

A Survey of Lifelong Learning Policy Implementation in Mongolia: Example of National Literacy Education Program

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The concept of lifelong learning encompasses a wide range of learning types, including formal, informal and non-formal learning. It also includes the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors that people acquire through their day-to-day experiences. In this study, we examined current status of lifelong learning policy implementation and stakeholders involved in its execution using various methods. We selected and analyzed the “National Literacy Education Program” to examine current status of lifelong learning policy implementation. We collected and used the secondary sources data from previously published works. Subsequently, we surveyed a total of 93 educators from lifelong learning centers in Mongolia through the questionnaire to examine stakeholders’ involvement in policy implementation. According to our findings, we highlight that consistency of government's policy on lifelong learning is crucial for its development and for improving the public accessibility. Additionally, stakeholder engagement, teacher leadership and stakeholder opinions positively influence the increased involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of lifelong learning policies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Lifelong learning (LLL) should not be narrowly understood as merely learning throughout life (Laal & Salamati, 2012, p. 399). Thus, the concept of LLL consists of the broad range of learning including formal, informal and non-formal learning. We can also include the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and

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behaviors that people acquire through their own day-to-day experiences in the LLL (Dunn, 2003, p. 3). These concepts encompass broader aspects that go beyond just fulfilling learning needs. In the context of Mongolia, it is essential to identify and address citizens' lifelong learning requirements. This includes formulating educational policies, creating opportunities and content for education, ensuring equitable participation, organizing effective training programs, protecting the interests of all stakeholders involved, and enabling individuals to use education as a tool for their livelihoods. Furthermore, integrating citizens into the labor market and evaluating the quality and efficiency of educational activities are also pressing matters (Begz, 2023, p.79; Semjaan et al., 2024, p.35).

Currently, LLL services in Mongolia are primarily limited to literacy training and equivalency programs for basic, lower, and upper secondary education targeting school dropouts (Batchuluun, 2019, p.9; Battulga & Sandui, 2022, p.40). In addition, more than 20 policy documents have been developed to support the legal framework and services of the LLL sector in Mongolia. These policies are reflected in the State Education Policy, national programs, and the sector's master plans, highlighting the ongoing inclusion of sub-sector issues (NSO, 2018, p.9).

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning promotes "lifelong learning-oriented education systems" (UIL, 2019, p.1), while the European Union defines lifelong learning as acquiring education across all stages of life through formal, informal, and non-formal means (Batchuluun, 2019, p.11). The European Commission's 2000 "Memorandum on Lifelong Learning" describes lifelong learning as "all purposeful learning activities undertaken to improve knowledge, skills, and competencies continuously" (Commission of the European Communities, 2000, p. 1). This aligns with the objectives of this study (Annette J, 2009, p.151). In many countries, lifelong education services primarily target adult education and are implemented through dedicated policies and strategies (Martin 2003, p.567). Particularly in European countries, informal and non-formal education outcomes are validated, recognized, and certified within educational policies.

Studying and implementing such practices in Mongolia is crucial. In this study, we aimed to i) evaluate policy implementation of LLL in Mongolia using the example of "National Literacy Education Program", and ii) determine the factors influencing for stakeholder involvement in policy implementation in Mongolia.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Our study design consisted of two main parts: 1) We aimed to assess the current status of lifelong learning policy implementation. In this section, we hypothesized that creating operational mechanisms through policies, legal

frameworks, and national programs to increase access and equity in lifelong learning would positively impact policy and improve the effectiveness of lifelong learning services in Mongolia.

To test our hypothesis, we selected and analyzed the “National Literacy Education Program” from the three main programs that represent the availability of lifelong education services in Mongolia. To fulfill the objective of collecting data related to the implementation and effectiveness of the "National Literacy Education Program" and testing our research hypothesis, we gathered data from secondary sources (Batchuluun, 2019, p.9).

