

Education in Ukraine

Context

Since independence Ukraine enjoyed relative political stability, until 2004 when the non-violent Orange Revolution was successfully led by several opposition parties against the declared president, who was accused of rigging the election. The Ukrainian Constitution guarantees free education for all children and mandates 12 years of compulsory schooling. Despite positive trends in education reform, the Ukrainian education system continues to face many challenges.

During its transition to a market economy, Ukraine experienced an eight year economic recession. Since then, Ukraine has enjoyed continued annual growth with a growth rate of 7.3% in 2006, which is up from 5.9% in 2000.¹ Ukraine is the third largest country in the region of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS), after Russia and Turkey, with a population of 46.5 million. It has a GDP of 140.5 billion, which is the third highest among CIS states, after Russia and Belarus.² Despite its growing economy, Ukraine faces many challenges in the area of human development. The UNDP ranks Ukraine 77th out of 177 countries on its index of Human Development.³ Twenty per cent of its population lives below the national poverty line and 5% live on less than \$2.00 a day.⁴ Overall unemployment remains at about 6.4% for the 14-70 population.⁵

Education Reforms

- A 'Program of the development of peculiarities of children of pre-school age' is currently being developed.⁶
- The government increased compulsory education to 12 years.⁷
- The government introduced external testing for secondary school graduates in 2008.⁸



- Efforts are being made to expand and diversify teaching methodologies in pre-school education.⁹
- In June 2000, in accordance with the Constitution, the Supreme Council adopted the Law of Ukraine on out-of-school children, making it state policy to integrate programs for continuing education into the national education system.¹⁰
- The State guarantees, by way of creating the network of general education institutions, the constitutional right of each citizen to obtain and have free access to full general secondary education.¹¹
- The government introduced a School Bus programme in rural areas as a step toward ensuring equity in access to education.¹²

Access

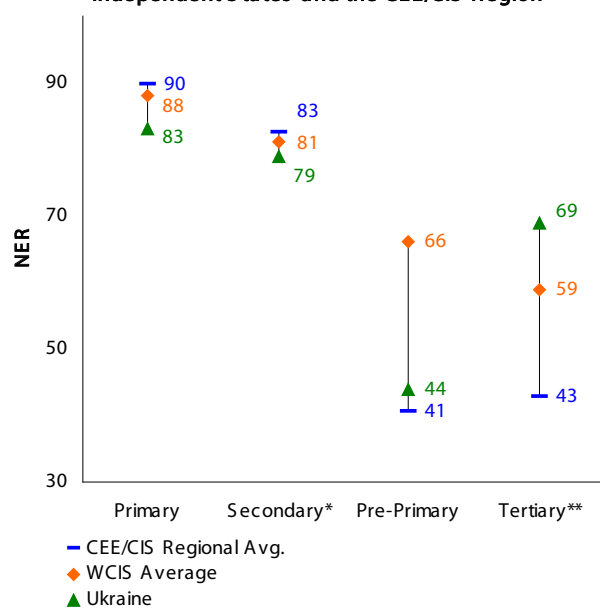
Access to education faces challenges at all levels in Ukraine. In primary education the net enrolment ratio (NER) is 83%, which is far below the sub-regional and regional average (this number may be an underestimate because of the school starting age being 7-years-old).¹³ Additionally, 296,000 chil-

Box 1. Quick Facts about Education in Tajikistan

	Ukraine	Belarus	Moldova	Russian Federation	WCIS
Total Population	46.4 m	9.8 m	4.2 m	143.2 m	203.6 m
Percentage of GDP spent on Education	6.5	6	3.8	3.6	5.0
Net Pre-Primary School Enrolment, 2005 (Gender Parity Index (GPI) (Girls/Boys))	44 (.97)	92 (.99)	67 (1.01)	60 (x)	60
Net Enrolment in Primary School, 2005 (GPI)	83, (1.0)	89 (.97)	92 (.99)	86 (1.01)	88
Net Enrolment in Secondary School, 2005 (GPI)	79 (.94)	89 (1.01)	76 (1.03)	x	76
Gross Enrolment in Tertiary Enrolment, 2005 (GPI)	69	62	71	34	59
Primary Student/Teacher Ratio, 2005	19	16	18	17	18
Out of School Children of Primary School Age (% girls)	296000 (49)	38000 (56)	24000 (49)	323000 (46)	681,000
Ranking on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (out of 179 countries)	134	151.00	109	147	109-151

Source: UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.

