| Secondary education – lower secondary | 62.7 | 60.2 | 62.9 | 64.7 | 69 |
| Secondary education – upper secondary | 36.8 | 33.9 | 33.4 | 34.7 | 37 |
| Tertiary education | 16.45 | 16.62 | 17.67 | - | - |
| Survival Rates (%) | | | | | |
| Primary education | 68.4 | 71.1 | 68.0 | 70 | 73.3 |
| Lower Secondary | 75 | 69 | - | - | - |
| University Qualification | 3 | 5 | 7 | - | - |
| Education Attainment of the Population aged 25 years and older (%) | | | | | |
| Lower secondary | - | 29.7 | - | - | - |

Education System Overview

As shown in Figure 3.4, Lao PDR's public school structure conforms to a 5-4-3 pattern, that is, five years of primary, four years of lower secondary, and three years of upper secondary studies. Attendance at primary school is compulsory. In parallel with the formal school system, but not shown in Figure 3.4, is a non-formal sector.

Figure 3.4 : Overview of the Public School System in Lao PDR

| Age | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
|--------|--------------|---|---|------------|---|---|---|----|-----------------|----|----|----|-----------------|----|----|
| Grade | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Level | Kindergarten | | | Primary | | | | | Lower Secondary | | | | Upper Secondary | | |
| Access | Voluntary | | | Compulsory | | | | | Voluntary | | | | | | |
| Cost | Fees | | | Free | | | | | | | | | Fees | | |

Pre-primary Education

Crèches accept children aged from three months to three years, and kindergartens accept children aged from two to five years. Participation in pre-school education is gaining in popularity, but factors such as availability and cost tend to restrict access to better-off families living in urban areas. In 2012/13, the gross enrolment rate in pre- primary education was only 33%, which was well below the average pre-primary gross enrolment rate for the ASEAN region of 62% in 2011,⁶⁹ but a significant increase from being only 15% in 2008.⁷⁰ Though private-sector providers are entering the market, they accounted for only 22% of all enrolments in 2010, and were predominantly located in the capital, Vientiane.⁷¹ A significant problem affecting the pre-primary sector is the shortage of trained kindergarten teachers. The need is especially acute in areas where the official Lao language is not the mother tongue.

Primary Education

As indicated above, there has been a significant recent growth in the primary education net enrolment rate. In 2012/13, there were 8,927 primary schools, and a primary school population of 878,283 students, 48% of whom were girls. Though, as shown in Table 3.4, there were 26 students for every primary school teacher in 2012/13, this average masks significant urban/rural disparities. It has been estimated that 10% of all villages do not yet have a primary school within reasonable access of a child's home, and that almost 57% of all primary schools, and an estimated 70% of primary schools in the poorest districts, are incomplete schools, that is, they do not offer the full range of primary education grade levels.⁷² Girls and non Lao-Tai groups are the most disadvantaged. The impact of food shortages, especially towards the end of the rainy season, must also be allowed for. The World Food Programme currently provides school feeding programmes for primary schools in 39 districts where the prevalence of stunting because of food shortages is high.⁷³

Dropout and grade repetition rates are relatively high in primary education in Lao PDR, especially in the rural areas. As shown in Table 3.4, the survival rate in primary school in 2012 was only 70%, and the incidence of repeating grades was about 10%, affecting mainly boys and children living in remote districts.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ UNESCO (2013). Education System Profiles. See: <http://www.unescobkk.org/education/resources/education-system-profiles/>

⁷¹ UNESCO (2012). Youth and Skills: Putting Education To Work. EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2102. Paris, p.334.

⁷² UNESCO (2013). Education System Profiles. See: <http://www.unescobkk.org/education/resources/education-system-profiles/>

⁷³ World Food Programme (2011). WFP Lao PDR Country Strategy 2011-2015. Vientiane, p. 16.

⁷⁴ UNESCO & UNICEF (2012). Asia-Pacific End of Decade Notes on Education for All: Gender Equality. Bangkok, p.3, 9. See <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/asia-pacific-efa-goal-5- gender-equality-education-2012.pdf>

Lower Secondary Education

There has also been a steady growth in the participation rates of young people in lower secondary education, as indicated by the improving net enrolment rates in secondary education documented in Table 3.4. The Lao Government, with the support of Official Development Assistance (ODA), has invested significantly in infrastructure for secondary schools. Accommodation for teachers and students has also been constructed to help minimise the adverse impact of schools being a long way from home. The secondary school sector continues, however, to be adversely affected by a shortage of well-trained teachers. Until recently, teacher salaries have been very low, and there have been administrative inefficiencies in paying them. The prospect of working in the more remote parts of the country is not attractive because there are rarely any other sources of additional income available in these regions. MOES is now rapidly addressing these shortcomings.

Upper Secondary Education

The disparities in educational participation rates between different subgroups (male/female, urban/rural, Lao-Tai/non Lao-Tai) become quite pronounced at the upper secondary level. In 2012/13 the gross enrolment rate was 37% - 33.9% for girls and 40.7% for boys. There was a loss of almost one-half of those who completed the final year of lower secondary school.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Students may commence TVET courses from grade 9 or grade 12. If commencing from grade 8, the students undertake a three-year training program to acquire basic vocational skills training. If commencing from grade 12, they undertake a two-year or a three-year training program to become a trained technician.

There are no recent data on the pathways followed by students in relation to TVET, and, in any case, collecting data would be complicated because of the multiple types of TVET opportunities available. In 2007, there were 50 registered TVET curriculum frameworks in 27 areas covering agriculture, business, industry and handicrafts.⁷⁵ Most students enrol in low-skill training programmes, especially in business, and yet there is a shortage of high-skill technicians. Matching participation in vocational training programmes with labour market needs is recognised as being in need of policy attention. As in a number of other ASEAN Member States, vocational training is regarded as being less attractive to pursue, despite the benefits that would accrue nationally if more students would undertake high-skill vocational training.

Higher Education

Lao PDR has five public universities, 10 teacher education institutions and about 50 other degree-granting education institutions. The focus is mainly on the award of undergraduate diplomas (of 3 years in duration) and degrees (of four to six years in duration). Master-degree courses are available at the National University of Laos and at the University of Health and Sciences. Members of teaching staff for these courses are required to have at least a master's degree, and preferably a doctoral qualification. The usual practice for obtaining a PhD is to go abroad, even if no further than over the border to Thailand. Over two-thirds of all academic staff members employed by universities have at least a bachelor's degree, but the incidence of doctorates is quite low. The Government has recently directed that the qualifications level for academic staff members at public universities should be lifted to a master's-degree level.

Higher education enrolments have been expanding rapidly over recent years. Private higher education providers have contributed significantly to the increased capacity of the higher education

⁷⁵ UNESCO (2013). Education System Profiles. See: <http://www.unescobkk.org/education/resources/education-system-profiles/> See <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/asia-pacific-efa-goal-5- gender-equality-education-2012.pdf>

system to enrol more students. Quality assurance systems need to be further developed in order to keep up with the variety of providers and courses now being made available.

Non-formal Education

Non-formal education programmes in Lao target children and young adults aged 15 to 40 who were unable to attend primary school and are willing to take literacy courses, adults aged 15 to 40 who are illiterate, and people aged 15 to 24 who are willing to receive basic vocational training. In 2005-06, 44,357 people were trained in the literacy programme; 96,955 enrolled at primary level; 1,890 enrolled at lower secondary level; 4,278 enrolled at upper secondary level; and 3,826 undertook skills development training.⁷⁶

Though non-formal education is accepted as being of national importance, the system of non-formal education is not well enough funded to address adequately the scale of the need that exists. There are relatively few trained personnel available at the district level, the funds to support them are limited, and there is a severe shortage of appropriate learning resources.

Challenges

Finance

Public expenditure on education as a share of the Government's budget was 17.3% in 2012/2013 and is expected to increase in the future. The Government relies quite heavily on ODA to supplement its expenditure, particularly in areas of infrastructure investment. In 2012/13, for example, ODA accounted for almost 79% of investment expenditure on the education system.

Governance and Management

The Government of Lao PDR has initiated a number of reforms to improve sector efficiency and governance by making government institutions and service delivery more efficient; by strengthening deconcentration/decentralisation, enhancing transparency by increasing the quality of information; improving the decision-making process through consultation and participation; restructuring/rationalizing the relationships both within the central government and between the central and local authorities. There are many incremental improvements aided by donor-funded projects, and changes are increasingly visible. However, there remain systemic and institutional issues that need to be addressed for improving governance, efficiency and long-term sustainability of the sector.

The Government's current policy of decentralisation aims at a deconcentration of the central authority. But local/sub-national capacity (i.e. at province and district levels) to implement national strategic policy objectives requires strengthening, particularly in the areas of staff skills and technical competence. Greater monitoring of implementation of Government decrees and instructions that aim at instituting reforms for improved planning, budgeting and management are needed. The quality and ease of access to information by all stakeholders builds responsive decisionmaking, accountability and efficiency. However, this requires improved data collection processes and more public access to data and information. There is a need to strengthen the strategic relationship among the key departments of MOES (Planning, Finance and Inspection) linking decision-making to evidence-based planning, strategic budgeting and monitoring, as envisaged under the ESDF policy framework.

At present there is not the institutional capacity and staff resources to undertake sector performance monitoring as envisaged by the Education Sector Development Framework policy framework. The efficiency of governance and of the deployment of human resources, including teachers, requires

⁷⁶ Ibid.

improvement. Institutional arrangements for quality in the delivery of educational management training are at an early stage of development and will need to be upgraded to meet the need to provide an effective training for all education managers and administrators. The governance framework and institutional autonomy status of higher education providers remain unclear and need to be further clarified, given the growing importance of higher education across the ASEAN region. Currently, there are many developmental projects in the education sector, but the lack of sustainability plans and of synergies between them result in high transaction costs.

Pedagogy

Teaching approaches in Lao PDR are very traditional, relying heavily on rote learning by students. The extent of reliance on these approaches is assisted by the fact that there are few other learning resources available to children in schools. Furthermore, there is a continuing shortage of trained teachers. Though a sufficient number of teacher education graduates are produced each year, there are inefficiencies in deploying teachers and constraints arising from restricted provincial allocations of funds to employ them.

Equity

Gender parity for 3-to-5 year-old early childhood education and primary education is on-track to be achieved by 2015. As the level of education increases, achievement of gender parity becomes more off track. The expected gender parity index for lower and upper secondary education will be 0.94 and 0.87, respectively, in 2015. Girls are particularly disadvantaged at the point of admission to secondary education, and they are also disadvantaged during the secondary years.⁷⁷ The problem is more pronounced in rural than in urban areas – the most likely explanation being that girls in rural households are more likely to be expected to contribute to household maintenance at an early age.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ UNESCO & UNICEF (2012). Asia-Pacific End of Decade Notes on Education for All: Gender Equality. Bangkok, p.3, 9. See <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/asia-pacific-efa-goal-5- gender-equality-education-2012.pdf>

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 19.

3.5. MALAYSIA

Country Background

Malaysia is comprised of 13 states and three territories. Most (80%) of its 28.96 million people (in 2011) live on Peninsular Malaysia, and the rest live on the island of Borneo. It is a distinctly multi-ethnic society, a characteristic that has been a potent influence on its history and politics.⁷⁹ The economy continues to expand rapidly. The level of GDP per capita in 2011 was US\$9,941 (see Table 2.1), and the World Bank classifies the economy as ‘upper middle income’. Poverty is steadily declining – but in 2011, 3.8% of the population fell below the national poverty line (see Table 2.1). Most Malaysians (67%) are *Bumiputera*, that is, Malays (55%) or members of indigenous groups (12%). The two significant *non-Bumiputera* groups are the Chinese (25%) and the Indians (a little over 7%). There are also a small number of other minority ethnic groups (accounting for about 1% of the population).



Legislation and Administration

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for the education system. A national philosophy of education, as expressed in the *Education Act* of 1996, underpins the system: “Education in Malaysia is an ongoing effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God.”⁸⁰

An *Education Blueprint* for the period from 2013 to 2025 expresses Malaysia’s longterm vision for its school system. It stresses that schools must imbue young Malaysians with “values, ethics and a sense of nationhood, enabling them to make the right choices for themselves, their families and the country with a view towards enduring and overcoming life’s inevitable challenges”. The *Blueprint* also refers to education as the foundation for future national economic prosperity: “In today’s global economy, a nation’s success depends fundamentally on the knowledge, skills and competencies of its people. It is no surprise that nations with higher education levels tend to enjoy greater economic prosperity.”⁸¹ The *Blueprint* points to the need to improve access, quality, equity, unity and efficiency in the national school system, and it envisages a system in which there is universal school attendance, high academic achievement, equity of access to educational opportunities, a focus on national unity, increased cost-effectiveness and improved accountability. Significant shifts proposed for the system include that there should be an internationally benchmarked set of curriculum standards, increased student proficiency in *Bahasa Malaysia* (the national language) and in English, a higher level of professional standing accorded to teachers, stronger leadership capability within schools, improved school autonomy, better community engagement, more effective accountability mechanisms and more transparent school reporting processes.

⁷⁹ Samuel, M. & Tee, M. Y. (2013). Malaysia: Ethnocracy and Education. In L. P. Symaco (Ed.). Education in South-East Asia. London: Bloomsbury, pp.137-55.

⁸⁰ Quoted from Loke, S.H. and Hoon, C. L. (2011). Education in Malaysia: Development and Transformations. In C. Brock & L. P. Symaco (Eds). Education in South-East Asia. Symposium Books: Oxford, p.100.

⁸¹ Government of Malaysia (2012). Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025. Kuala Lumpur, p. 1.

The Education Scorecard

Table 3.5 presents the performance indicator data available for Malaysia. The adult literacy rate (94.1% in 2012) is marginally below UNESCO's regional average of 94.7% in 2011,⁸² as are the literacy rates being achieved by young people aged 15 to 24 years (97.9% for males and 98.4% for females in 2012 – compared with regional averages of 98.9% and 98.8%, respectively). The net enrolment rates in primary school (96.42% in 2012) and secondary (90.18%) are above UNESCO's regional average – especially so in the case of secondary education. The student-to-teacher ratios for primary (12.29:1 in 2012) and secondary (13.11:1 in 2012) schools compare favourably with rates for most other ASEAN Member States. Survival rates for all levels of schooling are very high (99.06% for primary education, 96.28% for lower secondary, and 97.05% for upper secondary – all in 2012).



