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A Comparative study of the content of the university admission examination and the content of the secondary education curriculum

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Introduction

In 1992 the Republic of Azerbaijan established the State Student Admission Commission (SSAC), which administers both the admission exam and the student admission process to the tertiary education institutions, including universities and technical vocational colleges in the country (public and private). Each year the SSAC conducts exams for over 100,000 students. Exams consist of centralized and standardized multiple choice tests conducted nationally and computer technologies are used to score and process the test results.

Overall, the idea of independent admission exams is supported and consistently implemented throughout the country, partly in view of the greater anti-corruption safeguards they provide in comparison to traditional university-based, non-standardized admission exams. However, there is a frequently voiced opinion that the level of proficiency required of high school graduates taking the exams is too high in contrast to the existing school curricula. Even the best performing students are forced to seek private tutoring in order to succeed in the admission exam. In 2009, only 37.2% of all applicants (112,875) passed the threshold of 200-points out of a possible 700. In 2010, this ratio was 38.4%. These facts warrant looking into whether the content of the admission exams matches that of the school curricula or whether the requirements for the school-leaving exams are simplified. It is noteworthy to mention that the school-leaving exam uses a procedure similar to the admission exam and therefore the answer to the question lies in the comparison of the content validity of the exam materials.

Objective and Tasks

The objective of this study is to provide a comparative assessment of the content of the university admission and school-leaving exams in terms of their adequacy to the requirements of the school curricula and to provide recommendations to close the existing gap as necessary.

Main tasks:

1) To identify the existing gaps between the level of knowledge and skills of the secondary students set by the school curricula and the requirements of the school-leaving and admission exams.
2) Make recommendations to improve the content of the exams, as well as other measures that can be helpful in overcoming the existing gap (enhance the syllabi and curricula; increase the quality of teaching in schools and etc).

Work methodology and organization

The analytical work was based on the assessment of the content validity[1] of the questions and multiple choice items provided in the school-leaving and university admission exams (the content of the tests was matched against the existing curricula on four selected subjects (Azerbaijani language, math, history, biology)). It should be noted that this study did not review the new curricula that is currently under preparation and due to be introduced in the near future. In other words, some of the findings and recommendations in this study might have already been addressed in the new curricula.

The analysis intended to gather pertinent information regarding the following questions:

- How well do the multiple choice questions in the exams correspond to the school curricula?
- What share of the multiple choice questions is inconsistent with the curricula?
- Do knowledge and skills that students are supposed to acquire in school enable them to solve the questions provided in the school-leaving and admission exams?
- If the questions provided in the exams are consistent with the requirements of the curricula, then what are the causes of students' low exam scores?
- Assess the difficulty level of each exam (school-leaving and university admission) and determine the overall share of difficult questions.

[1] Content validity determines the level of a test's compliance with a subject area.

The following methods were used to address the specified questions:

- Analysis of the content validity of the exam questions with the assistance of local experts – specific subjects specialists.
- Meetings and interviews with individuals who are specialists on the educational system of Azerbaijan.
- Studying various data sources.

Analysis of the content validity of the exam questions with the assistance of local experts. The analysis was conducted in 4 subject areas (Azerbaijani language, math, history, biology) by 8 experts (two experts for each subject) selected by the World Bank from among leading school teachers-methodologists and scientists of Azerbaijan Republic. Each expert examined 2 variations of each of these tests. Technical tasks for experts is provided in the Annex.

Meetings and interviews. The following meetings were held during the visit to Baku:

1. 2 meetings at the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan Republic (with the minister of education, head of the monitoring and assessment unit, director of the educational projects under the World Bank). Discussions regarding the content and administration of the school-leaving exam.
2. 2 meetings at the State Student Admission Commission (chairwoman and specialists of the SSAC). Discussions regarding the content and administration of the admission exam.
3. 2 meetings with local experts. Discussions regarding the interim results of the experts' work.

Studying sources. The main information sources included official documents regulating exams (e.g., education legislations, rules for examinations, admission policies), compilations of test items, statistical data, and reports on the test results. This information was received during the meetings with the representatives of the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan Republic and State Student Admission Commission, as well as obtained on their websites.