Figure 1. Net Education Enrolment Ratios in Ukraine, Western Commonwealth of Independent States and the CEE/CIS Region



*Excludes Russia because of a lack of data.

**GER.

dren remain out of school, which is the third highest figure in the region, after Turkey and Russia. In secondary school, the NER is 79%, which is on par with the average for the WCIS sub-region but below the CEE/CIS regional average.¹⁴ See Figure 1.

Pre-primary NERs in the WCIS sub-region are significantly higher than in the CEE/CIS region at large. There are over 15,300 kindergartens in the country, although 1,400 of them do not operate officially.¹⁵

The sub-regional average NER is 66% compared to the regional average of 44%. However, access to pre-school in Ukraine is below both the sub-regional and regional average. Only 56% of children are enrolled in pre-primary education. This delays students' school readiness. See Figure 1.

Ukraine's tertiary education system is strong for the region. With a gross enrolment ratio (GER) of 69%, enrolment rates are significantly higher than the regional average (59%) and sub-regional average (43%). Higher education has been a major point of investment for the MoES.

Quality

Ukraine has not participated in any of the international learning assessments, nor has it carried out a national assessment of students' learning.¹⁶ Thus, the quality of education in Ukraine is measured on the basis of proxy indicators.

Students in Ukraine are estimated to complete about 14 years of education, according to trends of school survival rates.¹⁷ In 1999, 97% of enrolled students survived to the last grade of primary school, although figures are not available for later dates.¹⁸ The primary school completion rate is 91%. The teacher-pupil ratio in primary school is 1:19, with 99.7% of teachers being trained. Only about 0.1% of students repeat a grade. This indicates that the system is efficient, although efficiency is not necessarily indicative of quality. No figures are available on the number of school dropouts in Ukraine.

A lack of official and reliable data is a serious challenge for the MoES of Ukraine. The government 'does not yet possess the means to diagnose objectively the results produced by its system of

Box 2. A Survey of Attitudes of Early School Leavers in Ukraine.

Focus group respondents in a joint UNICEF-IRC survey of the attitudes of early school leavers in Ukraine conveys that young people often view education as being of poor quality and irrelevant to labour market opportunities. The following are quotes from early school leavers in Ukraine, aged 15-18, about their impressions of the quality and relevance of school:

- 'It is not true [that a diploma means good education]. It is possible to get a diploma for money, then I will go to work knowing nothing. A diploma is one thing and education is another...' Learning things that can be used in life is different from what they teach you at school. Even if I finish school and try to find a job I will not know what a CV is, but it is required... These are simply life skills, they have nothing in common with good education' (male, 18)
- 'The school diploma does not provide the chance to find a job. They are trying to introduce 12th grade now, maybe that will help.' (male, 17)
- '[The quality of education] was not particularly good. There were some classes which were really bad. Teachers did not pay any attention to weaker students, they never tried to do anything to make these kids study. They were giving them '3' for their intermediate leaving certificate and then threw them out.' (male, 18)
- '... Everything outside class was good ...' (female, 16)

While these remarks come from a select group of students, they are indicative of the shortcomings of the education system, at least in the eyes of these students who it excluded.

Source: UNICEF and IRC. Early School Leavers – Ukraine.

education... The absence of external assessment makes it impossible to assess objectively the results of the educational level of students, which, in turn, makes it impossible to compare these results at local, regional and national levels. As a result it is difficult to develop compensatory programs which provide students from different regions and social groups with equal opportunities to access high quality education. Finally, it is impossible to compare the results of student educational levels with international ones, to evaluate the national educational standards as well as to develop an education improvement policy.¹⁹

Notwithstanding the lack of official data, there are indicators that school quality needs improvement. A UNICEF-IRC focus group study on early school leavers conveys some of the frustrations of drop-outs in Ukraine. See Box 2.