Table 3.5 : ASCC Scorecard for Education for Malaysia

| General | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
| Total adult literacy rate (%) | 92.7 | 93.1 | 93.9 | 94.1 |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), male | 98.5 | 97.8 | 98.0 | 97.9 |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), female | 98.4 | 98.0 | 98.2 | 98.4 |
| Ratio of student to teacher (primary) | 13.31 | 12.97 | 12.60 | 12.29 |
| Ratio of student to teacher (secondary) | 13.10 | 13.38 | 13.12 | 13.11 |
| Human Development Index: mean years of schooling | 9.4 | 9.5 | 9.5 | 9.5 |
| Expected years of schooling (school life expectancy) | 12.6 | 12.6 | 12.6 | 12.6 |
| From primary to tertiary (years) | 11.6 | 11.9 | N/A | N/A |
| In tertiary (years) | 2.0 | 2.10 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| Net enrolment rate (%) | | | | |
| Primary education | 95.65 | 96.19 | 95.88 | 96.42 |
| Secondary education | 90.01 | 89.61 | 89.81 | 90.18 |
| Secondary education – lower secondary | 86.51 | 86.76 | 86.07 | 86.18 |
| Secondary education – upper secondary | 77.25 | 77.19 | 77.75 | 77.96 |
| Tertiary education – Gross | 40.24 | 42.3 | 40.87 | NA |
| Survival Rates (%) | | | | |
| Primary education | 98.80 | 97.17 | 98.70 | 99.06 |
| Lower Secondary | 98.37 | 96.20 | 96.27 | 96.28 |
| Upper Secondary | 96.32 | 96.70 | 96.58 | 97.05 |
| Education Attainment of the Population aged 25 years and older (%) | | | | |
| Primary | 23.7 | 23.3 | 22.9 | 22.7 |
| Lower secondary | 17.5 | 17.4 | 17.3 | 17.4 |
| Upper secondary | 31.2 | 31.7 | 32.3 | 32.5 |
| Tertiary | 18.3 | 18.9 | 19.9 | 20.1 |

⁸² UNESCO (2013).UIS Statistics In Brief. See: <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=198>

Education System Overview

As shown in Figure 3.5, Malaysia's public school structure conforms to a 6-3-2 pattern, that is, six years of primary school, three years of lower secondary school and two years of upper secondary school. TVET begins as a stream within the lower secondary years, continues as a stream within the upper secondary years, and is also a separate stream within a new network of vocational colleges. In 2003, MOE made English the medium of instruction for science and maths classes in grades 1, 7 and 10, but in 2009 it reverted to allowing classes to be taught in *Bahasa Malaysia*, because of the small proportion (less than 20%) of secondary school teachers and the even smaller proportion of primary school science and maths teachers who were sufficiently proficient in English.⁸³

Figure 3.5 : Overview of the Public School System in Malaysia⁸⁴

| Age | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | | |
|--------|--------------|---|------------|---|---|----|----|----|-----------------|----|----|-----------------|----|--|--|
| Grade | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | | |
| Level | Kindergarten | | Primary | | | | | | Lower Secondary | | | Upper Secondary | | | |
| Access | Voluntary | | Compulsory | | | | | | Voluntary | | | | | | |
| Cost | Free | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Pre-School

Over three-quarters of all children aged from 4 to 6 years attend pre-school education.⁸⁵ Pre-school education comprises early childcare education and kindergarten education. There is no prescription as to when a child should start pre-school education, but the majority of children start at the age of five in a kindergarten. Directors and teachers in childcare and kindergarten settings must have undertaken a formal training and certification process. The training covers lessons on child psychology, teaching methodologies, and other related curricula on childcare and development. In 2010, 46% of all pre-school children attended private pre-schools.⁸⁶ These providers focus mainly on early childcare services, but private kindergartens are also common in the major urban centres. There is strong official endorsement of the view that the first five years are the most critical to a child's development. To that end, there have been initiatives aimed at raising levels of participation in pre-school education, and progress is being made.

Primary

The primary school system in Malaysia is almost entirely public, with no tuition fees charged. Indeed, the school system as a whole is almost entirely a public system – in 2011, only 3% of all students aged from 7 to 17 years of age were enrolled in private schools. The two main primary school categories are the national schools, which provide for 75% of all primary school students, and the national-type (or vernacular) schools, which are either Chinese-medium (21% of students) or Tamil-medium (3.5% of students) – depending upon whether Chinese or Tamil is the medium of instruction. All primary schools must teach *Bahasa Malaysia* and English, and all schools must follow the same syllabus for non-language subjects, regardless of the language used for instruction. In addition to national and national-type schools, there are special education schools, special model schools and government-assisted religious schools, but, in aggregate, these enrol no more than 0.3% of the primary school population.

⁸³ Loke, S.H. & Hoon, C. L. (2011). Education in Malaysia: Development and Transformations. In C. Brock & L. P. Symaco (Eds). Education in South-East Asia. Oxford: Symposium Books, p.101.

⁸⁴ Malaysian Ministry of Education. (2009). Education in Malaysia: Towards Excellence. Kuala Lumpur.

⁸⁵ Government of Malaysia (2012). Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, p. 3.2.

⁸⁶ UNESCO (2012). Youth and Skills: Putting Education To Work. EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2102. Paris, p.334.

The separation of primary education into the national and national-type categories is criticised on grounds that it contributes to ethnic polarisation at an early age. To address this problem, attempts have been made to establish, on a pilot basis, 'vision schools' (*Sekolah Wawasan*) that permit Malay, Chinese and Tamil students to share school resources while maintaining the difference in medium of instruction. Some members of minority communities have resisted the initiative, however, on grounds that it may restrict the use of mother tongues.

Students completing primary school education undertake a Primary School Assessment Examination, set nationally and intended to mark the completion of primary school. The subjects tested include *Bahasa Malaysia*, English, Mathematics and Science. Students attending national-type schools also sit for Chinese or Tamil language tests. The Primary School Language Assessment Test determines which students may need to attend a one-year transitional class to focus on the proficiency of *Bahasa Malaysia* before going on to secondary school.

Secondary

National secondary schools use *Bahasa Malaysia* as the medium of instruction. English is a compulsory subject in these schools. National secondary schools must also provide teaching of Chinese and Tamil languages, as well indigenous languages if the parents of at least 15 students request it.

Secondary education requires five years of study and includes three years of lower secondary education and two years of upper secondary education. At the end of lower secondary education, students sit for a national examination to mark the completion of lower secondary education. The subjects tested include *Bahasa Malaysia*, English, Mathematics, Science, Geography, History, Living Skills, Islamic Education and Moral Education. Optional subjects available are Mandarin, Tamil and Arabic. In 2014, this national test will be replaced by a school-based assessment system.

Upon completion of two more years of secondary education, the students sit for a national examination for the Malaysian Certificate of Education (MCE), or an equivalent national examination. This examination is internationally benchmarked against O-level standards. There are compulsory tests in *Bahasa Malaysia*, English, Mathematics, Science, History, Islamic Education (for Muslim students) and Moral Studies (for non-Muslim students). There are also various elective subjects tested across the fields of arts and health, ICT, languages and literature, TVET studies, science and mathematics, social sciences and religion. The Malaysian Certificate of Education (MCE) examination is regarded as high-stakes because performance determines access to pre-university studies, and hence to university.

Post-secondary

Once students have attained a MCE, and based on their examination performance, they can proceed with a post-secondary study program. One option is the Form Six program, a two-year program, the first year of which is called the Lower Six and the second year of which is called the Upper Six. The students sit for the Malaysian Higher Education (MHE) Certificate, or its equivalent for students following a belief-based curriculum, the Malaysian Higher Religious (MHR) Certificate, when they are in their Upper Six. The MHE is modelled on the British A-levels, and the Form Six program is preparatory for university studies. The other option is for students to enrol in teacher-training institutes, community colleges or polytechnics.

Religious Schools

While all public schools in Malaysia teach Islamic Education in the national curriculum, other religious schools focus specifically on teaching subjects related to Islam, such as early Islamic history and

Arabic language. These schools account for 2% of all primary and secondary enrolments.⁸⁷ Many were formerly private schools that have voluntarily transferred to the public system, where they are managed by MOE or by the Islamic Religious Affairs Departments of the respective states. Some states, such as Johor, make it compulsory for all Muslim children aged 6 to 12 to attend special religious schools as a complement to their mandatory primary education.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

The vocational education sector in Malaysia is currently undergoing a significant transformation, the purpose of which is to ensure its comparability in terms of quality with the rest of the education system, as well as to contribute to the development of a more competitive and capable workforce. Three phases of this transformation are envisaged: a leap phase (2011-13), a growth phase (2014-16) and a strengthening phase (2017-20). The objectives of the transformation are: to produce lower secondary school leavers who possess skill certificates recognised by the National Accreditation Board; to produce lower secondary school leavers who are ready to continue their vocational studies at a higher level; to produce upper secondary school leavers who have skill certificates recognised by the National Accreditation Board; to produce upper secondary school leavers who are able to become competitive entrepreneurs; and to strengthen the delivery of the Malaysian education system in implementing the vocational education transformation. The proposed overhaul of the sector is expected to result in a revised vocational education curriculum, the development of new vocational education institutions, more emphasis on collaboration with industries to broaden access and increase employability levels, an overhaul of the assessment mechanisms to ease accreditation and recognition of vocational education graduates, and a vocational education reorganisation. There will be a Junior Vocational College Curriculum, a Vocational College system at the upper secondary and post-secondary levels – both public and private; and a body to be known as the National Vocational Education Advisory Council. Underpinning the reform commitment is a concern that the number of students enrolled in vocational secondary schools has been slowly declining from 2.7% of all secondary enrolments in 2008 to 2.2% in 2011.⁸⁸ At the same time, industry demand for TVET graduates is strong and growing ever stronger.

Higher Education

The higher education system in 2012 comprised of 20 public universities, 30 polytechnics, 37 private universities and over 400 private colleges. Almost one-half of all higher education students enrolled in public-sector institutions, which are well supported financially by the government. Most public universities rely mainly, but by no means exclusively, on *Bahasa Malaysia* as the medium of instruction, while most private universities and colleges rely mainly on English. Universities offer diploma and degree qualifications, and colleges and polytechnics are generally non-degree granting. All university awards must comply with the requirements of the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (*Agensi Kelayakan Malaysia*, or MQA), which is a statutory body established under the *Malaysian Qualifications Act* of 2007 to accredit academic programmes provided by post-secondary and higher education institutions. The MQA implements the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) as a basis for quality assurance of higher education and as the reference point for the criteria and standards for national qualifications.

The private sector in Malaysia has been playing a significant role in expanding the capacity of the higher education system. Private universities are developing a reputation for high quality teaching, and many of these institutions now offer courses in cooperation with foreign universities, allowing students to spend a portion of their coursework studying abroad. A number of reputable international universities have also established branch campuses in Malaysia since 1998. These

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 7.8.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 7.7.

developments are consistent with Malaysia's policy of seeking to internationalise the delivery of higher education, hence attracting more students from foreign countries and eventually becoming an international hub for higher education.

Current priorities for the higher education system, as documented in the National Higher Education Action Plan: Phase 2 (2011-2015), include widening access and increasing equity, improving the quality of teaching and learning, enhancing research and innovation, strengthening higher education institutions, intensifying internationalisation, and supporting lifelong education.

Challenges

Finance

The Malaysian Government has managed to maintain a high level of investment in the country's education system over an extended period of time. According to the *Education Blueprint*, the amount spent on school education represented 16% of total government spending in 2011, and 3.8% of GDP.⁸⁹ These levels are well above the OECD average, and appear also to be higher than for many ASEAN Member States. A challenge, however, is whether the country is achieving sufficient returns on its investment. Malaysia has been participating in TIMSS since 1999, when its average student score was above the international average in both Mathematics and Science. Over successive iterations of this test, Malaysia's performance has been steadily slipping. From 2003 to 2011, for example, Malaysia dropped from being 10th to being 26th in Mathematics, and from being 20th to being 32nd in Science. In 2011, almost two-thirds of Malaysian secondary students participating in the survey scored in the 'low' level for Mathematics and in the 'very low' level for Science.⁹⁰ Malaysia's performance on PISA has been no more gratifying. In 2009, Malaysia ranked in the bottom third of the 74 participating countries, well below the OECD average. In the *Education Blueprint*, an alarming fact is acknowledged: "A comparison of scores [on PISA in 2009] shows that 15-year-olds in Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Shanghai are performing as though they have had 3 or more years of schooling than 15-year-olds in Malaysia."⁹¹

Management

Malaysia's *Education Blueprint* document is a remarkably comprehensive and detailed exposition of how the Government intends to make education pivotal in the future unity and prosperity of the nation. The National Higher Education Strategic Plan serves a similar function in relation to the higher education sector. Many changes have occurred in recent years to improve the delivery of education in Malaysia. There is, however, an appreciation of the need for schools and public higher education institutions to be given more autonomy for decision-making with regard to operational matters of budget allocation and curriculum implementation. Accordingly, the *Education Blueprint*



⁸⁹ Government of Malaysia (2012). *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025*. Kuala Lumpur, p. E.3

⁹⁰ Lim, I. (2013). Muhyiddin slammed for 'silence' over TIMSS study. *The Malaysian Insider*, January 16. See: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/muhyiddin-slammed-for-silence-over-timss-study>

⁹¹ Government of Malaysia (2012). *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025*. Kuala Lumpur, p. E.4.

has proposed that school principals be eventually given full authority over how they spend their student per capita grant.⁹²In the school sector, selected school types (for example, High Performing and Cluster schools) are beginning to be given more autonomy, and in the higher education sector a small number of public universities have been designated as autonomous institutions.

Pedagogy

Notwithstanding Malaysia's evident commitment to improving the quality of pedagogy, the country's performance on the TIMSS and PISA surveys has been disappointing. The *Education Blueprint* acknowledges the need for more attention to be given to attracting well-qualified and capable candidates into the teaching profession, and recognises the need to provide teachers with significant continuous professional development. A long-term plan for the more integrated use of ICT resources in teaching and learning has also been laid out.



Equity

Equity is a significant area of challenge for the education system in Malaysia, as indeed it is for most other education systems. First, there are geographic inequities. In parts of the country with a high number of rural schools, examination performance is not as strong as for schools in urban areas. This gap is reported to be narrowing, but still persists.⁹³Second, there is a gender gap whereby girls at all levels of the education system, and especially at the higher levels, are consistently outperforming boys – and this gap is widening. Of growing policy concern is the whereabouts of the 'lost boys' cohort – boys who left school early and with low attainment levels.

The main challenge for Malaysia, however, is the disparity between high socioeconomic status households and low socioeconomic status households in terms of academic achievement. Students from poorer families are less likely to perform as well as students from middle-income or high-income families, and this relationship possibly contributes significantly to the geographic inequities referred to above, but there are promising signs that Malaysia is making progress. Indeed, there are indications that the impact of socioeconomic status on student achievement levels may now be less significant in Malaysia than in other education systems around the world. Malaysia's PISA results for 2009 showed that the influence of socioeconomic status on Malaysia's performance in 2009 was lower than that for the OECD as a whole.⁹⁴

⁹² Ibid. p. E.18.

⁹³ Ibid. p. E.7.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

3.6 MYANMAR

Country Background

Myanmar has a population of over 61 million, and a large landmass – the second largest in Southeast Asia. It had a GDP per capita of only US\$875 in 2011 (see Table 2.1). Poverty seriously affected over one-quarter (25.6% in 2011) of the population (see Table 2.1). Ethnic diversity is a distinctive country characteristic – there are more than 130 different ethnic nationalities within Myanmar's borders. One ethnic group, the Bamar, accounts for approximately 68% of the population. Other significant groups include the Shan (9%), the Karen (6%) and the Rakhine (4%), all of whom tend to live in the more remote and highland regions.

Legislation and Administration

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is primarily responsible for the provision of basic education. Two other ministries involved with basic education are the Ministry of Religious Affairs (responsible for monastic schools) and the Ministry of Border Affairs (partially responsible for schools in remote areas). The MOE manages the higher education sector through the Department of Higher Education (Upper Myanmar), based in Mandalay, and the Department of Higher Education (Lower Myanmar), based in Yangon. Besides MOE, there are 12 other ministries that are responsible for the provision of higher education. In the TVET sector, there are as many as 18 ministries that are involved in managing training institutions.

A *Thirty-Year Long-Term Development Plan* that took effect from 2000-2001 provides a framework for the development of the education system. This Plan has recently been supplemented by a National Development Plan. The declared vision for the system is “to create an education system that will generate a learning society capable of facing the challenges of the Knowledge Age”.⁹⁵ In February 2012, MOE initiated a *Comprehensive Education Sector Review*, the purpose of which is to promote a “learning society capable of facing the challenges of the knowledge age”. The *Review* is already of immense symbolic value because it gives hope that every child in Myanmar will have the opportunity to complete a full cycle of basic education of good quality and that it will produce a costed education sectors plan after its phase 3 for the development of education in Myanmar.