List of sources:

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6. Scientific-statistical analysis of the results of the student admission to higher education institutions in Azerbaijan Republic 2010\2011– "Abituriyent" journal, special edition , Baku, 2010.
7. Sample questions used in the school-leaving exam at the end of the general secondary education cycle administered centrally in 2009/2010 school year (www.edu.gov.az/upload/file/test2009-10-11.pdf).
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10. Statistical data on the school-leaving exams in 2009 and 2010, Ministry of Education.
11. Exam questions on biology for school-leaving and admission exams in 2009 and 2010.
12. Decree of the cabinet of ministries of the Azerbaijan Republic on approval of the Assessment concepts for the general education system of the Azerbaijan Republic. *Baku city, January 13, 2009, Nr.9*
13. "Abituriyent" journal, # 12 December 2010, "Scientific-statistical analysis of the results of the student admission in 2010-2011 school year".
14. "Abituriyent" journal, # 12 December 2009, "Scientific-statistical analysis of the results of the student admission in 2009-2010 school year".

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Website of the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan Republic - http://www.edu.gov.az

Key findings of the subject tests analysis

Background information on the admission exam.

Admission exams are held for each of the 4 specialization groups on a separate day.

The specialization fields included in the groups are as follows: I group - math, physics, engineering, chemical technologies, architecture and design; II group –economics, management, sociology and geography; III group – liberal arts, arts and music; IV – medicine, chemistry, biology, psychology, as well as specializations related to agriculture and sports.

The difference between the groups is in the composition of the exam subject areas:

- **I group**: Native language, math, physics, chemistry, foreign languages.
- **II group**: Native language, math, history of Azerbaijan, geography, foreign languages.
- **III group**: Native language, math, literature, history, foreign languages.
- **IV group:** Native language, math, physics, chemistry, biology.

When computing an applicant's test score in any given specialization, the relative scores in various subject areas are multiplied by weight coefficients ("1" or "2"), which are determined based on a given subject's level of importance/relevance, and then summed up.

Additionally, the students with Russian as their language of instruction take an Azeri language test prior to the admission exams. If passed they are allowed to take the admission exams.

The admission exam for each group consisting of five subject areas is administered in one day throughout Azerbaijan. Each exam uses 4 variations of the test booklets (A, B, C, D). The exam booklets for each group are prepared the day before the exam in a special bunker. Multiple variations of questions automatically selected from a general question bank are used to reduce the possibility of cheating.

The key observations and findings on the analysis of the subject tests provided by the local experts are presented below.

Math

1. The tasks and multiple-choice questions in the math section of the university admission exams are fully consistent with the curriculum. The difficulty level of the test is attained mainly using non-typical questions which focus on student's grasp of general academic skills (ability to compare, generalize and etc.).

2. The study of the test questions used in school-leaving exam is sufficient to assert that students are mainly offered typical questions which had been practiced in the course of the school courses and solving them only requires evidential knowledge, while analysis and synthesis skills are not necessary. Questions are clearly divided into themes and all correspond to the school grade "4"[2]. The questions in the school-leaving exams cover all key themes and they can be solved even by students who had regular schooling based on a minimal 3-hour study program (2-hour algebra + 1-hour geometry).

3. In the 1st and 2nd groups of the school-leaving exam questions are approximately grouped in the following way based on the difficulty level: 10 typical questions, 10 questions with medium difficulty and 5 non-typical questions which require deeper knowledge of the content and a grasp of fairly complex cognitive skills; the 3rd and 4th groups consist almost entirely of typical questions. Because the schools do not ensure that the majority of students are taught to solve non-typical questions, there is an increasing role played by tutors during the preparation to university admission exams. Most students are forced to seek tutoring assistance for 1-2 years being unable to independently deal with non-typical questions.

4. Applicants are sometimes unable to solve questions that are not too difficult on various topics. A fairly simple question on calculating a certain interval (2010, IV group, variation C, question 47) caused difficulties to most students: only 15.68 % answered correctly and 54.47 % provided no answer. This could be caused by the lack of time to study the topics introduced towards the end of the curricula, because integrals are taught in the end of the school course work.

5. One reason for poor performance in the admission exams is due to the lack of logic questions and tasks in the textbooks aimed at developing higher skills in students.

6. Another challenge is related to the students with humanities orientation who are allocated insufficient time to study the curricula in the upper grades. For example, in grades 10 and 11 math is not studied in-depth (5 hours of algebra and 3 hours of geometry); algebra is taught twice a week and geometry once a week based on the same curricula. Obviously, the curriculum in such classes is not covered in-depth and it is virtually impossible for these students to get admission to higher education institutions in the first and second groups.