Additionally, many of the students attending secondary school, attend vocational school, which were developed during Soviet times. Many of the curricula of these programs are out-dated and thus do not lead to jobs in the trades they teach. This problem is compounded by the high enrolment rates, especially for men, in these types of programs. '962 state vocational educational institutions (VEI) are run by the MoES of Ukraine, about 523,000 citizens – 350,000 of them (70 percent) men – study in such institutions and obtain full secondary education simultaneously with profession training.'²⁰

Equity

Gender equity in education enrolments is high in Ukraine. In primary school, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) is 1.00, which is on par with other countries in the region. In secondary school the GPI drops to .94, which is high overall, but very low for the region and sub-region. The vestiges of the Soviet system usually make for high gender equity,



Box 3. Children in Institutions

Children in institutions are a matter of growing concern. Progress in reforming the system and the provision of alternatives is slow, and government financial support for these institutions is inadequate. The number of orphans and children without parental care doubled during the 1990s and rose to 96,000 in 2004. The causes of child abandonment include family poverty and childbearing by under-age mothers. Children are often removed from families through legal action as a result of family breakdown or other reasons. The number of children living or working in the streets is reported to have increased steadily over the last decade, with a consequent rise in risk-taking behaviour. There is a policy trend towards seeking institutional remedies to the growing number of problem children and youth. This leads to further alienation and stigmatisation, especially in the case of HIV/AIDS victims.

Source: UNICEF Ukraine Web Site.

given the extensive education coverage during the Soviet years. In higher education, the gender ratio flips, with a GPI of 1.2. This indicates that girls are more likely to complete secondary education and to pursue higher education.

It is difficult to compare equity issues between other sub-national groups because of the lack of data. There is some evidence that linguistic minorities have less access to high quality education than majority language groups. Although the national law on the right to education in your native tongue states that all citizens will be provided with the 'conditions required for the study of the Ukrainian language and the profound fluency in it,' and also that, 'the free choice of the language of education shall be an inalienable right of citizens of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.'²¹

Education Financing

Ukraine spends 6.3% of its GDP on education.²² This level of spending is higher than all other countries in the region and higher than the OECD average. The biggest investments are made in higher education.

Teachers' salaries are among the highest in the region relative to the average national wage. Teachers' salaries are equal to 80% of the national wage, which is still lower than the ideal but is higher than in many other countries in the region.²³

Education Priorities in Ukraine

- Increase the enrolment rates of out-of-school children so that all children have access to school.
- Decrease the number of school dropouts in secondary school.
- Realign the curriculum, especially in vocational schools, with the labour market.
- Decrease the number of institutionalized children.
- Improve the system of unified external graduation tests.
- Introduce the Bologna Process in higher education.
- Improve the quality of education.
- Improve staffing in schools in rural areas.

1 World Bank Online Statistics: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/0,,contentMDK:20535285~menuPK:1192694~pagePK:64133150~piPK:64133175~theSitePK:239419,00.html>.

2 UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.

3 UNDP Human Development Statistics Online 2008: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/>

4 UNDP Human Development Statistics Online 2008.

5 Statistics Committee of Ukraine 2008.

6 MoES Ukraine Web Site: <http://www.education.gov.ua/pls/edu/educ.home.eng>.

7 MoES Ukraine Web Site.

8 UNICEF Ukraine.

9 MoES Ukraine Web Site.

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13 UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008.

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19 Lokshnya, O. External Assessment of Student Achievements. In: Reform Strategy of Education in Ukraine. OSI, UNDP and International Renaissance Program. 2003.

20 Ukraine MoES web site.

21 Fickes, D & DeFosset, A. Monolingual, Bilingual and Trilingual Education Systems: East and West. Power-Point presentation.

22 Transmonee database 2008.

23 UNICEF. Education for Some More Than Others? 2007.