Dataset construction: To create the dataset, we collected the following variables from Batchuluun (2019, p. 9), including the number of people who participated in the literacy training program between 2004 and 2018, as well as data summarized in Table 1. Our dataset consists of six variables: “year”, “number of participants”, “period”, “level”, and “attitude”.

Table 1. Secondary Source Data from Batchuluun (2019, p. 10)

Year	Participants	Time	Level	Trend
2004	7772	1	0	0
2005	8284	2	0	0
2006	7379	3	0	0
2007	9718	4	0	0
2008	10181	5	0	0
2009	9631	6	0	0
2010	9356	7	0	0
2011	10574	8	0	0
2012	10225	9	0	0
2013	3413	10	1	1
2014	3228	11	1	2
2015	4342	12	1	3
2016	2819	13	1	4
2017	2680	14	1	5
2018	2597	15	1	6

The time period covers a total of 15 years from 2004 to 2018. The “National Literacy Education Program” was approved and implemented in 2004 and completed in 2012. We consider this period (2004 to 2012) as a time when there has been no change in the level, which refers to the years in which the national program was being implemented. We indicate this period as “0”. Furthermore, the period between 2013 and 2018 is considered a period during which there was a change in the level, or the program was being implemented. Therefore, we indicate this period as “1”. In the last column, the variable “attitude” indicates the years following the end of the national program, in ascending order from 1.

Based on our dataset, we used a “quasi-experimental” research design (or model), which involves scientifically analyzing the outcomes of policy interventions without using a random sample to test the original hypotheses of this study (Dinardo, 2008, p.856). Since, in this study, we were not able to collect data using a random sample from primary sources, we collected our data using secondary sources. In a quasi-experimental design, there is no control group; instead, there is a comparison group that has similar or closely matching characteristics with the baseline or pre-intervention characteristics of the experimental group (as mentioned “0” and “1”).

$$Y_{jt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * time_t + \beta_2 * level_j + \beta_3 * trend_{jt} + \epsilon_{jt}$$

Where: Y_{jt} = Results of variables, β_0 = Basic level (beginning assessment), β_1 = Assessment during the policy implementation, $time_t$ = Time variable, β_2 = Assessment after the policy implementation, $level_j$ = Level variable.

As the second main part of this study, we aimed to answer the following research questions: How are stakeholders involved in the policy implementation of LLL? What is the level of stakeholder satisfaction with the policy implementation of LLL, and what factors influence it? To answer these research questions, we conducted a questionnaire survey among lifelong learning educators, who are representatives of lifelong learning stakeholders. A total of 93 lifelong learning educators and professionals participated in our research.

Moreover, we used the questionnaire survey to assess the expectations and satisfaction of teachers and professionals participating in the study. To increase accessibility, the questionnaire was distributed both electronically (Google Forms) and in paper form. Demographic information was collected at the beginning of the questionnaire. The questionnaire survey also collected basic information, such as age, gender, education level, and place of residence of the participants. Finally, we used factor analysis research model to identify hidden factors (also known as unobservable (*latent*) “factors”) that might affect the policy implementation of LLL. To do this, first, we identified the hidden factors correspond to the questions ($n=18$); second, we categorized the questions based on the revealed hidden factors, and finally, we performed a correlation analysis using the Pearson correlation test between the summarized factor groups ($n=5$). All statistical analyses were conducted in RStudio software. We consider statistical result significant when $\alpha < 0.05$.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation Status of LLL

We evaluated the current status of lifelong learning policy implementation using regression model analysis. We tested the number of participants against time, level, and trend variables (Table 2). According to the findings, we found statistically significant positive relationships between the years and the number of participants ($p = 0.0009$) from 2004 to 2012. In other words, the number of people enrolled in literacy training increased by 343 per year. During this period, it can be concluded that the lifelong policy was effectively implemented. In contrast, the number of participants decreased dramatically after the literacy training program was completed in 2015.

