TRADE UNION TRANSFORMATION AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY: THE CASE OF FMESU, MONGOLIA
RESEARCH REPORT

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ABOUT THE FMESU

- **Broader representation:** a total of 54.5 thousand employees in secondary schools; 11,970 employees at universities and colleges; 8,827 employees and science organizations (NSO, 2020)

- The **actual number of active members** of the FMESU is counted as 25,438 across the country (FMESU, 2021) representing 410 public educational organizations 173 local unions.

- In terms of **membership composition**, 48% is in general education schools, 27% in preschools, 12% in universities and vocational schools, 5% in scientific institutions, and 8% in rural educational institutions (FMESU, 2021).

- the FMESU has provided a balanced mix of membership, where 80% of total members and 68.8% of elected members are females.

- The charter of the union **sets a quota** of at least 50% of the members of the highest governing body to be **women and youth**.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- ***Document review:*** Relevant education statistics, key policy and legal documents and annual reports of the FMESU

- ***Qualitative survey:*** Face-to-face interviews (online meetings). 23 participants and 9 to diagnose the policy environment and the level of social dialogue where the FMESU operates.

- ***Quantitative survey:*** A total of 451 respondents participated in the survey, representing all gender and age groups, rural and urban, and different types of educational institutions.
  - 89.6% females and 10.4% males
  - Age range between 23 to 62, average age 41
  - 87.8% teachers and 12.2% other education workers
  - 92.2% members and 7.8% non-members, of which 2% from private school
  - Average years of membership 14.3
  - The average number of primary committee members 101

THE FMESU AS A TRADE UNION

To increase organizational capacity

- Expanded new member recruitment
- Organized regular training & developed handouts
- Organized extracurricular activities

To ensure equal representation

- Organized nationwide conferences & meetings
- Provided information to members and received feedback
- Best practice award

To influence policy

- Collective bargaining & negotiated on policy terms
- Monitored implementation of policies and negotiations
- Submitted proposals & organized demonstrations

To expand cooperation

- Established memorandums of cooperation
- Regular networking with sister organizations
- Foreign assignments and trainings

Development policy document
"the FMESU will take the lead at the national level in consistently protecting the labour rights and legitimate interests of its members, creating the conditions for a drastic improvement in their living standards, and contributing to quality education for all"

THE FMESU AS A TRADE UNION

- The external challenges being emerged in the future-of-work are not reflected adequately in the FMESU's development policy.

- FMESU's development goals and action plans seem to be based on an accurate diagnosis of its internal weaknesses and provisions are to address them.

- The organization focuses on addressing its internal weaknesses in defining its strategic objectives but does not pay much attention to how to adapt to external challenges and how to capture the opportunities created by changes in the external environment.

- There was no well-established conception at the organizational level about the digital economy and upcoming challenges.

- the FMESU's development goals and action plans did not include any specific measurement indicators, it was inaccessible to measure how the implementation of actions plans helped or would help to achieve the development goals.

- Annual reports mentioned the number of actions taken but lacked a qualitative assessment of how effective and efficient the activities were.

- Taking a closer look at the FMESU's annual reports for the last five years, it was apparent that the implementation process of the action plans is idle. In particular, FMESU's activities have been relatively inactive for the past two years, possibly due to the effects of the pandemic.