[2] The Azeri grade system for the assessment of student outcomes at the school level consists of: «5» - excellent, «4» - good, «3» - satisfactory, «2» -unsatisfactory (poor), and «1» - very bad.

7. Another noteworthy reason for poor performance in the admission exams lies in the fact that students are tested in all five subjects on the same day. For example, an applicant in the first group has to answer 125 questions on math, physics, chemistry, and the Russian and English languages in 3 hours. This specialization group is for applicants who are seeking admission into HEI with engineering specialties and their field-specific subjects are math and physics, with questions in these two subject areas requiring reasoning and analysis. Experience has shown that a student solves 80% of math questions if the math test is taken alone and only 50 % if the same test is combined with other subjects.

Suggestions:

1. Enhance the textbooks for the secondary education with a greater number of logic questions.
2. Examine the possibility of streaming math education into two types of curricula for students not concentrating on math in the upper secondary grades, for instance, five hours for basic math education and eight hours for advanced math education.
3. Administer the admission exams though a system where the math test is conducted on a separate day or at the very least related subjects are tested on the same day, i.e. admission and school-leaving exams are administered in two days.
4. Modify the scoring system so as to account for the difference in the levels of difficulty of questions in the tests (more points for more difficult questions).
5. Use open-ended questions to avoid cases of guessing by applicants in solving more difficult questions.[3]

Azerbaijani language

1. The questions in the admission exams were not inconsistent with the curriculum or the textbook. The SSAC also publishes test books by grades. The students are generally familiar with the types of questions. However the problem is that the number of teaching hours at school are not sufficient to cover these tests in class.
2. The applicants most frequently find the questions on orthography (spelling), orthoepics (pronounciation) and punctuation difficult to answer. This is due to the fact that the

[3] In 2011 the math exam materials will include open-ended questions.

curricula allocates insufficient teaching hours to strengthen knowledge base on these topics.

3. Another difficulty is caused by the many changes in the orthographic rules which are not studied in-depth at school (and not always reflected in the textbooks). Often the questions include words with revised spelling or words that constitute exceptions from the rules which causes difficulties in answering these questions.

4. The sequence of questions in the exams in terms of their difficulty levels also creates complications for the applicants. Arranging the questions from the simplest to the most difficult ones will positively impact the applicants' performance and lead to more success in dealing with various tasks.

5. The primary focus of the school-leaving exams is on assessing the elementary knowledge, while the admission exams require logical thinking and the ability to apply a range of skills in a number of areas.

Biology

1. The questions (tasks) in the university admission exams are consistent with the existing standards and the curriculum. None of the questions went beyond the scope of the curriculum in the test samples that have been reviewed.

2. The admission exams look not only at the applicants' basic knowledge on key subjects but also checks their ability to independently comprehend and systematize large amount of information, draw sound conclusions think logically, model and estimate.

3. The statement of a problem and its presentation is different from that of the school program and is meant for students who are well prepared. Those students who have superb analytical thinking and think fast can get high scores. For example, six out of 25 or 24% of questions and six out of 25 or 32% of questions in 2009 and 2010 were found difficult by the majority of the applicants.

4. The analysis of the questions shows that many students answered the rather easier questions which only required knowledge of simple facts. The response rate for questions requiring complex skills (comparison of various facts, analysis and systematization and etc.) was weak.

5. It is noteworthy that the most difficult types of questions happened to be the ones which used rare facts, such as the knowledge of the minimal and maximum number of leaves in a compound rosehip leaf, or which required remembrance of the minimal and maximum number of vitamins in group B that can preserve in cooked meat and etc. Questions of this nature are seen in the admission exams every year. Taking into account that each question in biology is worth 8 points and under the circumstances of tight competition even the lack of 1 or 2 points can be decisive for the applicants, it is considered unreasonable to include such questions in the admission exam.

6. Since questions are not categorized into various difficulty levels in the overall exam booklet, students often end up spending more time on simple questions looking for some implied meaning. In view of the limited time allocated for the exam (3 hours on 5 subjects), an examinee needs to spend less than 1.5 minutes per each question. Besides, every four wrong answers eliminate one correct answer. These are very strict conditions for the applicants. This outcome with a large number of unsuccessful applicants in the admission test doesn't come as a surprise if human factors such as stress and enormous cognitive workload are taken into account.

7. Knowledge and skills provided at the secondary schools enable students to answer questions in the school-leaving exams.