Table 2. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Variables of Policy Implementation (Regression Formula: Number of Participants \sim Time + Level + Trend)

	Estimate	SE	t-value	p-value
(Intercept)	7523.258	426.6798	17.632093	0.0000
Time	343.045	76.2460	4.499184	0.0009
Level	-6712.904	680.6324	-9.862746	0.0000
Trend	-548.315	160.5947	-3.414277	0.0058

The effect of the change (level in Table 1) in the policy (as the literacy training program was completed in 2012) shows that there was a statistically significant change after the policy change. After the policy change, the number of people enrolled in literacy training decreased significantly ($p < 0.001$). In other words, after the end of the National Literacy Education Program in 2012, the number of people enrolled in literacy training decreased by 6.712. Similarly, the trend following the policy change, or after the implementation of the National Literacy Education Program, shows that the number of literacy participants declined significantly ($p=0.0058$). This represents a decrease of 548 people per year.

These patterns indicate that maintaining and ensuring the sustainability of the positive outcomes of state policies, programs, and projects has not been effectively addressed, and the sustainability of the policy was not preserved.

As mentioned, we consider the completion of National Literacy Education Program in 2012 as a policy change in this part of the study. We can easily observe that there was a huge decrease in the number of participants in the literacy education training program. If the government's policy on lifelong learning had been consistent, the 72% decline would not have occurred.

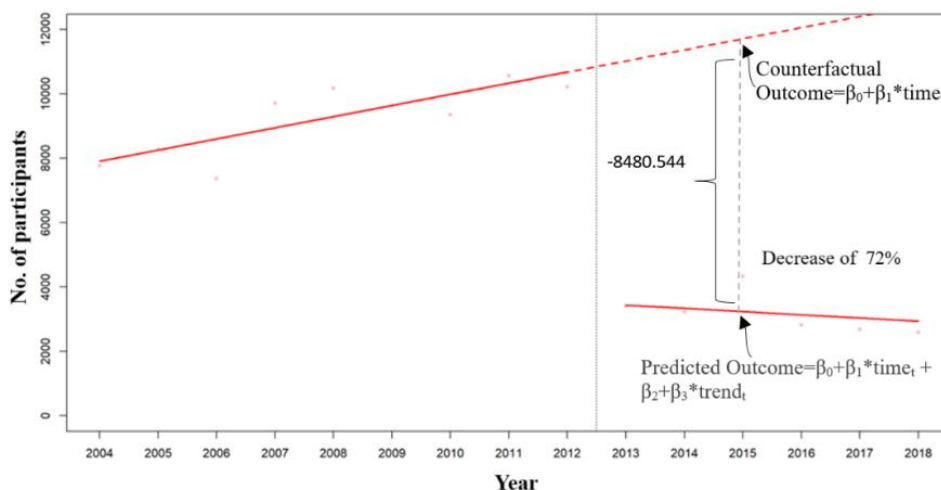


Figure 1. Regression Plot Showing Trend Differences Between During and After National Literacy Education Program

Stakeholders' Involvement in Policy Implementation of LLL

In this part of the study, we aimed to answer two research questions that generally addressed the role and involvement of stakeholders in the policy implementation of LLL. We used a total of 93 lifelong learning educators' questionnaire data. Our questionnaire consisted of 18 questions (Appendix 1). As mentioned in the Material and Methods section, we revealed a total of five unobservable factors that influence the involvement of stakeholders in the policy implementation of LLL. According to the correlation level of these unobservable factors, we summarized our 18 questions into five groups, such Policy Implementation (I), Teacher leadership (II), Stakeholder Engagement (III), Stakeholder Satisfaction (IV), and Public Opinion (V). Then, we measured the level of correlations between these five groups using the Pearson Correlation test (Table 3). A strong positive correlation was found between policy implementation and stakeholder engagement ($r=0.320$, $n=93$, $p=0.001$). In Addition, there were statistically significant correlations in most cases across the following indicators, such as Policy Implementation and Teacher Leadership ($r=0.556^{**}$, $n=93$, $p=0.000$), as well as Policy Implementation and Stakeholder Opinions ($r=0.347$, $n=93$, $p=0.001$) (Table 3). Interestingly, Stakeholder Satisfaction did not show statistically significant correlation with the other groups of factors.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix of Five Groups