THE FMESU AS A TRADE UNION
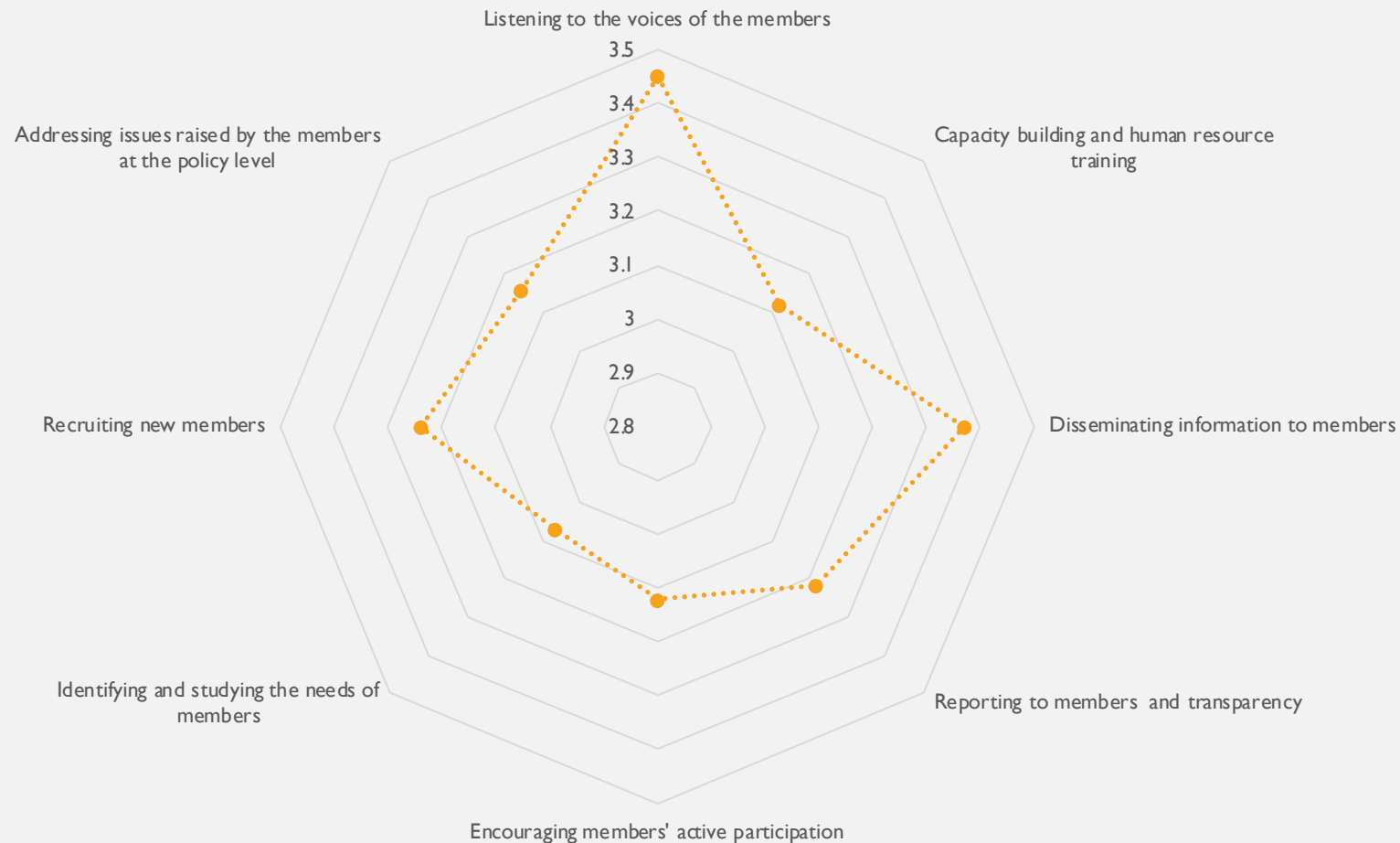
- the FMESU's performance was limited, especially in the area of capacity building and human resource training, identifying and studying the needs of members and encouraging active participation of the members.

- Contrarily, those are the immediate and regular activities offered by the FMESU to its members according to its annual reports.

- Then, it means that the gap exists in the outreach process to the grassroots members and the following inconsistencies are observed.

THE FMESU AS A TRADE UNION

1. The FMESU's unclear identity about their objectives and actions becomes a source of unsatisfactory outreach.

- When members are asked about their favourite activities of the FMESU, they answered as salary increase advocacy, teachers' rights protection and some welfare activities.

- This illustrates that there is a gap of understanding between the FMESU and its grassroots members and the mission of the organization is unclear and incompletely identified for its members.