History

1. The questions in the university admission exams are consistent with the curriculum and the textbooks with rare exceptions.

2. The knowledge acquired by students at school is generally sufficient to answer the questions. But students have difficulties in solving certain problems. This is particularly true in the case of topics that require application of critical thinking and making connections with other subject. Applicants find it difficult to draw conclusions from interrelated processes and events, substantiate and synchronize historic facts and events.

3. It is hard for applicants to answer exhaustive 125 questions in five subject areas and of varying degrees of difficulty within a 3-hour exam held in one day.

4. It is safe to say that most of the questions in the admission exam are of high and medium difficulty level. This takes up a greater share of the time allocated for the exam. The lack of time becomes the reason for the nervousness, stress because there is a minimum passing threshold score for each of the tested subjects.

5. The analysis of selected questions from exam book «D» (III group, 2010) and exam book «A» (II group) showed that students find it difficult to make comparisons across various subjects and generalizations across topics, apply theoretical knowledge in practice and draw conclusions required to correctly answer exam questions.

6. The questions used in the school-leaving exam for 2008/2009 are simple and easy to deal with compared to the questions in the admission exams. These questions are based mainly on facts and chronological details of the topics, which are clearly reflected in the textbooks. These questions are more concrete and are appropriate for the duration of the exam. They cover common concepts related to history, event and processes. A part of these questions are testing the applicants' memory.

Main conclusions

The main conclusions derived from the analysis regarding the content validity of the tasks and questions in the school-leaving and admission exams are as follows[4]:

1. An absolute majority of the questions in both school-leaving and admission exams are consistent with the school curricula.

2. The experts have established that there is a fewer number of simple questions in the admission exams compared to school-leaving exams. The admission exams have far more questions that require a good command of general educational skills - ability to compare, generalize, apply a range of solutions methods and etc.

3. Both exams use multiple choice questions.

4. Both exams include several subjects simultaneously. The school-leaving exam consists of eight subject areas (native language and literature, math, history of Azerbaijan, physics, chemistry, biology, geography and foreign languages), while the admission exam consists of five subject areas (see above the background information on the admission exam).

5. The exam procedures are comparable: both are standardized and centrally administered exams; both exams are three hours in duration and are conducted in examination centers; the exams are overseen by specifically trained administrators and observers; grading of the exams is computerized.

[4] It shall be noted that the findings and the recomenndations presented here are related to the curricula on four subjects currently in use. The new curricula is under preparation and is due to be introduced in the near future.

6. It shall be noted that a range of subjects in the admission exams require knowledge of certain facts which are not studied at school thoroughly due to the insufficient teaching hours for these topics. For example, there are different math syllabi in grades 10 and 11 - one for a 3-hour lesson (2 hours for algebra and 1 hour for geometry) and another for an 8-hour lesson (5 hours for algebra and 3 hours for geometry); different syllabi for biology – a 1-hour and a 3-hour.
7. The analysis of the exams also showed that the performance is relatively poor in regard to the questions related to topics that are covered in the second half of the final grade (a considerable part of the lessons during this period concentrate on review of the past materials).

Thus, it can be stated that the questions used in both exams are valid in terms of content.

8. The experts have determined that the grading system applied to various questions and the scaling procedure used in the admission and school-leaving exams are in need of a public deliberation. In this regard it is important to draw attention to certain grading rules such as equal points assigned for questions with varying degrees of difficulty, the penalty for guessing wrong answers and etc.
9. A commendable fact is the introduction of open-ended math questions beginning this year.
10. It is also important to comment on how fair and impartial the admission exam can be considered as a tool for selecting high school graduates to higher and vocational education institutions. Based on the results of the exams, graduates who are best prepared for the exam perform well. Therefore, it can be argued that the admission exam is fair. But it would be necessary to study and analyze how the admission exam is organized and implemented to provide a definitive conclusion (this work was not done under the current study). If it is not sufficiently reliable and/or abused in the process of the examination, then it may be impossible to draw a conclusion regarding its fairness.

Recommendations

The recommendations to improve the system of examination in the Republic of Azerbaijan based on the above-mentioned analysis are as follows:

<u>Admission examination system</u>

1. **Introduce open-ended questions.** In order to improve the school-leaving and admission examination procedures the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan Republic together with the State Student Admission Commission shall plan a transition to more progressive assessment materials – exams that include open-ended questions (with both short and long answers). For that purpose, open-ended questions that require short answers (number, word, formula and etc.) shall be included in the tests in the first phase. The processing of the results for these problems must be computerized. Once the students gain experience in solving similar problems, it is possible to shift to open-ended questions that require more extensive response (detailed answers to questions, mini essays, describing the problem solution and etc.). The processing of the results for these problems will require a review by trained experts.