The Education Scorecard

Table 3.6 presents performance indicator data for Myanmar. The adult literacy rate (95.01% in 2011) is above UNESCO's regional average of 94.7% in 2011,⁹⁶ and the literacy rates being achieved by young people aged 15 to 24 years (98.54% for males in 2012, and 97.17% for females) also compare favourably with regional averages. The net enrolment rate in primary school is 84.61% in 2011, but the net enrolment rate in secondary school was only 41.61% in 2011 (compared with the UNESCO regional average of 73% in 2011).

According to the new sanction, new schools have been constructed; 135 high schools, 233 middle schools and 1025 primary schools have been built. New teachers have been recruited at schools; 79 high school teachers, 486 middle school teachers and 4122 primary school teachers were recruited. The ratio of teacher and student for primary education in 2013 is 1:29 and that for secondary education is 1:32.

⁹⁵ Ministry of Education (2012). *Education Development in Myanmar*. Yangon: Ministry of Education

⁹⁶ UNESCO (2013). *UIS Statistics In Brief*. See: <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=198>

Table 3.6: ASCC Scorecard for Education for Myanmar

| General | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
| Total adult literacy rate (%) | 94.89 | 94.95 | 95.01 | 95.08 |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), male | 98.5 | 98.51 | 98.52 | 98.54 |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), female | 97.14 | 97.15 | 97.16 | 97.17 |
| Ratio of student to teacher (secondary) | 34.1 | 32.5 | 31.6 | 31.2 |
| Net enrolment rate (%) | | | | |
| Primary education | 83.94 | 84.13 | 84.61 | 84.60 |
| Secondary education | 39.57 | 41.15 | 41.61 | 43.77 |
| Survival Rates (%) | | | | |
| University Qualifications | 73.7 | 78.35 | 80.64 | 79.96 |

Education System Overview

As shown in Figure 3.6, Myanmar's public school structure conforms to a 5-4-2 pattern, that is, five years of primary, four years of lower secondary, and two years of upper secondary. This structure is, however, currently under review to be replaced by a 5-4-3 structure. Attendance at primary school is compulsory.

Figure 3.6: Overview of the Public School System in Myanmar

| Age | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | | |
|--------|-------------|---|---|------------|---|---|---|----|--------------------------------------|----|----|----|-----------------|----|--|--|
| Grade | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | | |
| Level | Pre-Primary | | | Primary | | | | | Lower Secondary | | | | Upper Secondary | | | |
| Access | Voluntary | | | Compulsory | | | | | Voluntary | | | | | | | |
| Cost | | | | Free | | | | | Low cost: (about US\$1.5-2 per year) | | | | | | | |

Pre-primary

Pre-school education is available in Myanmar, but the sector is not well integrated with the rest of the education system. Only about one-fifth of all eligible children attend a pre-school, with children in rural areas being the least likely to participate.

Primary

The MOE has shifted Free Primary Education to Free Compulsory Primary Education. In the 2013-14 academic year, textbooks and six exercise books each, in addition to a small amount of money for stationery, were provided to all 5.5 million primary school students free of charge. As a result, the Net Intake Rate has reached to 98.55% in the 2013-14 academic year.

The net primary enrolment rate in 2010-11 was estimated to have been only 84.61%, indicating that not all primary school students remained until successfully completing primary school at the end of grade 5. The main loss occurred during the first two years of primary school, mainly for reasons of affordability and access. By the end of the primary school years, only about 70% students who commenced in primary school five years earlier remained enrolled. The transition from primary to secondary school brought about a further loss. By grade 6 (the first year of secondary), only about 50% of students who commenced primary school six years earlier remained enrolled. The loss

continued, and by grade 10 only 28.6% of students who commenced in primary school 10 years earlier remained enrolled. Between grade 10 and grade 11, there was further significant loss, and by the final year of secondary school only 23.9% of the students who commenced primary school 11 years earlier remained enrolled.

Secondary

While some of the loss of students during the secondary years may also be attributed to affordability and access, what mainly impacts on retention during these years is the increasingly selective nature of the examination system. By grade 11, when students sit for the capstone Basic Education High School Examinations, most secondary students have left school because they have not been able to pass the succession of examinations leading up to the completion of grade 11. Given that it is rare for more than one-half of candidates for the Basic Education High School Examinations to achieve an overall pass grade, the success rate of students who commence a secondary education programme is indeed relatively small. However, MOE has used the Continuous Assessment System at the basic education sector.

Monastic Schools

The role of monastic schools in Myanmar is important. Education provided by Buddhist monks is a tradition dating back to the 11th century. Currently, monastic schools provide supplementary education for needy children and orphans – filling a significant gap in the education system. However, the impact of monastic education is difficult to estimate. Sources differ on the likely number of students attending monastic schools – the figure may be 240,000 children, accounting for nearly 3% of the primary school population. These schools invariably lack adequate teaching resources are heavily reliant on donations from parents and the public. The Government has provided the volunteer teachers from these schools with salaries.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Entry to pre-employment TVET programmes may occur upon completion of lower secondary education, and entry to higher-level TVET and to higher education may occur upon completion of upper secondary education. There are 18 different ministries responsible for the delivery of these programmes, and there is an unknown but increasing number of private providers. Some TVET programmes require intensive full-time studies and provide pathways to a degree. Others focus on short-term skills training, as in pre-employment programmes for school leavers. The Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) is the largest of the public TVET providers. It supports a network of technical high schools and vocational schools. Other ministries are more inclined to focus on short-term training programmes related to their areas of specific specialist need and portfolio interest. Little is known about where students who complete TVET programmes find employment, or about whether the knowledge and skills they acquire during their studies are even relevant to their future workplaces.

The sector is constrained by the insufficient technical equipment for use in training. The qualified trade skills that are in line with international level are needed for TVET in Myanmar.

The coordination and cooperation among the respective ministries need to be reinforced. The number of qualified trained technical personnel is not adequate for the areas such as electricity, water and basic sanitation, especially in rural and remote areas of the country, but, to date, the TVET sector needs to take time for planning to upgrade an increased number of qualified trained personnel. There is an almost complete absence of any direct participation by private-sector employers in the design and delivery of training programmes. This situation may change, however, as foreign direct investment in infrastructure and on development projects will require a more skilled national workforce.

Higher Education

The structure of the higher education sector remains largely as prescribed by the *University Education Law* of 1973. Thirteen ministries exercise line-management responsibilities for a total of 168 universities and colleges. MOE is the dominant ministry – its 68 universities and colleges account for about 77.8% of all higher education enrolments. Ministry of Science and Technology is also a significant provider – it now manages as many as 61 technical universities, technological colleges and technical institutes, accounting for 18% of all higher education enrolments. Whether higher education institutions belonging to MOST should all be classified as higher education institutions, as opposed to being classified as TVET institutions, remains unclear – many training programmes offered by the Ministry's higher education institutions are qualitatively different from traditional higher education programmes, and are more like trade training programmes. Two other important ministries are the Ministry of Health, which manages 15 higher education institutions, and the Ministry of Defence, which manages five higher education institutions.

Nearly all universities and colleges, other than the longer-established and more traditional liberal arts and science universities (for example, the University of Yangon and the University of Mandalay) are highly specialized, whether in economics, teacher education, foreign languages, engineering, computer studies, maritime studies, agriculture, forestry, medicine, nursing, veterinary science, and so on. Remarkably, but consistent with the pattern in basic education, 83.6% of all academic staff members are female. Though there are some universities in Yangon and Mandalay with more than 18,000 students attending regular programmes, the average enrolment per higher education institution is only a little over 4,000 students. Most 60.4% students learn distance education.

The Departments of Higher Education under MOE has also concentrated its efforts on the infrastructural development. New three and four-storeyed buildings have been built at universities and degree colleges, resulting in the termination of all two-shift attending universities. They have set the target of 50 students per classroom. They recruited over one thousand five hundred new university teachers in 2012 and have a plan to recruit more qualified new teachers every year.

MOE is striving for the development of higher education with the vision: "To upgrade the education standard to the standard of ASEAN universities and to transform the universities in Myanmar into Business Hubs that will play an important role for the achievement of the Knowledge-based Economic System". To realize the vision, the Departments of Higher Education have set the mission to produce highly qualified graduates and human resources required for building the modern developed democratic nation. In promoting higher education, they have set three targets: (a) to upgrade the universities in Myanmar and strive to gain international recognition; (b) to offer degrees, diplomas and certificates which are accredited by international universities and academic institutions; and (c) to nurture graduates who have necessary expertise, knowledge and skills for practical application in workplaces.



Finance

The education system was grossly underfunded – a state of affairs that had existed for a long time before 2011. However, the new Government has increased the allocation of more budgets for the education sector year by year. In 2011-12 Fiscal Year, the educational budget is just over 310,000 million kyats, and in 2012-13 Fiscal Year over 640,000 million kyats, an increase of 107.11%. Likewise, the budget allocation for education in 2013-14 increased 41% compared to 2012-13, with an increase of 192% for the educational budget in 2013-14 compared to 2011-12. Recent national budget figures for 2013-14 indicate a 6.1% allocation of the state budget to the education system.

In 2013-2014 Fiscal Year, the Ministry of Education has called for the list of the required items of lab equipment, teaching aids and reference books from all Rectors and Professors of all universities, degree colleges and colleges. After assessing the requirements, the Departments of Higher Education will be providing them with almost all the items requested.



Governance and Management

Challenges relating to governance and management are significant. The management culture across the education system is one of top-down decision making. The curriculum in schools, for example, is centrally determined, with negligible regard to local needs and circumstances. Textbooks and materials are prescribed centrally. School principals, though accorded a high level of respect in their school communities, are primarily administrators. Management performance incentives place more value on compliance with bureaucratic expectations than on the achievement of distinctive outcomes that meet the needs of local communities. Excellent teaching performance at any level within the education system is difficult to reward or measure, and it is generally quite difficult to take disciplinary action against underperforming teachers or administrators, all of who are civil servants.

MOE is making an effort to raise the standard of the education system to an international level as part of a multi-sector reform process for people-centred development that has been implemented since a new government took office in March 2011. Three strategies are being employed. First, new and revised laws including a *National Education Law* is under review while such a law as *Private School Registration Law* has been enacted. These legal instruments are being developed in line with the new political and socio-economic developments taking place in the country. Second, there is a focus on achieving 'quick wins' through the implementation of the *Twenty-Year Long-Term National Education Development Plan (2011-12FY–2030-31FY)*. MOE has, for example, identified a range of programmes for tertiary education reform, including: establishing quality assurance; raising the quality of higher education programmes to an international level; promoting international collaboration; improving facilities; raising the capacity of administrators; enhancing vocational skills by expanding TVET; and enacting legal reform to allow private sector participation in higher education. Third, and as referred to above, MOE has initiated a *Comprehensive Education Sector Review* with the aim of deepening socio-economic reform and further developing human resources in Myanmar. This initiative is being strongly supported by a consortium of international donors.

Pedagogy

As long ago as 1992, the Myanmar Education Research Bureau reported that: “Myanmar’s rigid school examination system, which encourages elitism, is a relic of the colonial period that survived Myanmar’s gaining independence in 1948 and still dominates the education system. With failure rates high, success in examinations became an important target of education.”⁹⁷ Several decades later, this examination culture continues to flourish. Teachers feel compelled to teach what will be tested, and students are inclined to learn only whatever might be on the exam. To make matters worse, parents often judge teachers on the basis of student success in examinations, and school authorities often judge teacher performance on the same basis, leading in some instances to teachers being even more anxious than their students about examination results.

The dominance of an examination culture impacts adversely on school retention and educational participation rates. In 2013, of 487,413 students who presented for the capstone Basic Education High School Examination, which involves examinations across a selected set of six subject-based examinations, only 34.89% passed. Those who pass this national examination can apply, in priority, for the admission of the universities they want to join. But only those who gain the highest scores in the examination are eligible for attending certain universities, such as University of Medicine and University of Technology that can admit a limited number of students.

There is a widespread agreement that teaching quality and teaching methods at all levels of the education system in Myanmar need improvement. Against a background of restricted resource availability, teacher-centred approaches reliant mainly on information dissemination are commonly adopted. In this regard, little has changed since 1992 when, according to the education sector report referred to earlier: “The emphasis in teaching strategies must be shifted away from the narrow goal of succeeding in examinations by regurgitating facts, towards a more functional use of learning. Most Myanmar students cannot think critically, raise questions or solve problems. Classroom instruction focuses primarily of getting students to understand and memorize the facts in textbooks, which are often out of date.” (MOE, 1992: 44).

Student-centred approaches to learning are now being officially encouraged (MOE, 2012: 15). These approaches will, however, require more library resources and more freedom to access the Internet. They will also require retraining opportunities for teachers, few of whom have had much formal induction to student-centred teaching methods, and most of whom model their teaching practices on the example provided by their own teachers. Recent initiatives implemented to encourage the exploration and application of new styles of teaching and student assessment are reported, but anecdotal reports suggest that, once back in their workplaces, teachers who attend professional development programmes on these new styles tend quickly to revert to the traditional styles favoured by the majority.

Equity

Young people from rural areas, and especially those from poorer households, are the least likely to remain in school through to the final year. Data collected in 2009-10 by UNICEF, in collaboration with several ministries, show, for example, that whereas 76% of children aged 10 to 15 years from urban areas were enrolled in school, the comparable figure for children in the same age group from rural areas was only 52%.⁹⁸ The data also show that, whereas over 85.5% of children aged 10 to 15 years from the richest quintile of households were enrolled in school, the comparable figure for

⁹⁷ Ministry of Education (1992). Education Sector Study: Final Report. Report for the Myanmar Education Research Bureau. Yangon: Ministry of Education, p. 26.

⁹⁸ United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) (2011). Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2009-10, p. 106. See: <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/>

children in the same age group from the poorest quintile of households was only 28.2%.⁹⁹ These patterns are consistent by other survey data.¹⁰⁰

Traditional gender inequity, with boys succeeding at the expense of girls, is not immediately evident in Myanmar. Girls are, in fact, over-represented among higher education students. Of special note also is the extent to which the teaching profession is predominantly (86%) female.¹⁰¹ It is widely asserted that the reason for this situation is that girls remain in school and are more likely to go on to higher education because they want to become teachers – teaching being traditionally regarded as a female occupation in Myanmar and because male students avoid teaching on account of its generally lower salary levels.

Quality

The challenge of improving quality is significant for the education system in Myanmar. At the level of basic education, a network of inspectorates functions with the aim of supporting and maintaining the quality of the school system. In practice, however, these inspectorates seem mainly concerned with ensuring compliance by schools and teachers with MOE policies and regulations, though some professional supports for individual teachers are also provided.



A matter of special concern for the TVET and higher education sectors is that there is no unifying national qualifications framework. The introduction of such a framework to Myanmar might necessitate some ultimately beneficial reforms. At the universities under the Ministry of Education, Internal Audit Teams have been formed and internal assessment for quality assurance on the programme level has been made. The MOE has made its utmost efforts to reach its aim to produce highly qualified graduates and human resources required for building the modern developed nation.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2011). Integrated Household Living Conditions survey in Myanmar (2009-2010): Poverty Profile. See: <http://www.mm.undp.org/IHLCA/>

¹⁰¹ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2011). Multiple indicator cluster survey 2009-10. See: http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MICS_Myanmar_Report_2009-10.pdf

3.7. PHILIPPINES

Country Background

The Philippines, an archipelago of over 7,000 islands, had a population of 95.83 million in 2011 (see Table 2.1), more than one-half of whom lived in urban areas. It is a densely populated country with a remarkable linguistic diversity. Most people speak at least one of the thirteen common languages (Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilokano, Hiligaynon, Waray-Waray, Kapampangan, Bikol, AlbayBikol, Pangasinan, Maranao, Maguindanao, Kanaray-a, and Tausug). In addition, there are more than 160 local dialects spoken.¹⁰² The national language is Filipino, which is spoken by more than one-half of the population. Filipino and English are the official languages. The level of GDP per capita in 2011 was US\$2,341 (see Table 2.1), and the World Bank classifies the economy as ‘lower middle income’. Despite recent strong economic growth rates, about 24% of the population lives below the national poverty line (see Table 2.1).