- In other words, members understand that the trade union is an organization that protects employee's rights and social issues, but they lack a clear understanding of what the FMESU does "to create the conditions for a drastic improvement in their living standards, and contributing to quality education for all" as stated in the FMESU's mission.
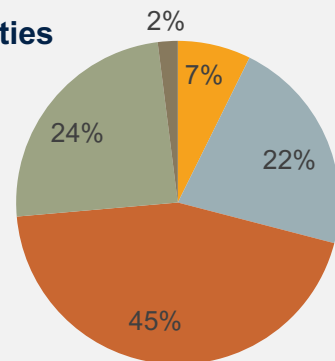
THE FMESU AS A TRADE UNION

2. Lack of information about the FMESU among the grassroots members hampers their engagement.
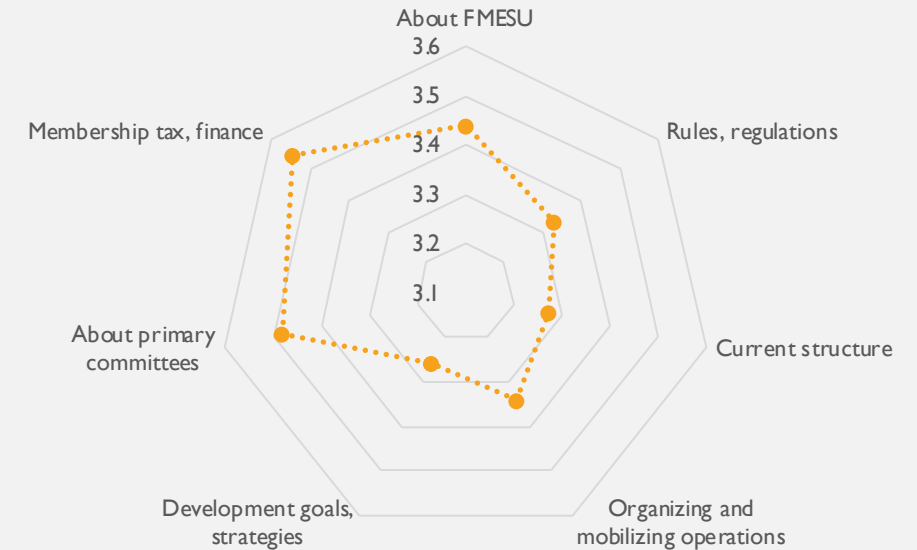
- 7.3% had no knowledge about the FMESU and did not hear anything even after the membership

- 9.8% had no knowledge about the taxes they are paying from their salary

- 24% answered that they didn't receive any information about the FMESU before joining.

- Cases of automatic membership without a voluntary basis were confirmed. Some were unaware of their right to refuse to join the union and avoid paying taxes.

- This illustrates that there can be a malfunction depending on the supervisors at the grassroots that they fail to familiarize new members with the FMESU. If this situation continues, there will be no significance of expanding recruitment.

Accessibility to the activities

Pie chart legend: Absolutely, Adequate, Moderate, Inadequate, None

Values: 2%, 7%, 22%, 24%, 45%

MEMBERS' KNOWLEGDE AND EXPERIENCE ABOUT THE FMESU

Radar chart axes: About FMESU, Rules, regulations, Current structure, Organizing and mobilizing operations, Development goals, strategies, About primary committees, Membership tax, finance
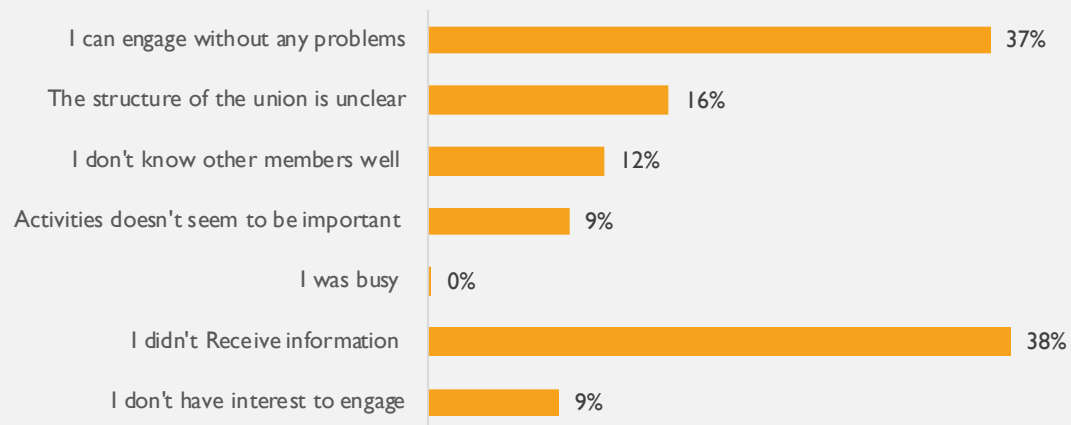
Scale: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6