2. **Improve the scoring method.** It is necessary to unify approaches to assessment of the test items in both school-leaving and admissions exams. If problems of a certain type in the admission exam are more difficult and are assigned higher points compared to less difficult problems, then comparable problems in the school-leaving exam shall be graded similarly.

3. **Discontinue the setting of threshold scores**. Another sensitive issue is related to the minimum passing (threshold) score for applicants set by the SSAC. Using such exam scores can lead to inaccurate conclusions with respect to the quality of work in the school education system, which would strongly demoralize the schools and teachers. The main objective of the admission exam is to sort the performance outcomes of the applicants based on their test scores (determine the applicants' ratings). There is no need for setting the minimum score as the universities would select applicants with better test results. Therefore, it is recommended to discontinue the practice of setting a threshold score.

4. **Break up the examination by subject.** Review the appropriateness of simultaneously having questions on several subjects in the same exam. In particular, Math and Azerbaijani language exams should ideally be administered independently on separate days.

5. **Separate the examination into basic and advanced levels**. It is crucial to ensure that the requirements that are applied to applicants and school graduates account for the differences in the types of subject curricula (which provide for different numbers of teaching hours) and that these requirements are taken into account during the preparation of questions for both exams. Going forward, it is desirable to consider the option of dividing the admission exam into a basic and an advanced level subject to an applicant's specialization.

Curriculum and syllabus

6. **Introduce more competency-based curriculum.** The requirements of the school curricula focus primarily on developing the students' strictly subject-oriented knowledge and skills. The curricula shall be reviewed periodically to incorporate competency-oriented educational outcomes. All modifications in the educational content must be reflected in the textbooks and methodical literature. This work is underway in Azerbaijan. According to the information received from the local experts the new curricula which is being prepared is more oriented towards developing knowledge and life skills required in the modern society.

7. **Balance syllabus across the school year.** Examine the possibility of reducing new topics in the fourth quarter of the final year in high school. New themes are not covered thoroughly or completely during this period due to the main emphasis being on reviewing past topics.

8. **Improve the quality of teaching to deliver the curriculum effectively in a given teaching hours.** The success on the admission exam depends largely on the students' proficiency in solving problems that require higher analytical and cognitive skills. The schools are often unable to teach their students within given teaching hours. This causes a dilemma – increase the number of teaching hours for a given subject or squeeze the subject's content. Every country deals with this issue differently. But the general approach is to start the reforms by improving the teachers' qualifications and creating conditions for their professional development. Increasing the number of hours won't solve the problem if lessons are conducted by an inferior teacher. In a 2007 report by McKinsey it is stated that the quality of any education system cannot be higher than the quality of its teachers[5].

Using the results to provide methodology support for teachers

9. **Strengthen the feedback mechanism based on the examination results.** It is essential to provide more detailed recommendations/feedback based on the results of the school-leaving and admission exams to improve the system of teacher in-service training, the curricula and the teaching/learning materials. The Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan together with the State Student Admission Commission shall conduct a detailed analysis of the results in order to prepare recommendations for improvement of the learning process. It is necessary to establish experts groups in various subject areas. The expert groups shall include experienced teachers, members of the exam committees, curricula developers,

[5] Consistently high performance: Lessons from the world's top performing school systems // McKinsey&Company. June 2007

representatives of the teacher in-service training system. Based upon the results of the work conducted by the groups, it is necessary to publish and widely disseminate a collection of materials which include clear information for teachers and methodologists regarding the results of the exams, as well as targeted recommendations to teachers, curricula and textbook developers and the representatives of the in-service training system.

10. **Expand the web-based lectures on the examinations.** The SSAC experts prepare lectures in the Azeri language for students and teachers with a description of the content of the exam in line with the existing requirements. The lectures are then placed on the SSAC website, which makes them accessible to the teachers who have internet access at school. This practice needs to be supported and expanded, because it enables the teachers to use this information both to prepare students for the exams and to improve the overall learning process in the subject area. It is particularly essential for teachers in remote schools, who are not able to visit in-service training centers.