Legislation and Administration

The *Constitution* of 1987 provides that “the State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all”. Three separate government agencies are tasked to carry out this mandate – the Department of Education (DepEd), which handles basic education, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), which oversees all non-degree middle level skills development, and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), which oversees higher education.

Republic Act 9155, or the *Governance of Basic Education Act* of 2001, established the DepEd, which works through a network of regional and divisional offices, and through three bureaus – the Bureau of Elementary Education (BEE), the Bureau of Secondary Education (BSE), and the Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS). These bureaus are responsible for developing curriculum policies and standards, monitoring and evaluating programmes, and proposing initiatives to support the development of facilities, teaching, and learning materials. Established in 1994, TESDA provides oversight of the TVET sector. It encourages the participation of industry, labour, local government and TVET providers in the development of the country’s human resources. CHED, also established in 1994, is responsible for the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies, programmes and standards; the regulation of higher education institutions and the safeguarding their academic freedom. Academic programmes offered by higher education providers are accredited by agencies that form two CHED-recognized federations—the Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP), made up of the Association of Christian Schools, Colleges and Universities Accrediting Agency Inc. (ACSCU-AAI), the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU) and the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA), on the one hand, and the National Network of Quality Accrediting Agencies (NNQAA) consisting of the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities of the Philippines (AACCUP) and the Association of Local Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (ALCUCOA), on the other.

In 2009, in an initiative intended to put the Philippines on the path to achieving its Millennium Development Goals by 2015, Benigno Aquino III, then a presidential candidate, formulated a *10-Point Education Agenda* that provides for, amongst other things, the commencement of a 12-year basic education cycle, universal pre-schooling, the establishment of a kindergarten Islamic curriculum to be piloted in selected schools, the reintroduction of TVET courses to public high

¹⁰² Symaco, L. P. (2013). The Philippines: Education Issues and Challenges. In L. P. Symaco (Ed.). *Education in South-East Asia*. London: Bloomsbury, p.197.

schools, the implementation of a system-wide reading recovery programme in the early primary school curriculum, an expansion of public financial assistance to private secondary schools, the provision of more resources to support learning in mother-tongue languages, the production of better textbooks, and the building of more schools and classrooms.

Since 2010, a number of important laws and policies have been passed in line with the above 10-point agenda and which have served as platform for introducing education reforms. Among these laws and policies are the Kindergarten Education Act (RA 10157) which provides for mandatory kindergarten, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013(RA 10533) also known as the K to 12 law (Kindergarten to level 12), and the Philippine Qualifications Framework or PQF through Executive Order 83.

The Education Scorecard

Table 3.7 presents performance indicator data available for the Philippines. The adult literacy rate (95.4% in 2012) is slightly above UNESCO's regional average of 94.7% in 2011.¹⁰³ The net enrolment rate in primary school (95.2% in 2012) is slightly below the regional average of 96% in 2011, as is the net enrolment rate in secondary school (64.6% in 2012), which is below UNESCO's regional average of 73% in 2011. The survival rate for primary school was only 75.3% in 2012. The student-teacher ratios for primary (36:1 in 2012) and secondary (35:1 in 2012) school do not compare favourably with rates reported by most of the other ASEAN member countries.

Table 3.7: ASCC Scorecard for Education for the Philippines

| General | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
| Total adult literacy rate (%) | 95.6 | - | - | 95.4 |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), male | - | - | - | - |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), female | - | - | - | - |
| Ratio of student to teacher (primary) | 36 | 36 | 37 | 36 |
| Ratio of student to teacher (secondary) | 38 | 38 | 37 | 35 |
| Human Development Index: mean years of schooling | 8.7 | - | - | 8.9 |
| Expected years of schooling (school life expectancy) | 11.5 | - | 11.7 | - |
| In tertiary (years) | 1.5 | - | - | - |
| Net enrolment rate (%) | | | | |
| Primary education | 89.4 | 95.9 | 97.3 | 95.2 |
| Secondary education | 59.9 | 64.7 | 64.8 | 64.6 |
| Tertiary education – gross | 28.1 | - | - | - |
| Survival Rates (%) | | | | |
| Primary education | 74.4 | 74.2 | 73.5 | 75.3 |
| Secondary | 78.4 | 79.4 | 78.8 | 78.2 |

Education System Overview

As shown in Figure 3.7, the Philippine's public school structure conforms to a 6-4-2 structure, having very recently shifted from a 10-year to a 12-year basic education cycle. There are six years

¹⁰³ UNESCO (2013).UIS Statistics In Brief. See: <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=198>

of elementary school (equivalent to primary in other ASEAN Member States), four years of junior high school (known in other systems as lower secondary), and two years of senior high school (known in other systems as upper secondary). In parallel with the formal school system, there is an Alternative Learning System, formerly known as the non-formal system, that provides education services to young people who do not attend school, as well as for adults requiring assistance with literacy development. The private school system provides for a small proportion (8%) of all elementary school students, and a larger proportion (20%) of junior high school students.¹⁰⁴ It generally follows a slightly different structure in that it often requires elementary school students to complete seven years of elementary education before progressing to junior high school.

Figure 3.7: Overview of Public School System in the Philippines

| Age | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
|--------|----------------|---|---|------------|---|---|---|----|----|-------------|----|----|----|-------------|----|
| Grade | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Level | Pre-elementary | | | Elementary | | | | | | Junior High | | | | Senior High | |
| Access | Compulsory | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cost | Free | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Pre-Elementary

Since the *Kindergarten Education Act* of 2012 made pre-elementary education compulsory in the Philippines, the number of children enrolled in kindergarten increased by 33.5% from 1.65 million in 2010-2011 to 2.2 million in 2012-2013. In kindergarten, the children are assisted to learn the alphabet, numbers, shapes and colours, using games, songs and dancing. Kindergarten also encourages children to develop communication skills in their mother tongue.

Elementary

Elementary schools admit students at the age of six (or seven, in a minority of cases). The children undertake studies in Filipino, English, mathematics, science (starting in grade 3), various elective studies (starting in grade 4) and *Makabayan* (a subject that seeks to develop a deeper appreciation of the Filipino culture, history and heritage, and that may be broadly described as civics and culture, health and history). Children who do not make sufficient progress with their studies in the first few years of primary school may be given remedial support, and may be required to repeat a grade. At the upper levels of primary school, if their marks fall below a pass mark of 75%, which is the level prescribed as indicating a minimum mastery of what has been taught, they will be required to repeat a grade level.

Upon successful completion of grade 6, children are given a Diploma, and progression to junior high school is automatic – unless they are attending a private school (or certain public elementary schools) with a seven-grade elementary curriculum, or unless they are progressing to a private junior high school, in which case they may need to complete an entrance examination.

During the elementary school programme, and again during the junior high school programme, all students, whether at public or private schools, are required to sit for National Achievement Tests. The DepEd administers the tests, which are undertaken by students in grades 3, 6 and 10. The grade 3 version addresses student proficiency in Filipino and English, mathematics and science. The grade 6 version addresses student proficiency in Filipino, English, science, mathematics and social studies. The grade 10 version addresses student proficiency in Filipino, English, science, mathematics, social studies and critical thinking. A mean score of 75% is set as the mastery level

¹⁰⁴ Australian Education International (2012). Philippines Regulatory Fact Sheet. Canberra, p. 10.

standard. It is noteworthy that in the past years, the national averages have consistently increased and, although still below the 75% level, the movement has been approaching toward mastery.

Figure 3.8: Trends in the Philippines National Achievement Test (NAT) Results

| Levels | SY 2010-2011 | SY 2011-2012 | SY 2012-2013 |
|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Elementary | 68% | 67% | 69% |
| Secondary | 48% | 49% | 51% |

Junior High

Students in junior high schools, whether public or private, follow a four-year curriculum that includes the study of five learning areas: Filipino, English, science, mathematics and *Makabayan*. Progression through the curriculum is based on passing examinations, and the convention of setting the pass mark at 75%, a level at which mastery of the subject matter is said to be indicated, is maintained. Students who receive a mark below 65% in any subject are required to repeat it, or may be required to repeat a grade level – in 2007, 3.7% of grade 7 students (and, disproportionately, 5.5% of boys) repeat grade 7.¹⁰⁵ Within the junior high school system, there are a small number of technical-vocational high schools that offer a curriculum that has a TVET focus. These include agricultural high schools, schools of fisheries and schools of arts and trades. In 2007, only 3.16% of all junior high school students were enrolled in these schools.¹⁰⁶ Upon successful completion of junior high school, students are given a Certificate of Graduation and may then proceed to senior high school, where they will have access to a wider range of electives for study¹⁰⁷.

As prescribed by the *Public Secondary Education Act* of 1988, attendance at public junior high schools in the Philippines is free. Schools may, however, seek to collect voluntary contributions from students and their parents.

Senior High

The senior high school curriculum will not be fully implemented until 2015-16. However, 55 schools nationwide have volunteered to model the senior high school curriculum prior to its full implementation, curriculum design for all subjects are almost finished and major resource requirements have been front loaded starting 2014.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

TVET programmes in the Philippines include formal school-based programmes of one to three years in duration, non-formal programs offered by specialized training centres, non-formal programmes conducted in community settings, mainly for poor and marginalized groups, and training programmes delivered by enterprises seeking to invest in skill development for their employees. TVET qualifications have also been embedded in selected bachelor degree programmes offered by higher education institutions. In 2010, there were 4,297 registered TVET course providers, of which 90% were private-sector providers.¹⁰⁸ In addition, there were over 700 higher education

¹⁰⁵ UNESCO & UNICEF (2012). Asia-Pacific End of Decade Notes on Education for All: Gender Equality. Bangkok, p.10. See <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/asia-pacific-efa-goal-5- gender-equality-education-2012.pdf>

¹⁰⁶ UNESCO (2009). Secondary Education Regional Information Base: Country Profile – Philippines. Bangkok, p. 13.

¹⁰⁷ The senior high school level is currently being introduced.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 18.

institutions that offered integrated TVET qualifications with degree programmes in areas that included agriculture and fishing, health and medical services, ICT, maritime education, tourism and hotel management, criminology, teacher education and engineering.

Higher Education

The Philippines as of 2012-13 has 1,871 universities and colleges, most (88%) of which are private-sector institutions. Bachelor degrees are generally four-year programmes, but in some fields (such as engineering, law and medicine) they may be five-year to eight-year programmes. The number of years associated with academic programmes is currently being revised in line with the kindergarten to 12 reform agenda. Postgraduate diplomas and other advanced education degrees are also awarded.

Under the *Higher Education Act* of 1994, CHED has responsibility for managing the sector. Its approach has been to underscore the importance of internal quality assurance in higher education institutions (HEIs). As a result, HEIs that have had a long tradition of integrity and untarnished reputation, evidence of commitment to excellence, and evidence of operational sustainability and viability¹⁰⁹ are granted deregulated or autonomous status and enjoy a large measure of institutional autonomy¹¹⁰.

Challenges

Finance

In 2009, the Government of the Philippines allocated 12.3% of its national budget to the education system (see Table 2.2). This proportion was higher than for some other ASEAN member countries, but below the proportions being allocated by countries such as Thailand (29.5%), Singapore (21%), Malaysia (21.3%), Indonesia (20.2%) and Viet Nam (19.8%). Though generalizations about the relationship between levels of public expenditure on education and the quality of national education systems are fraught with complexity, it is the case that many of the problems being experienced by the education system in the Philippines (for example, shortages of classrooms, teacher shortages, and so on) could more easily be addressed if more public funds for the education system were available. In the past 3 years, however, the budget of the Department of Education has almost doubled from about P175 billion in 2010 to P295 billion in 2013. The proposed budget for 2014 is about P338 billion.

Over coming years, the Philippines will face a significant financial challenge in implementing its new 12-year school cycle. The estimated cost of the initiative is substantial¹¹¹. Government has, however, committed to push these reforms through and has been putting the plans in place so that the system will be capable of admitting the estimated 1.3 million students who will enter senior high school in 2016.

Equity

The Philippines is generally regarded as having achieved gender parity in primary education, but there is a challenge emerging in relation to the retention of boys in the school system, particularly

¹⁰⁹ Australian Education International (2012). Philippines Regulatory Fact Sheet. Canberra, p. 24.

¹¹⁰ Symaco, L. P. (2011). Philippines: Education for Development? In C. Brock and L. P. Symaco (Eds). Education in South-East Asia. Oxford: Symposium Books, p.142.

¹¹¹ Symaco, L. P. (2011). Philippines: Education for Development? In C. Brock and L. P. Symaco (Eds). Education in South-East Asia. Oxford: Symposium Books, p.144

through to the end of secondary schooling. Girls are now better represented at the upper secondary level, and a trend further in that direction is now developing.¹¹² The problem is that boys are more likely than girls to need to repeat classes in secondary school,¹¹³ and they are also more likely than girls to drop out of secondary school before reaching the final year.¹¹⁴ The evidence suggests that there is a link between this pattern and poverty: it is the boys from the poorest households, especially in rural areas, who are less likely to remain in the formal school system.¹¹⁵ The social implications of this trend are of concern.

In other respects, the equity profile of education participation in the Philippines is similar in many respects to that of most other ASEAN member countries. There are significant discrepancies in educational opportunities and attainments that relate to differences in household socioeconomic status.¹¹⁶



Pedagogy and Quality

Pedagogy and quality are significant interrelated areas of concern for the Philippines. As noted earlier, average scores being achieved at three different grade levels by students on National Achievement Tests are modestly improving but still fall short of the designated mastery levels of attainment. The academic achievements of young people in the Philippines may not, on average, be improving.

An important reform initiative under the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda 2006-10 was the formulation of a set of National Competency-Based Teacher

Standards, to be used as a basis for teacher education, the professional development of teachers, their promotion and their deployment. The shift from a purely credentials-based form of recognition of teaching capability to one that takes account of professional competency is significant for the education system, especially as the designated competencies are firmly grounded in a learner-centred model of teaching.

¹¹² UNESCO & UNICEF (2012). Asia-Pacific End of Decade Notes on Education for All: Gender Equality. Bangkok, p.8. See <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/asia-pacific-efa-goal-5-gender-equality-education-2012.pdf>

¹¹³ Ibid. p. 12.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 23.

¹¹⁵ UNESCO (2012). Youth and Skills: Putting Education To Work. EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2102. Paris, p.185.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

3.8. SINGAPORE

Country Background

Singapore is a city-state with a population of 5.18 million in 2011. It has the highest GDP per capita level (US\$50,130 in 2011) of any of the ASEAN Member States (see Table 2.1). The country has a very strong focus on national economic competitiveness, and in 2012-13, the World Economic Forum ranked it as second out of 144 countries on its global competitiveness index.¹¹⁷ Fostering social cohesion through its school system is of vital national importance to Singapore, which is a multi-ethnic society in which most (74%) of its citizens are ethnically Chinese. There are also significant Malay (13%) and Indian (9%) communities. About 80% of the population is literate in English, which is one of the four official languages (the others being Malay, Mandarin and Tamil). A very high proportion of the population is bi-lingual.¹¹⁸

Legislation and Administration

Responsibility for managing the education system in Singapore is given to the Ministry of Education (MOE). The Ministry develops and issues a national curriculum framework for the school system, though increasingly schools are being encouraged to exercise more autonomy in curriculum matters. Two important policy milestones affecting schools in Singapore were the Thinking Schools, Learning Nation initiative, launched in 1997, and the Teach Less, Learn More initiative, launched in 2004. The first initiative sought to reposition the education system to enable it to play a more direct role in contributing to Singapore's global competitiveness. It provided the momentum for the Decentralisation of decision making to schools and to teachers. It also encouraged the development of classroom teaching practices intended to develop students' critical thinking skills. The second built on the first, emphasising the need for a focus on values, attitudes and mindsets in schools that encouraged children to learn because they were passionate about learning. Teachers were encouraged to spend less time giving directions to students about matters of content, and to adopt pedagogical approaches that gave more time and space for students to be inquiring and self-directed learners. Teachers were also encouraged to adopt more authentic forms of student assessment, and allow students to engage more in monitoring their own learning and intellectual growth.