When asked about the overall knowledge about the union, members had a sound knowledge about the activities of primary committees and membership taxes compared to the FMESU's current structure, development strategies, rules and regulations.
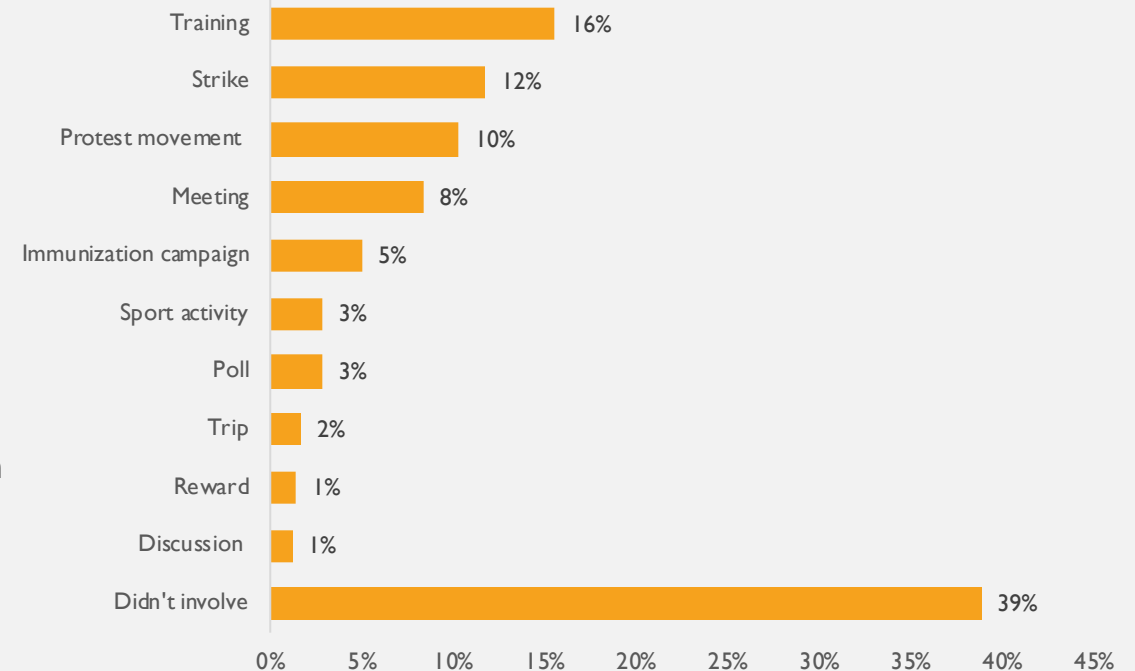
THE FMESU AS A TRADE UNION

3. Non-diversification in the engagement activities deter the development of collective mindset:

- In terms of members' engagement, 43% of the members are satisfied with the current condition, whereas 28% are unsatisfied.

- When asked about the engaged activities by the FMESU, 39% of the respondents answered that they had zero involvement in any of them.

- Among the reasons why members don't involve in the FMESU's activities, lack of information contains the largest percentage of 38%.

- Less than 10% of the respondents stated personal reasons such as being busy or unwilling to participate.

- It clearly indicates the need to diversify activities to ensure the active participation of grassroots members.

Frequently organized activities

Activity	Percentage
Training	16%
Strike	12%
Protest movement	10%
Meeting	8%
Immunization campaign	5%
Sport activity	3%
Poll	3%
Trip	2%
Reward	1%
Discussion	1%
Didn't involve	39%