Using the results to monitor and evaluate student learning

11. **Introduce a low-stake and sample-based assessment to monitor and evaluate student learning.** The use of results from either of the exams (when both are high-stakes tests) to determine the quality of education at schools is deemed fairly problematic and does not quite reflect the real situation. The international experience shows that it is difficult and unreasonable to use the results of the high-stakes exams in evaluating the quality of school and teacher performance for a number of reasons. First and foremost, the exams do not take into account the social-economic background of students' families, which determines a child's learning outcomes to a great degree. Besides, the school and teacher input in the students' performance is only partial. Private tutoring and other forms of extracurricular learning play a major role in this case. Therefore, it is necessary to envisage an introduction of monitoring studies at the primary, basic and higher education levels to evaluate the quality of student learning in specific subjects and their command of cross-subject competencies (general educational skills) as well as the changes in the dynamics. This will allow for assessment of a broader range of education results across various age groups of students. The Russian experience shows that, if no other procedures for assessing educational achievements (monitoring surveys) are introduced along with the national examination, these exams are improperly used for multiple purposes at once - not just certification of graduates and selection to HEIs, but also to evaluate the quality of teachers, schools, municipal and regional educational systems and etc. As a result, the procedures

and the content of the exam get distorted and it is unable to effectively fulfill its immediate purpose.

The directions for future studies

The themes for further studies regarding the content and procedure of the exams depend on who will use the results and for what purposes. The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan and State Student Admission Commission shall have an interest in making higher education more accessible to various social groups.

Therefore, one of the critical topics is the «Impact of the national exams on the accessibility of higher education to children from families with lower social-economic status, as well as to students from remote rural regions ».

Another important topic is to determine the *predictive* value of the admission exam, i.e. its capacity to predict the quality of students' learning in HEIs. This study should establish the correlation between the results in the admission test and the students' learning outcomes during their freshmen and sophomore years.

Annex

Tasks for use in organizing the experts' work in Azerbaijan

Task 1. Address the question of whether the questions (tasks) in the university admission exam are consistent with the existing curricula and textbooks.

1) Select 1 variation of the exam book from the previous year and 1 variation of the exam book from the year before that. Match the exam questions with the curricula and the existing textbook on the given subject. Determine what share of the exam questions is consistent with the content of the curricula and the existing textbook.

2) Identify the share of questions in each of the specific exam books which are not solved by a majority of students based on the official statistics regarding the results of the exam?

3) Provide a sample of a question which is inconsistent with the curricula and explain why/in what way it is not consistent with the curricula.

Task 2. Do knowledge and skills acquired by children at school enable them to answer the exam questions? Is that knowledge sufficient for solving the questions?

1) Select two variations of the exam book (tasks) from the school-leaving exam and based on the experts' assessment and the official statistics on the results of this exam identify the range of topics, knowledge and skills which are best grasped by the majority of school graduates (the questions that are solved by at least 60% of students).

2) Compare the questions from the admission exam with the range of identified topics. As in the paragraph 1 of the Task 1 above, determine what share of the exam questions is inconsistent with the actual knowledge and skills acquired by the students.

3) Indicate the main causes (based on experts' assessment) of students' failure to grasp the content of the curricula (if this is the case). The range of causes may include excessive requirements in the curricula or standards, lack of teachers with necessary qualifications, certain topics are not covered in-depth or are completely ignored by teachers and etc.

Task 3. Compare school-leaving and admission exams.

1) Based on the results of the 1 and 2 tasks compare the knowledge and skills assessed in the school-leaving and admission exams. Indicate what share of questions in the admission exams are not consistent with the school-leaving exam (use those indicated in paragraph 1 of Task 2).

2) Provide an expert assessment of the shares of questions in both exams (school-leaving and admission) by levels of difficulty. Use three levels: very difficult questions (solved by a very

small number of students), very simple (solved by the majority of students), questions with the average difficulty level (solved by a portion of students).

3) Are the questions from the two exams different? What is the difference?

Task 4. Provide answers to the following questions in regard to preparation to the admission exams.

1) Do children acquire experience in solving questions that are similar to those in the admission exams in the course of their school education?

2) How are children prepared for the exam?

3) In what grade are such preparations started?

4) Approximately what share of students use private tutoring services?

5) How different are the administrative procedures of the two exams?

Task 5. Prepare a final memo (up to 5 pages) addressing the questions provided in the above-mentioned tasks.