The Education Scorecard

Table 3.8 presents performance indicator data available for Singapore. The adult literacy rate (96.4% in 2012) is above UNESCO's regional average of 94.7% in 2011,¹¹⁹ as are the literacy rates being achieved by young people aged 15 to 24 years (99.9% for males in 2012, and 99.8% for females). The net enrolment rate in primary school (100% from 2010) could not be higher, and the net enrolment rate in secondary school (98.8% in 2012) is also very high. The student-to-teacher ratios for primary (17.1:1 in 2012) and secondary (13.9:1 in 2012) school compare very favourably with rates for most other ASEAN Member States. Survival rates for the primary and secondary school sectors are very high (100% for primary education and 99.3% for secondary education in 2012).

¹¹⁷ World Economic Forum (2013). The Global Competitiveness Report 2012-2013. Geneva.

¹¹⁸ Department of Statistics Singapore (DSS). (2013). Statistics. See: http://www.singstat.gov.sg/statistics/latest_data.html#13

¹¹⁹ UNESCO (2013). UIS Statistics In Brief. See: <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=198>

Table 3.8: ASCC Scorecard for Education for Singapore

| General | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
| Total adult literacy rate (%) | 95.6 | 95.9 | 96.2 | 96.4 |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), male | - | 99.7 | 99.9 | 99.9 |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), female | - | 99.8 | 99.8 | 99.8 |
| Ratio of student to teacher (primary) | 19.6 | 19.3 | 18.6 | 17.7 |
| Ratio of student to teacher (secondary) | 16.4 | 16.1 | 14.8 | 13.9 |
| Human Development Index: mean years of schooling | 9.7 | 10.1 | 10.2 | 10.3 |
| School life expectancy: From primary to tertiary (years) | 14.5 | 15.2 | 15.4 | 15.8 |
| In tertiary (years) | 3.1 | 3.5 | 3.6 | 3.9 |
| Net enrolment rate (%) | | | | |
| Primary education | 96.8 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Secondary education | 95.2 | 98.3 | 98.8 | 98.8 |
| Post-secondary non-tertiary – gross | 74.6 | 73.5 | 78.5 | 87.5 |
| Tertiary education – gross | 63.6 | 71.0 | 72.0 | 81.3 |
| Survival Rates (%) | | | | |
| Primary education | 99.9 | 99.9 | 99.9 | 100 |
| Secondary education | 99.2 | 99.2 | 99.3 | 99.3 |
| Education Attainment of the Population aged 25 years and older (%) | | | | |
| Primary | 25.2 | 23.8 | 23.3 | 22.6 |
| Lower secondary | 11.6 | 10.7 | 10.1 | 9.7 |
| Upper secondary | 22.5 | 19 | 19.6 | 19 |
| Post-Secondary (Non-Tertiary) | 5.7 | 9.5 | 8.9 | 9.1 |
| Tertiary | 35 | 37 | 38.1 | 39.6 |

Note: For Singapore, 'secondary education' refers to grades 7 to 10.

Education System Overview

As shown in Figure 3.9, Singapore's public school structure conforms to a 6-4-2 pattern, that is, six years of primary, four years of secondary, and two years of pre- university studies. School attendance is compulsory at the primary school level, and most students complete grade 10 (known as Secondary 4 in the public school system). The private sector plays the complementary role to the State in providing educational opportunities. Private educational providers must be registered with MOE/CPE, and they mostly conduct study programmes in areas of market appeal, such as in business studies, ICT studies and foreign languages. They also engage in the delivery of degree programmes offered by foreign universities.

Figure 3.9: Overview of Public School System in Singapore

| Age | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | | |
|--------|--------------|---|---|--------------------|---|---|----|----|----|-----------|----|----|----|----------------|----|--|--|
| Grade | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | | |
| Level | Kindergarten | | | Primary | | | | | | Secondary | | | | Pre-University | | | |
| Access | Voluntary | | | Compulsory | | | | | | Voluntary | | | | | | | |
| Cost | Free | | | Heavily subsidised | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Pre-primary

Though pre-school education is not compulsory, most parents in Singapore send their children to a pre-school. Pre-school education is available for children aged three to six years. It includes child-care centres (or nurseries) and kindergartens. It relies almost entirely on the private sector, with providers of pre-school education including religious bodies, for-profit bodies and even a major political party. International schools also provide pre-school programmes for children of expatriate parents.

MOE is responsible for registering all kindergartens, and the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports registers all child-care centres. Fees for attendance at child-care centres vary considerably, and can be expensive. A subsidy is available to assist all parents with these fees, and additional financial support is available for needy families. Kindergarten fees are not quite as expensive.

Primary

The primary school curriculum in Singapore is delivered in two stages. The first is a foundation stage (grades 1 to 4), and the second is an orientation stage (grades 5 and 6). Upon completion of the orientation stage, students sit for a national examination, the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). This examination assesses students' performance in four subjects: English, Mother Tongue Language, Mathematics and Science. Students select their secondary schools based on their PSLE scores.

The focus of teaching at the primary school level is on assisting students to acquire sound values and basic life skills, and to develop a foundation of language and numeracy skills. Students learn three core subjects, that is, English, a second language (their mother tongue) and mathematics. They also study art, civics and moral education, music, social studies and physical education. Science as an area of study is not introduced until grade 3. In the orientation stage of primary school, they study subjects at either a foundation or a standard level, depending upon the learning pace that suits them. They may also mix the levels at which they study subjects, doing some subjects at the foundation level



and others at the standard level. Primary schools generally provide learning support programmes for children in the early years who are experiencing difficulty in adjusting to formal schooling. There are also programmes available to assist children who are intellectually gifted.

MOE is seeking to place more emphasis in the primary school curriculum on non-academic activities in areas such as physical education, art and music. It is also encouraging the development of wider set abilities, including abilities in sport, the performing arts and visual arts.

Secondary

The results students obtain on the PSLE determine in large part the course into which they will be placed in secondary school, that is, whether in the 'Express' course (about 60% of students), the 'Normal (academic)' course (about 25% of students) or the 'Normal (technical)' course (about 15% of students).¹²⁰ The curriculum and teaching approaches across the courses are differentiated to match students' aptitudes, profiles and interests. Students remain in these courses for four to five years of secondary schooling, with the possibility of mobility between courses.

Students in the 'Express' course complete the Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) Examinations (the O-levels) at the end of their fourth year of secondary studies. Students in the 'Normal (academic)' course complete the Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education (Normal Level) Examinations (the N-levels) at the end of their fourth year of secondary studies, and, depending on their performance, they may sit for the O-levels one year later. Subjects studied for the O-levels must include two languages (English and the mother tongue), humanities subjects, and mathematics. There is a range of elective subjects that include the sciences, literature, design and technology, and so on. Students in the 'Normal (technical)' course are graded progressively throughout their studies, and sit for the GCE N-levels at Secondary 4. Co-curricular activities form an integral part of secondary education to develop character, values and life skills. Schools offer a wide range of co-curricular activities that include various sports, the performing arts and uniformed groups.

There are various other pathways through the lower secondary school curriculum. There are, for example: Integrated Programmes, which assist the top 10% in the secondary cohort to proceed through to the completion of the General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) Examinations (A-levels) without having to sit for the O-level examinations; Third Language Programmes, which enable students with strengths in languages to focus on the learning of more than two languages; and Art Elective and Music Elective Programmes, which are intended to meet the needs of students with particular abilities in the visual arts and music.

There are also specialized schools. These include the NorthLight School and Assumption Pathway School (offering an integrated academic and vocational programme for students), the Singapore Sports School, the School of Science and Technology, and the School of the Arts. There are also private and international secondary schools.

Pre-university

About 25% of the secondary school cohort proceeds to pre-university studies, whether at a two-year junior college or at a three-year centralised institute. The large majority of these students then sit for the A-levels, the results of which determine their options for university studies. During their pre-university studies, students can select subjects that are at different levels of difficulty, and they can select subjects from different academic areas, though there is a requirement that they choose

¹²⁰ Tan, J. (2011). Singapore: Schools for the Future. In C. Brock & L. P. Symaco (Eds). *Education in South-East Asia*. London: Symposium Books, p. 159.

one subject that is not in their specialist area of interest. A Science student, for example, would be required to choose at least one Humanities subject.

Polytechnics and Institutes of Technical Education

Generally, students with GCE 'O'-level certificates may wish to apply for admission to one of Singapore's five polytechnics for a three-year diploma programme in fields that include engineering, business studies, accountancy, tourism and hospitality management, mass communications, digital media and applied sciences. Starting from 2013, students who have done well in their GCE 'N'-level examinations could also apply to the Polytechnic Foundation Programme, which is a one-year preparatory programme that prepares polytechnic-bound Normal (Academic) students for entry into the relevant polytechnic diploma courses. About 44% of students from the 2011 primary one cohort were admitted to the polytechnics.

Generally, students with either GCE 'O'- and/or 'N'-level certificates may wish to apply for Nitec or Higher Nitec programmes at the Institute of Technical Education in Singapore. The Nitec or Higher Nitec programmes span across a wide range of vocational areas. Students who performed well in their studies in their Nitec or Higher Nitec programmes may wish to further their studies by taking up relevant diploma programmes at the polytechnics and subsequently progress to relevant degree programmes at the universities if they are found suitable. About 22% of students from the 2011 primary one cohort were admitted to the Institute of Technical Education.

Higher Education

Singapore has four publicly-funded universities that offer full-time degree-level courses. They are: the National University of Singapore (NUS), the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), the Singapore Management University, and the Singapore University of Technology and Design. In addition, there is the Singapore Institute of Technology, which provides an industry-focused university education for students admitted from polytechnics, and the SIM University, which provides publicly subsidised part-time degree programmes for adult learners and working professionals. The NUS and NTU are highly ranked for the quantity and quality of their research achievements. They are deservedly referred to as being 'world class'.



Challenges

Finance

The education system in Singapore is very well funded. The Government allocates a significant proportion (21.0% in 2012) of the national budget to the education sector. The education system is also being encouraged to become strongly market-oriented and competitive, which is presenting some challenges. There is competition between schools, for example, as each strives to do better than others. Thus, well-established schools have been allowed to become 'autonomous', that is, they are permitted to make decisions independently about staffing appointments, salaries, finance, management and the curriculum. Permission has also been given to secondary schools and junior colleges to implement direct school admission processes that involve them in conducting selection interviews and admitting a limited proportion of their annual intake prior to the students concerned

121 Ibid, p. 163.

having sat for the relevant national examinations. It has been observed that the emphasis being given to market-based competition may well serve ultimately to encourage schools to engage in shallow marketing devices, such as the poaching of students with special academic, artistic or sporting abilities, and may also contribute to more social stratification of the schools in the system.¹²¹

Pedagogy and Quality

The Singaporean education system is widely regarded as being one of the world's most successful.¹²² Singaporean students have been among the top scorers in international assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and the Progress in International Readings Literacy Study (PIRLS). Much of this success is attributed to the investment Singapore makes in the quality of its teachers. Teacher trainees have their tuition fees covered by the Singaporean Government, and they are paid a full salary while undertaking their basic training. They are paid competitive salaries that keep pace with the market (taking into consideration relevant qualifications, job scope etc.), but not lead the private sector. Teachers are expected to engage routinely in professional development activities – they are granted 100 hours for professional development each year, and their individual performance is reviewed periodically. Strong support is given to the integration of ICT resources in the curriculum, pedagogy and student assessment, and there is a national commitment to strengthening student competencies in 21st century skills. Schools participate in a quality assurance framework, known as the School Excellence Model, which requires them to undergo annual self-assessments, together with six-yearly external validation processes involving MOE.

In 2010, the Minister for Education, in a keynote address delivered in Canada, attributed Singapore's success to "key leverage points", including: (a) developing leadership talent – putting good principals in charge, investing in their development, and providing an effective framework for teachers to improve their performance; (b) investing in quality teachers – attracting the best candidates into teaching and providing effectively for their professional development; (c) transforming learning through ICT – providing schools with ICT resources and allowing them to decide how best to deploy them; and (d) transparency and accountability – empowering schools to make decisions within a quality assurance framework that is judicious and transparent in seeking to maintain and improve standards.¹²³ Further insights to Singapore's success are provided by the OECD's coordinator of PISA (Andreas Schleicher), who commented on: (a) the national commitment to the importance of education as the route to economic advancement; (b) a culture of continuous improvement – "constantly assessing what is and isn't working using both data and practitioner experience from around the world"; (c) coherence – resulting from "enormous attention to the details of implementation; (d) clear goals, rigorous standards and high-stakes gateways; (e) high-quality teachers and principals; and (f) intelligent accountability – where "serious attention is paid to setting annual goals, to garnering the needed support to meet them and to assessing whether they have been met".¹²⁴

122 World Economic Forum (2013). The Global Competitiveness Report 2012-2013. Geneva, p. 319.

123 Ng Eng Hen (2010). Building a National Education System for the 21st Century. Keynote address to the International Education Summit, September 14, Toronto, Canada.

124 Schleicher, A. (2011). Singapore: Five Days in Thinking Schools and a Learning Nation. Educationtoday, posted November 8, 2011. See: <https://community.oecd.org/community/educationtoday/blog/2011/11/08/singapore-five-days-in-thinking-schools-and-a-learning-nation>.

Schleicher also observed, though, that Singapore's "emphasis on meritocracy alone provides no guarantee for equity", that parents in Singapore spend significant resources on private tutoring, the benefits of which are questionable in terms of the attainment of a high-quality education, and that Singapore might well pay more heed to the value of having a stronger commitment to personalized learning in the school curriculum.¹²⁵ Others have also identified these areas of challenge for Singapore.¹²⁶

Equity

Gender equity does not appear to be a matter of concern for Singapore, other than that, as is happening across many education systems, girls are moving ahead of boys in terms of their likelihood of engaging with and doing well in higher education studies. There does not, however, appear to be much loss of boys from the education system in Singapore during the primary and secondary years of education, as is happening in other systems.

The MOE has been engaging stakeholders to discuss concerns of a stratified view of society, based on academic achievement. This possibility is suggested by the extent to which there may be a "persistent reliance on academic achievement as a primary indicator of an individual's societal worth".¹²⁷ Such views could work against national aspirations such as 'equal opportunities for all' and 'every Singaporean matters'. The concern extends to one that the public will soon regard investments in education with suspicion if those gaining the most from these investments are becoming more and more socially exclusive.

MOE recognises these challenges and is making policy shifts in terms of school admission and allocating resources toward making "every school a good school" so that "every student (is) an engaged learner".

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Tan, J. (2011). Singapore: Schools for the Future. In C. Brock and L. P. Symaco (Eds). Education in South-East Asia. London: Symposium Books, p. 159

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 168. cts at the foundation level and others at the standard level.