Union engagement

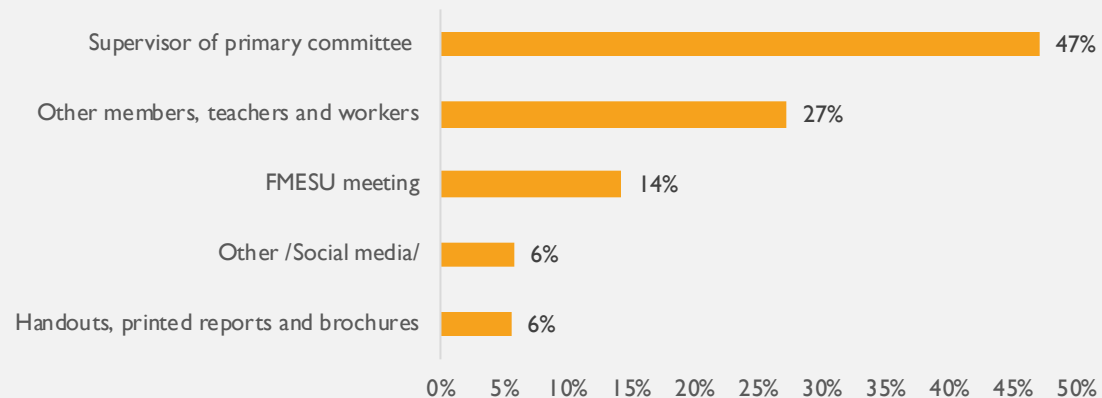|	Percentage
I can engage without any problems	37%
The structure of the union is unclear	16%
I don't know other members well	12%
Activities doesn't seem to be important	9%
I was busy	0%
I didn't Receive information	38%
I don't have interest to engage	9%

- The respondents' named typical activities such as training, strike, protest and meetings are organized frequently by the FMESU and local unions.
- However, extracurricular events such as sports tournaments, trips, and award ceremonies, which adds extra value to the formation of collective mindset and engagement (Rombaldi, 2018), are rarely organized among members.

4. Unsustainability in the dissemination of information hinders the potential outreach.

- Information exchange is highly involved with humans rather than relying on a sustainable and integrated system.

- Unofficial platforms such as Facebook messenger chat. The channel is decided by the preference of the supervisor

- In other words, members' engagement, impression, and satisfaction about the FMESU of each grassroots primary committee are highly dependent on the supervisor's capacity, activeness, and the way s/he runs the union work.

Members' information source about the FMESU

Source	Percentage
Supervisor of primary committee	47%
Other members, teachers and workers	27%
FMESU meeting	14%
Other /Social media/	6%
Handouts, printed reports and brochures	6%

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40% 45% 50%

5. The FMESU fails to reach members because of its limited organizational capacity.

- Use of the traditional approach to archive documents, record registration and integrate reports, which is excessively time and labour consuming.

- The workload and extra parallel duty of administrative workers are other hindering factors.

- Funding limits the number of full-time administrative staff

- The FMESU's operation is directly dependent on the management capacity of the primary committee supervisors

- The FMESU collects membership fees mainly from education and scientific workers residing in Ulaanbaatar, and in exceptional cases directly from a few rural unions.

THE FMESU AND THE SOCIAL DIALOGUE

	The enabling conditions	The conditions of the government	The conditions of the FMESU
1	Existence of strong and independent workers' organizations	Legalized by the Law on Trade Union Rights adopted in 1991	▪ Inadequate representation ▪ Narrow policy involvement
2	Technical capacity and the access to relevant information to participate in social dialogue	Numerous sources of information are available at hand.	▪ Exchange of information between three-level-organizations are slow ▪ Lack of independent structure to conduct research and policy analysis
3	Political will and commitment to engage in social dialogue	Enabled in the current laws. Ruling party's political will to develop a solid foundation for social democracy.	▪ Emphasized in its mission statement and development plan. ▪ Participation of grassroots members in union activities are sought
4	Respect for the fundamental rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining	Enabled in the Law on Trade Union Rights and protected by the Constitutional rights	▪ The formation of unions is voluntary.
5	Appropriate institutional support	Reflected in the long-term national development policy. Funding concerns.	▪ Lack of structure or resources to monitor the policy implementation ▪ Limited funding