		I	II	III	IV	V
I	Pearson Correlation	1	0.556**	0.320**	0.132	0.347**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.002	0.206	0.001

	N	93	93	93	93	93
II	Pearson Correlation	0.556**	1	0.319**	0.157	0.188
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.002	0.132	0.071
	N	93	93	93	93	93
III	Pearson Correlation	0.320**	0.319**	1	0.114	0.048
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	0.002		0.277	0.646
	N	93	93	93	93	93
IV	Pearson Correlation	0.132	0.157	0.114	1	0.179
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.206	0.132	0.277		0.086
	N	93	93	93	93	93
V	Pearson Correlation	0.347**	0.188	0.048	0.179	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.071	0.646	0.086	
	N	93	93	93	93	93

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Conclusion: This study examined the current status of lifelong learning policy implementation in Mongolia, focusing on the National Literacy Education Program and the role of various stakeholders. Our findings indicate that the government's policy consistency plays a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of lifelong learning programs. The analysis of policy implementation trends revealed that while the National Literacy Education Program successfully increased literacy rates between 2004 and 2012, its discontinuation led to a significant decline in participation, highlighting the need for sustained policy commitment.

Furthermore, our study identified key factors influencing stakeholder involvement in policy implementation. The correlation analysis showed that policy implementation is positively associated with teacher leadership, stakeholder engagement, and public opinion. The role of teacher leadership in fostering a supportive learning environment and enhancing stakeholder participation was particularly evident. However, stakeholder satisfaction did not show a statistically significant correlation with other factors, suggesting the need for further research to improve engagement and satisfaction levels.

Overall, our study underscores the importance of a stable and well-integrated policy framework for lifelong learning in Mongolia. Future policies should focus on enhancing accessibility, maintaining stakeholder engagement, and ensuring sustainable implementation strategies to maximize the long-term impact of lifelong learning initiatives. Policymakers should also consider adopting international best practices, particularly in recognizing and validating informal and non-formal learning, to further develop Mongolia's lifelong learning sector.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire Survey Questions

	Group	Component				
		1	2	3	4	5
1. Do you think that educational policies have a real positive impact on student achievement?	I	.822				
2. How supportive is your learning environment for policy implementation?	I	.788	-.348			
3. Was the organization of policy implementation adequate and effective?	I	.788	-.348			
4. Have sufficient guidelines and instructions been provided for the implementation of educational policies?	I	.764				
5. Did you face any difficulties during the implementation of the policy?	I	.758				
6. Have teachers received sufficient training and advice to support policy implementation?	I	.754				
7. Does the content of the educational policy match your learning needs and goals?	I	.710	.329			
8. Are teachers' suggestions and initiatives reflected in the policy implementation process?	I	.533	.481			
9. Do you think that teachers' workload has negatively affected policy implementation?	II	.442	-.435			
10. Is your center actively involved in policy implementation?	II	.473	.688			
11. Has education policy had a positive impact on your motivation to work?	II	.393	.669			-.313
12. Were the resources and materials needed to implement the policy adequate?	V	.411	-.415	.343		.373
13. How effective was citizen and public participation in policy implementation?	III	.355		.552		
14. Did decision makers ask about your opinion regarding the policies implemented in the learning environment?	III		.341	.532		
15. Are you interested in participating in and implementing this type of policy again?	V		.331	-.518		.489

16. Has the quality of training at the Lifelong Learning Center improved during the implementation of the policy?	IV	.407	-.333	-.486		
17. How satisfied are you with the overall policy implementation process?	IV				.663	.515
18. Do you think that student and parent satisfaction has increased after the implementation of the education policy?	IV				-.658	.380