3.9. THAILAND

Country Background

Thailand had a population of 67.6 million in 2011. It ranks 38th in the world in terms of its global competitiveness (behind Singapore, Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia).¹²⁸ Its rate of economic growth over the past two decades has been relatively strong. Its level of GDP per capita in 2011 was US\$5,116 (see Table 2.1), and the World Bank classifies its economy as 'upper middle income'. The proportion of the population living below the national poverty line remains surprisingly high, at 7.2% in 2011 (see Table 2.1). Thailand is predominantly (almost 95%) a Buddhist nation, though with a small but distinctive Muslim community (almost 5%) living mainly in the southern provinces adjoining Malaysia. About 75% of the population is ethnically Thai, 14% is ethnically Chinese, and 3% is ethnically Malay. Other ethnic groups include communities living in the highland regions stretching across into Lao PDR, Cambodia and Myanmar. The Thai language is spoken throughout the country, but in many provinces there are also local languages and dialects. The median age (35.1 years) is older than for most other ASEAN Member States.

Legislation and Administration

Thailand's *1997 Constitution* provides that all Thai people will have equal right to receive at least 12 years of basic education, of quality and free of charge. Before the bureaucratic reform in 2002, physical education, cultural affairs and religious affairs were under the Ministry of Education (MOE). However, after the reform, the Department of Physical Education was moved to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports; the former Office of the National Culture Commission was upgraded to the Ministry of Culture; and a Department of Religious Affairs under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and the Office of National Buddhism was established as an independent public agency directly under the Prime Minister. The major reform was carried out in accordance with the *1999 National Education Act* (amended in 2002) and the *2002 Bureaucratic Reform Bill*. Three agencies, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of University Affairs and the Office of National Education Commission, were merged into a single MOE. The MOE is responsible for providing, promoting and overseeing all types of education, including formal, non-formal and informal education, at both basic and higher education levels. It has five main offices, namely the Office of the Permanent Secretary, the Office of the Education Council, the Office of the Basic Education Commission, the Office of the Vocational Education Commission and the Office of the Higher Education Commission.

The importance of decentralisation to the management of public affairs in Thailand is accentuated in the *Decentralisation Act* of 2006, which imposes a strong requirement for decentralisation across all Thai Government ministries. In conformity with the requirement to decentralise authority in educational administration, Educational Service Areas were established under the Office of the Basic Education Commission. Other legislation relating to the education system includes the 2008 *Promotion of Non-Formal and Informal Education Act* and the *2008 Vocational Education Act*. Apart from the MOE, Local Administrative Organisations under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior and other ministries also contribute to educational provision.

¹²⁸ World Economic Forum (2012). Global Competitiveness Index 2012-13. Geneva.

The Education Scorecard

Table 3.9 presents performance indicator data available for Thailand. The adult literacy rate (96.1% in 2010) is marginally above UNESCO's regional average of 94.7% in 2011,¹²⁹ and the literacy rates being achieved by young people aged 15 to 24 years (96.4% for males in 2010, and 96.3% for females) are close to the regional average for young people. The net enrolment rate in primary school (89.7% in 2010) is below UNESCO's regional average, but the net enrolment rate in secondary school is very close to the regional average. The student-to-teacher ratios for primary (19.9:1 in 2010) and secondary (19.9:1 in 2011) education are satisfactory in comparison with rates for most other ASEAN Member States. The gross enrolment rate in tertiary education (47.7% in 2011) is quite high, compared with rates for other ASEAN Member States.

Table 3.9: ASCC Scorecard for Education for Thailand

| General | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
| Total adult literacy rate (%) | - | 96.1 | - | - |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), male | - | 96.4 | - | - |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), female | - | 96.3 | - | - |
| Ratio of student to teacher (primary) | 19.5 | 19.9 | - | - |
| Ratio of student to teacher (secondary) | 21 | - | 19.9 | - |
| Human Development Index: mean years of schooling | - | 6.6 | - | - |
| School life expectancy: From primary to tertiary (years) | 12.3 | - | - | - |
| In tertiary (years) | 2.3 | 2.3 | 2.4 | - |
| Net enrolment rate (%) | | | | |
| Primary education | 89.7 | 89.7 | - | - |
| Secondary education | 72.7 | 77.2 | 74.1 | - |
| Tertiary education – gross | 45.8 | 46.2 | 47.7 | - |

Education System Overview

As shown in Figure 3.10, Thailand's school structure conforms to a 6-3-3 pattern, that is, six years of primary, three years of lower secondary, and three years of upper secondary studies. Since 2009, the MOE has gone beyond Thailand's legislative requirements by providing 15 years of free basic education, including three years of pre-primary education. The duration of compulsory education is 9 years, covering six years of primary and three years of lower secondary education. Government agencies supervise over 50,000 educational institutions, the majority of which (over 30,000 educational institutions) are supervised by the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) in the MOE. An increasing number of public schools under the supervision of the OBEC provide English programmes, using English language as the medium of instruction in core subjects, including mathematics, science and English language. Currently, the percentage of private participation in providing primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and tertiary education is 16.2%, 9.3%, 13.5% and 18.3%, respectively. Private contributors include Catholic diocesan, religious orders and other charitable organisations. Approximately 75 international schools are well

¹²⁹ UNESCO (2013). UIS Statistics In Brief. See: <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/tableviewer/document.aspx?ReportId=198>

established in big cities throughout Thailand. In addition, a number of private Islamic schools are located in the southernmost provinces.

Over 2 million students are studying at tertiary level. There are approximately 80 public universities, 20 public community colleges and 71 private universities. So far, Thai higher education institutions offer 1,017 accredited international programmes, comprising 344 bachelor degrees, 394 master degrees, 249 doctoral degrees and 30 training programmes.

Figure 3.10: Overview of the Public School System in Thailand

| Age | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
|--------|--------------|---|---|------------|---|---|---|----|----|-----------------|----|----|-----------------|----|----|
| Grade | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Level | Kindergarten | | | Primary | | | | | | Lower Secondary | | | Upper Secondary | | |
| Access | Voluntary | | | Compulsory | | | | | | | | | Voluntary | | |
| Cost | Free | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Pre-Primary

The gross enrolment rate in pre-primary education in Thailand in 2011 was 100%, which is higher than for most other ASEAN Member States.¹³⁰The rate has been above 90% since 1999, with no difference between girls and boys. That this rate has been consistently high is, no doubt, an outcome of the free education policy adopted by Thailand when the 1999 *National Education Act* was approved. There are three basic types of pre-primary education institutions: child development centres; pre- school classes offered by public and private providers; and formal kindergarten education offered by public and private schools. Private providers are supervised by the Office of the Private Education Commission (OPEC) and account for about one-fifth of all pre-primary enrolments.¹³¹Though access levels to pre-primary education are high, household socio-economic characteristics continue to impact on it. Concerning pre-school attendance, for example, it has been reported that 74% of children from rich households, but only 54% of children from poor households, attend pre-school programmes.¹³²

Primary

Primary schools have a six-year curriculum. Following a major curriculum reform, there is a focus on eight core subjects: Thai language, mathematics, science, social science, health and physical education, arts, careers and technology, and foreign languages.¹³³ Primary education is approaching a point where it might be said to be universal. Attendance is compulsory, but there are children living in remote rural areas and in urban slums who do not attend primary school, and hence the net enrolment rate in primary education in 2010 was only 89.7%. Progress is being steadily made in bringing these young people into the education system.

There is, however, some national concern about the quality of the primary education system. National tests and the results of international studies indicate a number of factors requiring attention. These include: a national shortage of qualified and trained teachers, the lack of an incentive for excellent teachers (especially those with expertise in science, mathematics and English language)

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ UNESCO (2012). Youth and Skills: Putting Education To Work. EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2012. Paris, p.350.

¹³² Ibid., p. 51.

¹³³ Trakulphadetkrai, N. V. (2011). Thailand: Educational Equality and Quality. In C. Brock and L. Pe Symaco (Eds). Education in South-East Asia. Oxford: Symposium Books, p. 199.

to work in remote parts of the country, especially in mathematics, science and English language; and a general lack of availability of high-quality learning materials, especially materials able to be employed with support from Internet services and resources.

Lower Secondary

There has been a significant increase in the level of participation of young people in secondary education overall – in 2011 the net enrolment rate was 74.1%, which compares with a gross enrolment rate of only 64% in 2002.¹³⁴ Attendance at lower secondary education is compulsory. As with primary education, however, there are readily identifiable groups of children who are not participating. OBEC has expanded educational opportunities for children belonging to those groups. Scholarships for lower secondary education participation are also being provided. The curriculum in the lower secondary education area requires students to study Thai language, mathematics, science and English. Additional elective studies are then undertaken, reflecting local needs and circumstances – as, for example, occurs in the south of Thailand where a majority of students would elect to undertake Islamic studies.

Upper Secondary

The upper secondary curriculum has two tracks: general academic and vocational. The general academic track is the more popular, but a sizable proportion of students participate in the vocational track. The current Minister of Education of Thailand aims to further increase the proportion of students in the vocational track. This trend may place a great deal of pressure on the availability of suitably qualified teachers. However, the MOE also intends to improve the teaching-learning quality in vocational education institutions by expanding the dual education system (otherwise known as the dual vocational training program), which integrates learning in schools with learning at the workplace. This development will mean greater collaboration with private manufacturers and entrepreneurs to strengthen school-industry linkages. It will also involve providing incentives to the private sector to increase and encourage their participation in the dual education system. Ultimately, it is hoped to raise the proportion of learners in the vocational and general education streams to a ratio of 50:50, and to equip vocational graduates with required knowledge and skills.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Thailand has over 400 public vocational colleges offering training in agriculture, animal husbandry, nursing, administration, hospitality and tourism. Businesses may offer dormitory accommodation to enable daily commuting by students to classes. There are also a sizable number of private TVET providers across the country. TVET in Thailand is offered in three forms: the normal programme; the dual vocational training programme; and non-formal programme. There is a certificate-level qualification available to students who complete a three-year vocational training programme following completion of the final year of lower secondary school. The two other qualifications are a technical diploma, completed after attainment of the certificate, and a higher diploma, which also acts as a basis for admission to a university course of studies. The Department of Vocational Education (currently known as the Office of Vocational Education Commission) introduced the dual vocational training programmes in 1995. These programmes involve on-the-job training in selected organisations in the private sector over a three-year period, with more than half of the time devoted to learning in the workplace setting. In addition, a Vocational Qualifications Framework was also set up to establish the skills, knowledge and capabilities needed by employers.

¹³⁴ UNESCO (2013). Education System Profiles. See: <http://www.unescobkk.org/education/resources/education-system-profiles/>

Higher Education

Thailand has 71 private higher education institutions, 20 public community colleges and 80 public higher education institutions, consisting of 63 limited admission universities, two open admission universities, and 15 autonomous universities, which include two Buddhist universities. OHEC has set up the Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education to establish the skills, knowledge and capabilities required for each qualification. Generally, students who complete upper secondary education can apply to attend a public university through a centralised system of student admissions and must take the Ordinary National Educational Test (ONET) and/or the Advanced National Educational Test (ANET). However, some university faculties administer a direct admission system. Teacher training programmes are offered in the Faculty of Education in some universities, for example, Chulalongkorn University and Srinakharinwirot University, as well as in Rajabhat universities, which offer traditional teacher training in most provinces. The Rajamangala Institute of Technology became the Rajamangala University of Technology in 2005 and currently comprises nine universities providing undergraduate and graduate levels of education.

There has been an extraordinary growth in higher education student numbers during the past 15 years or so. The transition rate of students from upper secondary school to higher education is particularly high – at 74% in 2009, and the gross enrolment rate in tertiary education was 47.7% in 2011 (see Table 3.9). This rapid expansion can be partially explained by both rising demand for higher education, stimulated by the availability of free basic education and generous student loan system for higher education students, and an expansion of capacity across the university system. The Thai Government is steadily providing public universities with more institutional autonomy and academic freedom. This means that public universities are required to obtain sufficient budget to be sustainable in the long run. Most public universities provide special programmes for which they can charge high tuition fees and receive extra budget income. As a result of public subsidies, public universities can charge tuition fees that are about one-half of the size of the tuition fees charged by private-sector universities. The enrolment share of private universities is reported to be declining, and public higher education providers now account for 85% of all enrolments.

Non-Formal and Informal Education

Since 1979, the Non-Formal Education Department has been the main agency promoting non-formal education in both general and vocational streams. By the 2008 Non-Formal and Informal Education Act, the agency became the Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education to reflect its extensive role in promoting non-formal and informal education as mechanisms to stimulate lifelong learning. There are now over 7,000 Community Learning Centres in Thailand and they have become an essential means of empowering individuals and promoting community development through lifelong education for all. Resource persons, including local elders and monks, play an important role in providing literacy, post-literacy, income generation, and life skill programmes. They provide basic education and are important in improving the quality of life for community members consistent and compatible with their environments and social contexts.

Currently, non-formal and informal education is provided to several target groups, including the disabled, disadvantaged children, the elderly, workers, farmers, local leaders, convicts and Thais living abroad. The Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education offers 3 types of non-formal education services, including the literacy promotion program, the basic education equivalency program for those over 15 years of age who missed schooling opportunities informal education, and continuing education programmes for those who have completed in the basic education. In the 2012 fiscal year, the targeted number for the literacy promotion program and the basic education

equivalency program was 84,000 and 1,053,571 participants respectively. In the 2012 fiscal year, the continuing education program served over a million learners in several areas, including vocational skills, life skills and social/community development.

A total of 906 public libraries are currently used as lifelong learning centers and provide books, Internet, reading, and various learning promotion activities. The Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education supervises 16 science education centers and organizes science promotion activities for communities across the country, using mobile science caravans. In addition, it is responsible for organizing educational radio programmes and educational television programmes.

Challenges

Finance

The Thai education system is mainly financed by the national budget, with 29.5% of annual government expenditure in 2011 allocated to the education system – which is by far the largest proportion for any of the ASEAN Member States (see Table 2.1). The Government has been consistently generous in its financial support of the education system. For much of the past decade, the proportion of its budget spent on the education system has been above 20%. The largest share of this public expenditure has been on basic education, covering pre-primary, primary and secondary education. Private expenditure on education accounts for about one-quarter of national expenditure on education.¹³⁵ The main costs here are tuition fees for private schools, but there is also substantial expenditure on fees charged by universities, and on private tutors. Private funding is, however, slowly declining, and so the education system is becoming increasingly dependent upon public sources of funds. Free public schooling is politically popular, but its weight on the national budget is becoming heavier. The current Minister of Education views the private education sector as an important educational asset and strength of the nation. He emphasizes that greater participation by the private sector should be promoted, and that private sector entities should assume greater responsibility for the support and conduct of educational programmes.

Governance and Management

While the MOE has responsibility for the education system as a whole, the 2006 Decentralisation Act stipulated that financial management responsibilities should be delegated to the provincial, district and even institutional levels. The process of decentralising decision-making authority within the public education sector is, however, challenging. Technically, Local Administration Organisations, which are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior, should be given responsibility for the management of staff members and school assets. The Local Administration Organisations are expected to work with Education Service Areas to ensure the effective management of public resources at a local level. In practice, however, the requirement of the local



¹³⁵ Panyasavatsut, C. (2013). Thailand: Issues in Education. In L. P. Symaco (Ed.). Education in South- East Asia. London: Bloomsbury, p. 282.

areas and Local Administrative Organisations' readiness and capability in providing different levels of education varies. So far, the majority of schools under local administration supervision are pre-primary and primary level institutions. The process of decentralisation is time-consuming, and a general view in the public education sector is that, by default, it tends to remain fairly centralised in terms of its management.¹³⁶

Quality

Given the high level of public financial commitment to the education system, the issue of educational quality is possibly the area of greatest challenge for the education system in Thailand. Recent evidence of under-performance has been provided by two data sets.¹³⁷ The ONETs, conducted at the sixth, ninth and twelfth grade levels, indicate that Thai primary and secondary students perform very poorly in English language, mathematics and science. The PISA data set also indicates poor performance. The PISA results for 2009, for example, showed that most Thai students were below the OECD average in the areas of reading, mathematical and scientific literacy. Indeed, "nearly half the Thai students did not have basic reading and science skills; and more than half lacked basic mathematical skills."¹³⁸ There has also been a drop in the level of performance of Thai students over the period from 2000 (when Thailand participated in the inaugural PISA survey) and 2009. The problem is, then, that schools are better resourced than ever before, yet quality, as indicated by the ONETs and PISA, is declining.