THE FMESU AND THE SOCIAL DIALOGUE

- **The FMESU faces challenges in terms of its representativeness.**
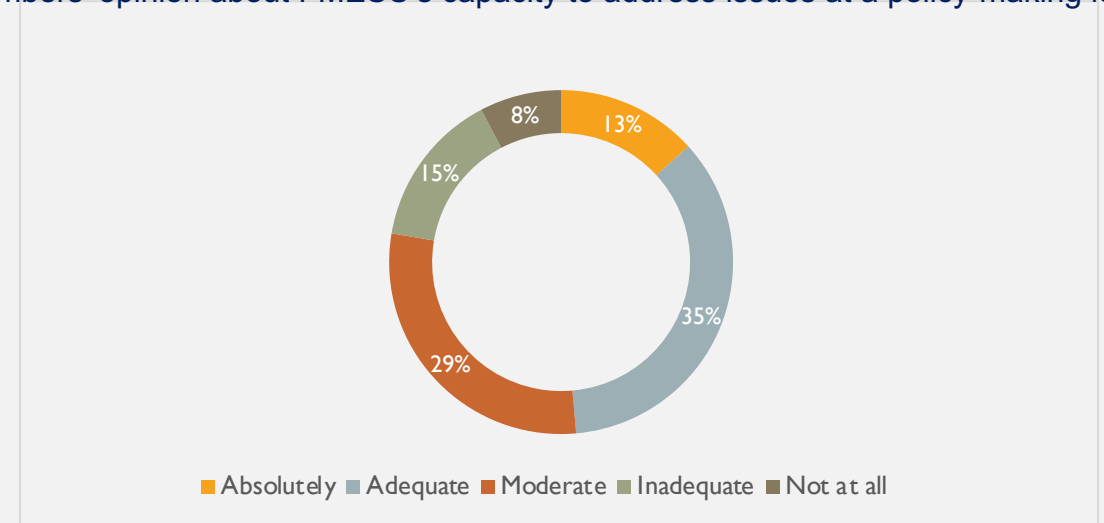
  - The number of civil society organizations with parallel activities aimed at solving labour relations issues of education workers has increased.

  - It does not involve the voices of private institutions because of their inactive membership status.

- **The scope of FMESU's responsibilities is interpreted in a narrow context both for the government and the public.**
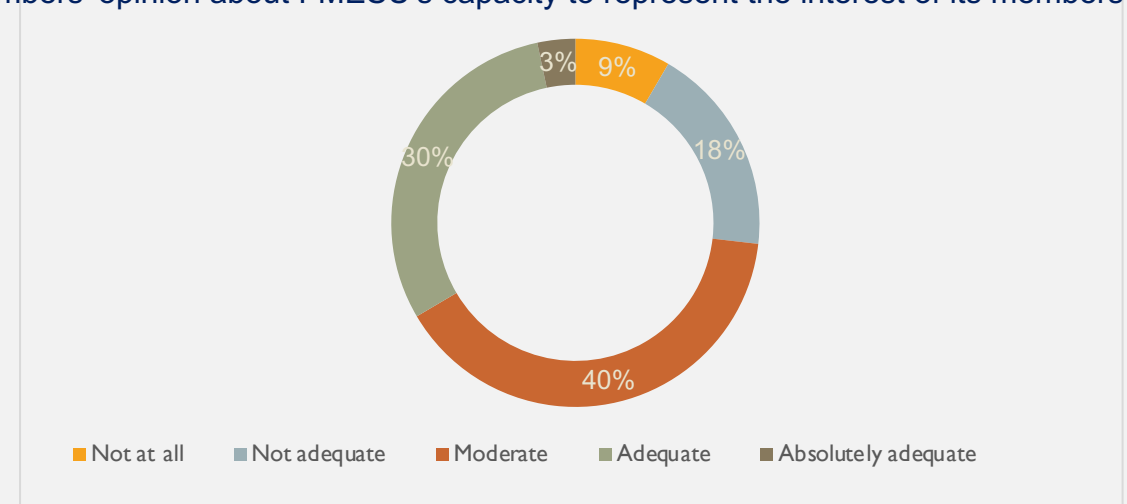
  - The interests of the FMESU have often been seen only from the angle of labour relations.

  - In the social dialogue process as the priority is given to the materialistic needs of the education workers.

- **Lack of institutional support** including close monitoring of the laws passed by the Parliament regularly and limited funding also becomes a hindrance to an effective social dialogue as the policies to support education workers are poorly implemented.