Differences in teacher quality may be a significant factor. Another may be the difference in quality of schools across regions and income groups. Evidence available from the PISA results shows, for example, a marked difference between urban and rural schools, and between different socioeconomic groups. The Government has allocated the so-called per-head subsidies to schools in line with the number of students in a particular school. Consequently, students in rural areas attending small- sized schools with small teacher-to-pupil ratios may also be under-performing, because of the more serious resource constraints on these schools.

The current Minister of Education's policy will focus on educational reform in six areas, namely: curriculum reform; teaching-learning reform; testing, assessment and evaluation of learners; university admissions system; teacher evaluation, accreditation and promotion; and assessment of educational institutions. These six areas must be interrelated and focused on learner quality and achievements. Furthermore, teacher evaluation, accreditation and promotion will be based on students' performance and achievements.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 277.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 90.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

Equity

Gender equity in terms of access to educational opportunities is not generally a significant challenge for Thailand, where gender parity exists throughout much of the school system, except in relation to repeating grades in primary school. Boys in primary education in Thailand are significantly more likely to have to repeat grades than girls.¹³⁹ The pattern is also evident in secondary education, but is not as pronounced. Boys in Thailand are also less likely to make the transition from primary to secondary school, and so the girls are more likely than boys to participate in secondary schooling.¹⁴⁰

Even with a student loan fund to assist, children from poor families tend to be less likely than children from rich families to remain in schools to complete upper secondary education, and to proceed to higher education. The children least likely to complete upper secondary education include children living in remote rural areas, from immigrant families, and from ethnic communities in the Northeast, North and far South.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ UNESCO & UNICEF (2012). Asia-Pacific End of Decade Notes on Education for All: Gender Equality. Bangkok, p. 5. See <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/asia-pacific-efa-goal-5-gender-equality-education-2012.pdf>.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁴¹ UNESCO (2013). Education System Profiles. See: <http://www.unescobkk.org/education/resources/education-system-profiles/>

3.10. VIET NAM

Country Background

Viet Nam has been following a course of market-oriented economic reform since the mid-1980s that has enabled it to achieve significant economic growth and develop a strong export sector. Its level of GDP per capita in 2011 was US\$1,403 (see Table 2.1), and the World Bank now classifies its economy as 'lower middle-income'. The proportion of its population of 87.84 million in 2011 who were living below the national poverty line was high, however, at 13.1% (see Table 2.1). Most (86%) of its people are ethnically *Kinh*. In addition, there are 53 other ethnic nationalities, most living in the more remote parts of the country.¹⁴²

Legislation and Administration

Viet Nam's *Constitution* refers to education as being the "foremost national policy". *The Education Law of 2005* accords every citizen, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, beliefs, gender, family background, social status or economic conditions, an equal right of access to learning opportunities. It also obliges the State and the community to help the poor to have access to education and to enable gifted people to develop their talents. State priorities for the education system are expressed in ten-year strategy statements, such as the *Education Development Strategy* for 2011-2020. These typically express fairly ambitious goals for the system. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) sets broad policy directions for the education system. Provincial authorities are mainly responsible for upper secondary and professional education, and district authorities are mainly responsible for early childhood and primary education. In the TVET sector, there are shared, but also overlapping, management responsibilities exercised by MOET and the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA). In the higher education sector, MOET approves the curriculum and admission quotas for all higher education institutions, but there are at least 11 ministries, including MOET, and more than 60 government instrumentalities, that individually manage their own public universities.

The Education Scorecard

Table 3.10 presents performance indicator data available for Viet Nam. The adult literacy rate (93.4% in 2011) is marginally below UNESCO's regional average of 94.7% in 2011,¹⁴³ as are the literacy rates being achieved by young people aged 15 to 24 years (97.5% for males in 2011, and



¹⁴² UNESCO (2013). Education System Profiles. See: <http://www.unescobkk.org/education/resources/education-system-profiles/> 143 UNESCO (2013). UIS Statistics In Brief. See: <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=198>

¹⁴³ UNESCO (2013). UIS Statistics In Brief. See: <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=198>

96.7% for females). The net enrolment rate in primary school (99% in 2011) is quite high, and it is evident that survival rates in primary and lower secondary school are relatively (99% for primary education in 2011, and 87.24% for secondary education). The gross enrolment rate in tertiary education (54.25% in 2010) is remarkably high and suggests that a significant proportion of young people proceed to some form of tertiary education.

Table 3.10: ASCC Scorecard for Education for Viet Nam

| General | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
| Total adult literacy rate (%) | - | 93.2 | 93.4 | - |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), male | - | 97.4 | 97.5 | - |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), female | - | 96.5 | 96.7 | - |
| Ratio of student to teacher (primary) | 19.9 | 19.63 | 19.40 | 18.88 |
| Ratio of student to teacher (secondary) | 17.75 | 16.98 | 16.62 | 16.18 |
| Ratio of student to teacher (secondary)/lower secondary | 16.61 | 15.89 | 15.79 | 15.44 |
| Ratio of student to teacher (secondary)/upper secondary | 20.26 | 19.31 | 18.35 | 17.73 |
| Human Development Index: mean years of schooling (school life expectancy) | 11.6 | 11.9 | - | - |
| Expected years of schooling: In tertiary (years) | 1 | 1.1 | 1.2 | - |
| Net enrolment rate (%) | | | | |
| Primary education | 98.5 | 98 | 99 | - |
| Secondary education | 84.96 | 85.09 | 87.24 | - |
| Tertiary education – gross | 51.73 | 52.59 | 54.25 | - |
| Survival Rates (%) | | | | |
| Primary education | 91.32 | 92.16 | 92.08 | - |
| Lower Secondary | 77.99 | 79.12 | 81.32 | - |
| Upper Secondary | 76.23 | 79.82 | 82.47 | - |
| University Qualifications | - | - | - | - |

Education System Overview

As shown in Figure 3.11, Viet Nam's public school structure conforms to a 5-4-3 pattern, that is, five years of primary, four years of lower secondary, and two years of upper secondary studies. Attendance at school up to the age of 15 years is now the norm, and participation rates in upper secondary and higher education are climbing rapidly. Private education, referred to officially as 'non-public' education, plays a very minor role in Viet Nam's school system. In the higher education sector, about 16% of all students are enrolled in private universities or colleges. This proportion is expected to increase over coming years.

Figure 3.11: Overview of Public School System in Viet Nam

| Age | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
|--------|-------------|---|---|------------|---|---|---|----|----|-----------|----|----|-----------------|----|----|
| Grade | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Level | Pre-Primary | | | Primary | | | | | | Secondary | | | Upper Secondary | | |
| Access | Voluntary | | | Compulsory | | | | | | | | | Voluntary | | |
| Cost | Free | | | | | | | | | | | | Fees | | |

Pre-primary

Crèches accept children aged from three months to three years, and kindergartens accept children aged from three to five years. Participation in pre-school education is compulsory, but actual rates of participation vary, and are generally much higher in cities and for better-off families. Private providers are becoming more prominent: in 2010, they accounted for almost one-half of all enrolments.¹⁴⁴



In 2008-09, the gross enrolment rate for children in crèches was 20%, while for children aged five years in kindergartens it was 90.2%.¹⁴⁵ The Government has expressed its determination to achieve universal participation in pre-school education by 2015.

Primary

Primary schools accept children at the age of six and provide five one-year grade levels. Schools follow a national curriculum, with some of the time made available to address local content. Schools are strongly encouraged to offer foreign language training as an elective in the upper primary grade levels. English is generally the language selected. In 2009-10, there were 15,172 primary schools in Viet Nam, providing for a total enrolment of 6.9 million students (47.3% of whom were girls).¹⁴⁶

Lower Secondary

Lower secondary schools provide a further four grade levels of education. The lower secondary curriculum seeks to consolidate and develop student capability in Viet Nameese, mathematics, national history, the social sciences, the natural sciences, informatics and foreign languages. Schools follow a national curriculum, but some flexibility in applying the national curriculum at a local level is permitted. In 2009-10, there were 10,060 lower secondary schools, and a further 319 combined lower and upper secondary schools, providing for a total enrolment of 5.2 million

¹⁴⁴ UNESCO (2012). Youth and Skills: Putting Education To Work. EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2102. Paris, p.334.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ UNESCO (2011). World Data on Education: Viet Nam, 7th edn, 2010/11. See http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Viet_Nam.pdf.

students (49.8% of whom were girls).¹⁴⁷ Students who successfully complete grade 9 receive a lower secondary school diploma.

Upper Secondary

Upon successful attainment of a lower secondary diploma, students may proceed to upper secondary education, subject to conditions set by provincial authorities. In 2009-10, there were 2,242 upper secondary schools, providing for a total enrolment of 2.886 million pupils (50.2% of whom were girls).¹⁴⁸ Whereas the curriculum for primary and lower secondary education is standardised nationally, at the upper secondary level there is a general curriculum and a special curriculum, with the special curriculum intended to allow students to specialise in certain subject areas (natural science, social sciences or the arts). Currently, at the end of upper secondary education, students must sit for a final examination, for which a set of six subjects including literature, maths and a foreign language are core, and three other electives. All the subjects are approved by MOET. Students who successfully complete grade 12 receive an upper secondary school diploma from provincial authorities.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

The TVET sector includes two streams, professional secondary education and vocational training. Professional secondary education has one level only, an intermediate level (hence it is often referred to as professional intermediate education). Students require three to four years to complete their studies if they have been admitted on the basis of completion of a lower secondary school diploma, or one to two years of study if they have been admitted on the basis of completion of an upper secondary school diploma. Professional secondary education programmes are provided by professional secondary schools belonging to ministries or provincial People's Committees, or they may be provided by professional secondary schools that are affiliated with higher education institutions, or that have been established by business companies or an industry organisation. Professional secondary schools are under management by MOET for academic and enrolment matters. They are accountable administratively to provincial People's Committees.

The second stream, vocational training, falls exclusively under the management of MOLISA. It has three levels: a basic level, an intermediate level and a college level. Admission to the basic level is relatively unrestricted, and these programmes, which may take from three months to one year to complete, are made available through vocational training centres, vocational secondary schools, vocational colleges, professional intermediate schools, and so on. Admission to the intermediate level is restricted to students who have completed either a lower secondary school diploma, in which case the training programmes may take three to four years to complete, or an upper secondary school diploma, in which case the training programmes may take only one to two years to complete.

In 2010, Viet Nam had 513 vocational education institutions, of which 290 were professional secondary schools. There were 686,184 professional secondary students, mainly enrolled full-time. Figures on enrolments in vocational training centres, schools and colleges are not readily available.

The Government has indicated that it wishes to concentrate foreign assistance on developing high-quality vocational training. It has assigned responsibility to MOLISA to formulate a project to establish 40 high-quality vocational schools, including 10 that are of international standard, with the 10 international-standard institutions to be established by 2020.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.



The higher education sub-sector includes undergraduate level education, which may be provided by a college or a university, master-degree level education, which may be offered by a university, an academy, or, in approved cases, cooperatively with a research institute, and doctoral level education, which may be offered by a university, an academy (for example, the Viet Nam Academy of Science and Technology) or an approved research institute.

Students admitted to a college to complete an undergraduate level training program require between one and three years to complete their studies. They may be admitted on the basis of having completed an upper secondary school diploma, a professional secondary (intermediate) qualification, or a vocational training (intermediate) qualification. Depending on the nature and duration of the training program undertaken, they may graduate with a certificate, a diploma or an associate degree.

Students admitted to a university to complete an undergraduate level training program require at least four years to complete their studies, though some training programmes (for example, medicine and dentistry) may require six years. Students may be admitted on the basis of having completed an upper secondary school diploma, a vocational training (intermediate) qualification, or a college-level vocational training qualification: they graduate with a degree. Students admitted to full-time undergraduate training programmes are generally required to have undertaken the national university entrance examination. Students admitted to part-time undergraduate level training programmes may not always have undertaken this examination, particularly if completing their studies on an in-service basis involving a partnership between a university and an employer.

Students admitted to master-degree level programmes at a university require one to two years to complete a program of studies, while students admitted to a doctoral level program at a university or research institute require two to four years to complete their candidature. Students admitted to master-degree and doctoral programmes may be required to complete an entrance examination.

The higher education sub-sector has expanded dramatically during the past decade. The average annual growth rate in enrolments over the period from 2001 to 2011 was 9%, with an average of 8 new universities and 12 new colleges being established each year to meet the demand.

Challenges

Finance

The education system is well supported in financial terms by the Government, which allocates as much as 20% of the State budget to education. Most (52%) of this expenditure is directed to primary and lower secondary education.¹⁴⁹ The system is also well supported by private household expenditure. Indeed, private household expenditure on education is now claimed to be approaching or exceeding public expenditure on education.¹⁵⁰ Tuition fees, which are charged at all levels other

¹⁴⁹ UNICEF (2010). An Analysis of the Situation of Children in Viet Nam, 2010, p.171. See: http://www.unicef.org/sitan/files/SitAn-Viet_Nam_2010_Eng.pdf.

¹⁵⁰ London, J. (2011). Education in Viet Nam: Historical Roots, Recent Trends. In J. London (Ed.) Education in Viet Nam. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 24.

than for primary education, are a significant component of private household expenditure on education and were estimated in 2006 to account for 31.8% of all private household expenditure on education.¹⁵¹

Governance and Management

Even in official policy documents, management of the education system in Viet Nam is recognised as needing to be more comprehensively reformed. *The Education Development Training Strategy for 2011-20* states that there is a “lack of synchronisation” across the education system, and that education management remains “inadequate”.

A significant issue concerns the training of managers and administrators. It is estimated that there are over 10,000 educational administrators working for MOET in provincial and district offices, and that there are a further 80,000 administrators working for schools, colleges and universities.

Pedagogy

The kind of teaching that is widely practised in Viet Nam encourages students to focus more on mastery of theory and the acquisition of memorized knowledge than on the development of soft skills such as analytical, problem solving and communication skills. Teaching approaches remain largely traditional, with examinations relying heavily on the capacity of the students to reproduce knowledge and skills learnt in this way. New approaches to teaching are being adopted. MOET, with financial assistance from the World Bank, has begun developing a new student-centred learning program to improve the quality of teaching and learning in primary schools. Even where teachers encourage students to be more proactive in their approach to learning, the shortage of learning materials and the limitations of the physical facilities are major constraints.

The education system lacks an effective national regulatory framework for periodically reviewing the quality of teaching and the curriculum. There is, therefore, no significant pressure exerted to achieve nation-wide compliance with quality standards. Teaching quality continues to be judged largely on the basis of having the required academic qualifications, with less attention given to having an adequate subject knowledge, being competent in practical teaching skills and having the capacity to motivate students.¹⁵² National standards for secondary schools have recently been officially adopted and a nationwide quality assessment process for accrediting these schools is being implemented. The implementation of national reform agendas is, however, characteristically slow. The business community, particularly in geographically large middle and southern cities, has become a vocal source of pressure for change. Industry wants the education system to provide students with more than knowledge of theory. It values flexibility, adaptability and communication skills, and it needs students leaving schools, colleges and universities to be able to exercise initiative, accept responsibility, make decisions and provide effective customer service. In certain important sectors of the economy, it also requires students to have a high level of proficiency in foreign languages, especially English. The business community is not, however, inclined to invest in the education system. In the case of higher education graduates, it relies on the State to produce the graduates and then it complains about their quality.

¹⁵¹ UNICEF (2010). An Analysis of the Situation of Children in Viet Nam, 2010, p.187. See: http://www.unicef.org/sitan/files/SitAn-Viet_Nam_2010_Eng.pdf.

¹⁵² UNESCO (2011). World Data on Education: Viet Nam, 7th edn, 2010/11. See http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Viet_Nam.pdf.

Gender-based inequity is generally not evident as far as school enrolment rates are concerned, except among particular ethnic minority groups and in certain geographic regions.¹⁵³ Differences between ethnic nationalities in school attendance rates are, however, a challenge. In 2006, for example, a national sample survey found that net attendance rates at secondary school were lower for ethnic minority groups than for all other young people – among girls, for example, the attendance rate was 61.6% for ethnic minority groups, but 82.6% for all other students.¹⁵⁴ To improve enrolment rates in secondary and vocational education among ethnic minority groups, the Government – and International Aid Organisations – are providing more scholarships, constructing more boarding schools, encouraging the learning of Viet Nameese, and providing tuition fee exemptions. It has also approved the use of community languages in schools attended by ethnic minority children, though, in fact, teachers, who in most cases do not come from these communities, may not know how to use a local language in their teaching. Viet Nam's ethnic nationalities tend to live in the more remote and mountainous parts of the country, and so their geographic location adds to the difficulties of providing them with an adequate level of education. Children living in mountainous areas are possibly worst off. Bad weather and poor roads may disrupt attendance at school. As they get older, young people from these regions, especially girls, may be required to spend more time helping out at home.

Enrolment rates in pre-school and secondary education also differ significantly between rural and urban areas. The survey conducted in 2006 found, for example, that 75 per cent of urban children attended a pre-school, compared with only 51 per cent of rural children.¹⁵⁵ Various conditions impact on these rates. Parents in rural areas are possibly less aware of the value of more education for their children, and they are certainly less likely to be earning high incomes. Rural areas are also more likely to experience a shortage of qualified teachers, especially younger and recently qualified teachers.

There is a positive correlation between private household income and years of schooling undertaken by a young person in Viet Nam. The survey conducted in 2006 found that attendance at pre-school was twice as likely for children from the wealthiest families as for children from the poorest families – 80%, compared with 36%.¹⁵⁶ It also found that the rate of secondary school attendance was 92% for the wealthiest families, but only 60% for the poorest families.

Data limitations constrain discussion of the extent to which Viet Nam is making recent progress in terms of introducing students with disabilities into inclusive education settings. In 2005-06, the percentage of children with disabilities enrolled in inclusive education settings was only 31%.¹⁵⁷ This rate is, however, a considerable improvement on the rate of only 9.1% in 2002-03.

¹⁵³ UNESCO & UNICEF (2012). *Asia-Pacific End of Decade Notes on Education for All: Gender Equality*. Bangkok, p. 16. See <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/asia-pacific-efa-goal-5- gender-equality-education-2012.pdf>.

¹⁵⁴ UNICEF (2010). *An Analysis of the Situation of Children in Viet Nam, 2010*, p.189. See: http://www.unicef.org/sitan/files/SitAn-Viet_Nam_2010_Eng.pdf.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 176

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.176.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.176.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

Appendix A

List of Persons Consulted

| Name | Details |
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| Mr Ky-Anh Nguyen | Assistant Director/Head, Education, Youth and Training, ASEC, Jakarta/Indonesia |
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Appendix B

Actions for Education in the *ASCC Blueprint* and Specific Programmes in the *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)*

ASEAN's strategic objective is to ensure the integration of education priorities into ASEAN's development agenda and to create a knowledge based society; to achieve universal access to primary education; to promote early child care and development; and to enhance awareness of ASEAN to youth through education and activities to build an ASEAN identity based on friendship and cooperation.

ASCC Blueprint

| Actions for Education in the ASCC Blueprint | |
|---|--|
| A1. ADVANCING AND PRIORITISING EDUCATION | |
| i. | Achieve universal access to primary education across ASEAN by 2015 with priorities to eradicate illiteracy and to ensure compulsory primary education for all and gender equality in education, through advocating for equal opportunity in education regardless of social class, geography ethnicity, background or physical disabilities, with 70 percent target benchmark achieved by the end of 2011 |
| ii. | Improve the quality and adaptability of education, including technical/vocational/skills training education in the ASEAN region by developing a technical assistance program including training for teaching staff and staff exchange program at higher education level for this purpose by 2009, in particular CLMV |
| iii. | Undertake periodic reviews of the various ASEAN scholarship programmes for the purpose of rationalizing and consolidating them in order to increase their impact |
| iv. | Use ICT to promote education and life-long learning particularly in underserved communities through open, distance education and e-learning |
| v. | Promote education networking in various levels of educational institutions and continue university networking and enhance and support student and staff exchanges and professional interactions including creating research clusters among ASEAN institutions of higher learning, in close collaboration with the Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) and the ASEAN University Network (AUN) |
| vi. | Promote equal access to education for women and girls and enhance the exchange of best practices on gender-sensitive school curriculum |
| vii. | Strengthen collaboration with other regional and international educational organisations to enhance the quality of education in the region |
| viii. | Include the teaching of common values and cultural heritage in school curricula and develop teaching materials and capability for this purpose starting in |
| ix. | Develop and offer courses on ASEAN studies, both in the primary, secondary and |
| x. | Continue the ASEAN Youth Leadership Development Programme and similar programmes with the same objectives and encourage networking among ASEAN Youth Programme alumni to promote solidarity and mutual understanding higher education levels |
| xi. | Support learning of ASEAN languages and promote exchanges of linguists |

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| xii. | Establish ASEAN university games, ASEAN youth peace corps, ASEAN computer games and ASEAN Science Olympiad to promote greater interaction and understanding among the youths in the region |
| xiii. | Exchange of cultural performers and scholars among Member States through education system to give greater access and understanding of the different cultures of ASEAN Member States |
| xiv. | Promote the options of university placements in an institution of higher learning in a second ASEAN Member State through “a semester abroad” or “a year abroad” programme |
| xv. | Support the citizens of Member States to become proficient in the English language, so that the citizens of the ASEAN region are able to communicate directly with one another and participate in the broader international community |
| xvi. | Promote life-long learning |
| D3. PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION | |
| i. | Implement the ASEAN Environmental Education Action Plan (AEEAP) 2008-2012 |
| ii. | Establish a baseline assessment on the extent to which national curricula in the basic education system include Environmental Education (EE) and Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD) content; |
| iii. | Establish a baseline assessment on the extent to which teacher education programmes and in-service and pre-service training address EE/ ESD theory and practice; |
| iv. | Ensure that Quality Assurance (QA) systems for formal education (that is, national standards) require the inclusion of EE/ ESD issues in the relevant disciplines |
| v. | Promote research on EE/ ESD issues to ensure continuing development in formal education |
| vi. | Promote sustainable schools (for example, eco-schools/ green schools) concept and practice throughout ASEAN; |
| vii. | Develop EE curricula, materials and resources that are locally relevant and complement ESD at the local/ community level |
| viii. | Establish an ASEAN sustainable/green/eco-school network; |
| ix. | Build and strengthen existing networks of NGOs, universities and media throughout the region to be effective practitioners, promoters, communicators and agents of change for EE and ESD; and |
| E1. PROMOTING ASEAN AWARENESS | |
| vi. | Support school activities promoting ASEAN awareness, such as by encouraging the observance of the annual ASEAN Day |
| xxii. | Include the studies on ASEAN arts and culture as well as their values in school curriculum |
| E.2. PRESERVATION AND PROMOTION OF ASEAN CULTURAL HERITAGE | |
| iii. | Undertake risk assessments and prepare emergency response plans for rescuing threatened significant cultural heritage across ASEAN; Promote ASEAN civilization studies, including through collaboration between the ASEAN culture officials and the members of the AUN |

ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015)

| Programmes | |
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| Priority 1 – Promoting ASEAN Awareness | |
| 1-1. | Supporting the establishment of ASEAN guidelines for promoting ASEAN awareness and common values among pre-school, primary and secondary students. |
| 1-2. | Supporting ASEAN curriculum development Primary and Secondary Education |
| 1-3. | Supporting capacity development of Ministry of Education staff, teachers, and educators; (Primary and Secondary Education) |
| 1-4. | Supporting ASEAN Studies Programmes (undergraduate, graduate). |
| 1.5. | The establishment of “ASEAN Corner” or celebrating “ASEAN Day” every 8 August. |
| 1.6. | Encouraging student, faculty, sporting and cultural exchanges. |
| Priority 2A – Increasing Access to Quality Primary and Secondary Education | |
| 2.1. | Sharing best practices in promoting universal and equal access to quality education through partnership programmes and technical assistance; benchmarking; NGO, private sector, and community initiatives; tracking mechanisms for students at risk of dropping out and collaborative gathering of data for use in planning. |
| 2.2. | Documenting and sharing practices for “reaching the unreached.” |
| 2.3. | Incorporating effective approaches for systematic teacher development programmes and use of relevant data for planning, policy formulation and recommendations. |
| 2.4. | Using university and corporate social responsibility programmes to broaden access to education. |
| Priority 2B – Increasing the Quality of Education– Performance Standards, Lifelong Learning and Professional Development | |
| 2.5. | Promoting quality through networks of teachers, principals, administrators, teaching institutes, schools, and teacher associations. |
| 2.6. | Supporting Teacher Development Initiatives. |
| 2.7. | Sharing best practices on teacher incentives, awards, and appraisal. |
| 2.8. | Promoting regional teacher accreditation and mobility programmes (physical and virtual). |
| 2.9. | Enhancing regional capacity building efforts for school management, school improvement planning, leadership development, and school governance. |
| Priority 3 – Cross-Border Mobility and Internationalisation of Education | |
| 3.1. | Share knowledge of regional resources and interconnectedness of AMS. |
| 3.2. | Strengthen activities that support student exchanges and scholarships at all levels. |
| 3.3. | Develop a regional action plan to internationalise higher education with a focus on regional strategies. |
| PRIORITY 4 – Support for Other Sectoral Bodies with an Interest in Education | |
| 4.1. | Supporting workshops and meetings to form clear partnerships for collaboration between sectors, to complement each other’s work and reduce duplication. |
| 4.2. | Analysing and/or refining teacher training in environmental education, disaster risk reduction and management, Human Rights education and HIV/AIDS. |

Appendix C

Education Scorecard Indicators

| Indicator | Definition | Interpretation |
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| General | | |
| Total adult literacy rate (%) | Percentage of population aged 15 years and over who can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement on his/her everyday life. Generally, 'literacy' also encompasses 'numeracy', the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations. | A high literacy rate suggests the existence of an effective primary education system and/or literacy programmes that have enabled a large proportion of the population to acquire the ability of using the written word (and making simple arithmetic calculations) in daily life and to continue learning. |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), male | Percentage of males aged 15 to 24 years who can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement on their everyday life. Generally, 'literacy' also encompasses 'numeracy', the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations. | A high literacy rate among the 15 to 24 year old males suggests a high level of participation and retention in primary education, and its effectiveness in imparting the basic skills of reading and writing. |
| Youth (15-24 years) literacy rate (%), female | Percentage of females aged 15 to 24 years who can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement on their everyday life. Generally, 'literacy' also encompasses 'numeracy', the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations. | A high literacy rate among the 15 to 24 year old males suggests a high level of participation and retention in primary education, and its effectiveness in imparting the basic skills of reading and writing. |
| Ratio of student to teacher (primary) | The average number of pupils per teacher at the primary level of education, based on headcounts of both pupils and teachers. | A high teacher pupil-ratio suggests that each teacher has to be responsible for a large number of pupils. In other words, the higher the pupil/teacher ratio, the lower the relative access of pupils to teachers. |
| Ratio of student to teacher (secondary) | The average number of pupils per teacher at the secondary level of education, based on headcounts of both pupils and teachers. | As above |

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| Ratio of student to teacher (lower secondary) | The average number of pupils per teacher at the (secondary)/lower secondary level of education, based on headcounts of both pupils and teachers. | As above |
| Ratio of student to teacher (upper secondary) | The average number of pupils per teacher at the (secondary)/upper secondary level of education, based on headcounts of both pupils and teachers. | As above |
| Human Development Index: mean years of schooling | Based on calculations for the construction of the UNDP Human Development Index. The average number of years of education received by people aged 25 and older, converted from educational attainment levels using official durations of each level. | A higher number would suggest that more members of the adult population aged 25 and older have remained longer in the education system. |
| Expected years of schooling (school life expectancy) | that a child of school entrance age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates persist throughout the child's life. | The number of years of schooling. A relatively high school life expectancy indicates greater probability for children to spend more years in education and higher overall retention within the education system. It must be noted that the expected number of years does not necessarily coincide with the expected number of grades of education completed, because of repetition. |
| From primary to tertiary (years) | The sum of enrolment ratios by age from primary to tertiary | As for school life expectancy. |
| In tertiary (years) | The average number of years that an entrant to tertiary education can expect to complete. | An increase would indicate that retention in tertiary education is increasing. |
| Net Enrolment Rate (%) | | |
| Primary education – net | The total number of students in the theoretical age group for primary education enrolled in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group. | A high NER denotes a high degree of coverage for the official school-age population. The theoretical maximum value is 100%. Increasing trends can be considered as reflecting improving coverage at the specified level of education. When the NER is compared with the GER, the difference between the two highlights the incidence of under-aged and over-aged enrolment. |

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| Secondary education – net | The total number of students in the theoretical age group for secondary education enrolled in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group | |
| Secondary education – net/lower secondary | The total number of students in the theoretical age group for lower secondary education enrolled in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group. | |
| Secondary education – net/upper secondary | The total number of students in the theoretical age group for upper secondary education enrolled in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group. | |
| Tertiary education - Gross | The total number of students in the theoretical age group for tertiary education (within five years of the secondary age group) enrolled in that level, as a proportion of the total population in that age group. | A high GER denotes a high degree of coverage for the unofficial tertiary-age population. The theoretical maximum value could be more than 100% because of the incidence of under-aged and over-aged enrolment. |
| Survival Rates (%) | | |
| Primary education | The percentage of a cohort of students enrolled in the first grade of primary education in a given school year who are expected to reach the final grade of primary education, regardless of repetition | Rates approaching 100% indicate a high level of retention and a low incidence of dropout. |
| Lower Secondary | The percentage of a cohort of students enrolled in the first grade of lower secondary education in a given school year who are expected | As above |
| Upper Secondary | The percentage of a cohort of students enrolled in the first grade of upper secondary education in a given school year who are expected to reach the final grade of upper secondary education, regardless of repetition. | As above |
| University Qualifications | The percentage of a cohort of students enrolled in the first year of university studies in a given school year who are expected to reach the final year of university studies, regardless of repetition | As above |

| Education Attainment of the Population aged 25 years and older (%) | | |
|--|--|---|
| Primary | Percentage distribution of population aged 25 years and above according to completion of primary education. | A relative high concentration of the adult population in a given level of education reflects the capacity of the educational system in the corresponding level of education. Educational attainment is closely related to the skills and competencies of a country's population, and could be seen as a proxy of both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the stock of human capital. |
| Lower secondary | Percentage distribution of population aged 25 years and above according to completion of lower secondary education. | As above |
| Upper secondary | Percentage distribution of population aged 25 years and above according to completion of upper secondary education. | As above |
| Tertiary | Percentage distribution of population aged 25 years and above according to completion of tertiary education | As above |
| Post-Secondary (Non-Tertiary) | Percentage distribution of population aged 25 years and above according to completion of post- secondary (non-tertiary) education. | As above |





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