Members' opinion about FMESU's capacity to address issues at a policy-making level

8% | 13% | 35% | 29% | 15%

■ Absolutely ■ Adequate ■ Moderate ■ Inadequate ■ Not at all

Members' opinion about FMESU's capacity to represent the interest of its members

3% | 9% | 18% | 40% | 30%

■ Not at all ■ Not adequate ■ Moderate ■ Adequate ■ Absolutely adequate
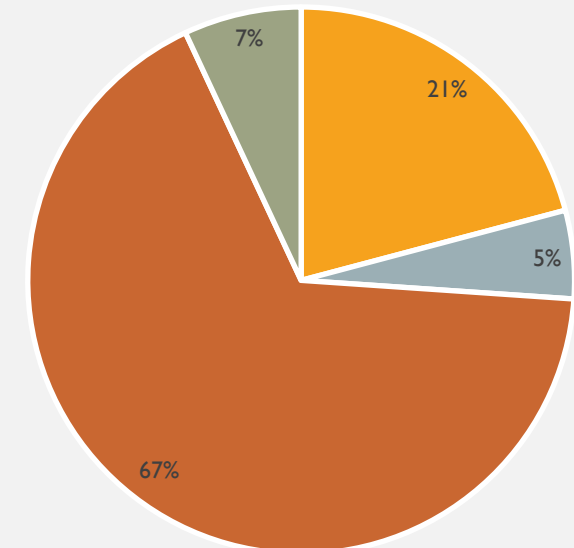
THE FMESU AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

The chapter focuses on the current situation of members' engagement, feedback mechanism, strategies of information dissemination

Two-way communication mechanism at the FMESU is poor

- Issues that cannot be resolved by committee supervisors take a longer process.
- Petition procedure does not guarantee personal confidentiality
- The most common way of conveying complaints is to participate in the relevant poll (67%) and the conferences and meetings (21%).
- However, only 5% of the respondents decided to file a complaint to the executive body and requested feedback.
- During the period between 2015 to 2020, a total number of 130 complaints were filed to the office of the FMESU, which was approximately 22 in a year. This is a relatively small number, compared to its over 25 thousand members.
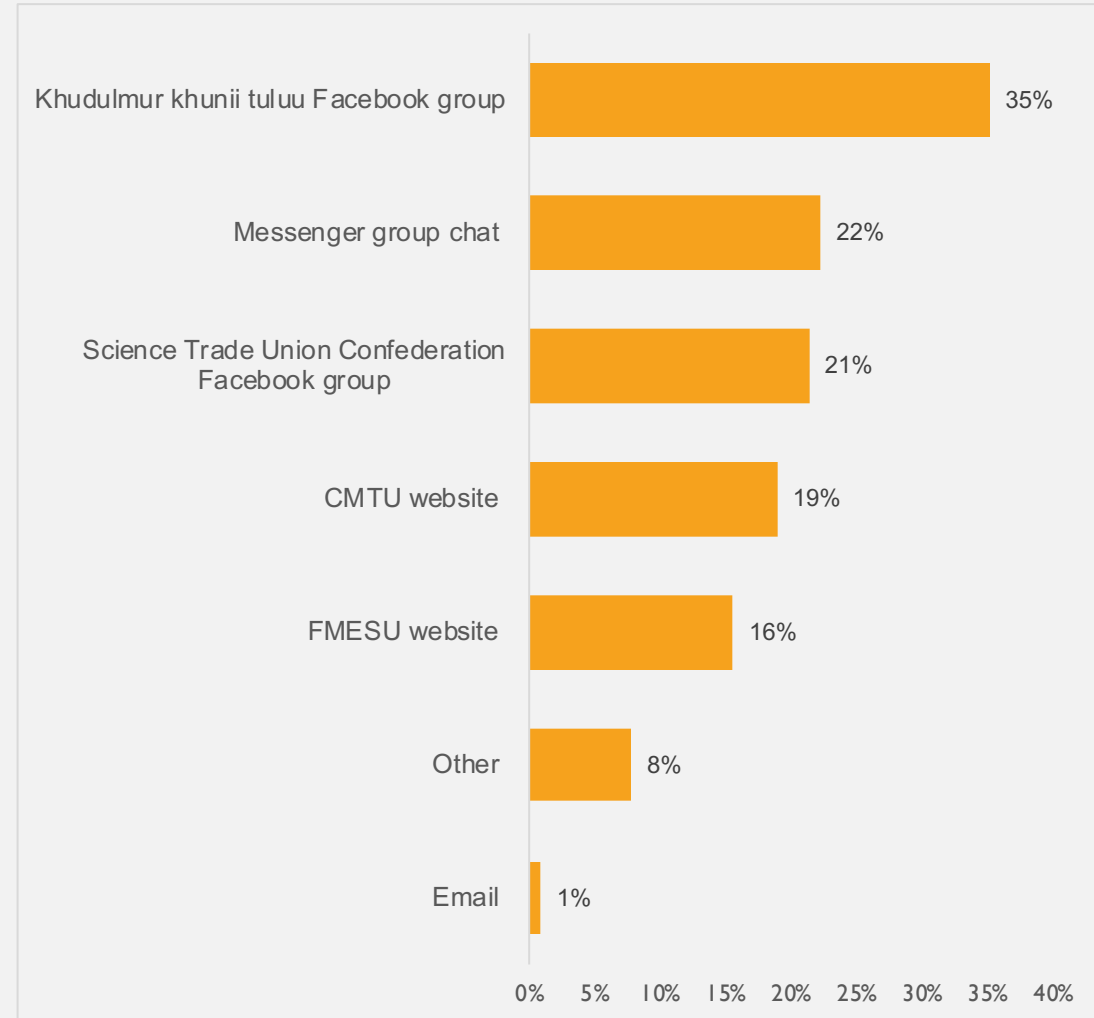
Ways of conveying comments and complaints

Legend:
- Participate in conferences, meetings (21%)
- File a complaint to the primary committees (5%)
- Participate in the relevent poll (67%)
- Other (7%)

THE FMESU AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

Unofficial communication tools

- The process of disseminating and exchanging information is human-based
- the Facebook group "Khudulmur khunii tuluu" is the main tool used by the FMESU to spread any news to its members.
- The members are left out of the information as it disappears quickly from the discussion wall.
- Despite being an unofficial channel of information, Facebook group or Messenger group chat is echoed by the members as a comparatively faster option to access information.
- 47% of the members are not satisfied with the current situation of disseminating information.
- All the interview participants admit that room for improvement is needed, especially in promoting official channels by using modern tools, platforms or smart technologies.

Communication tools

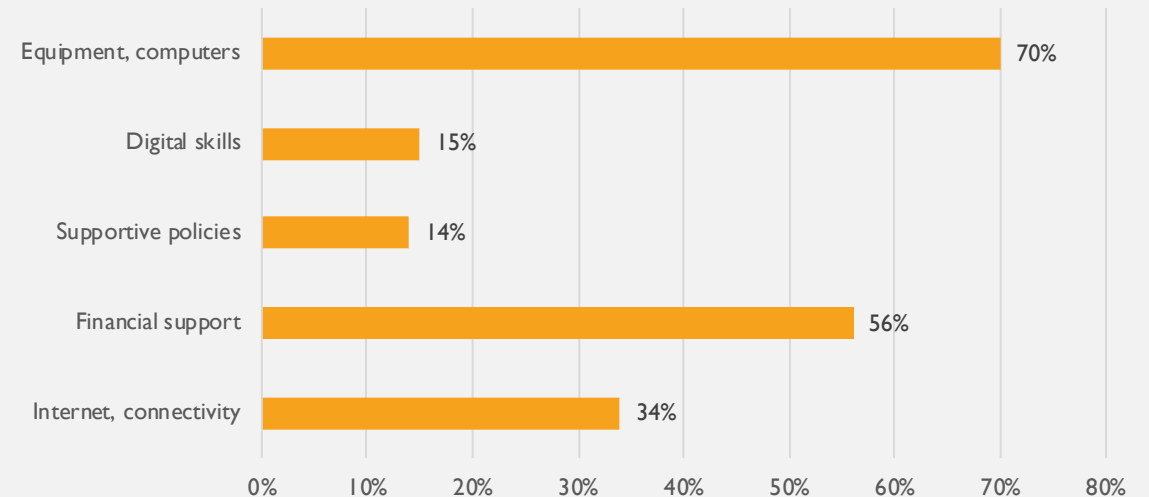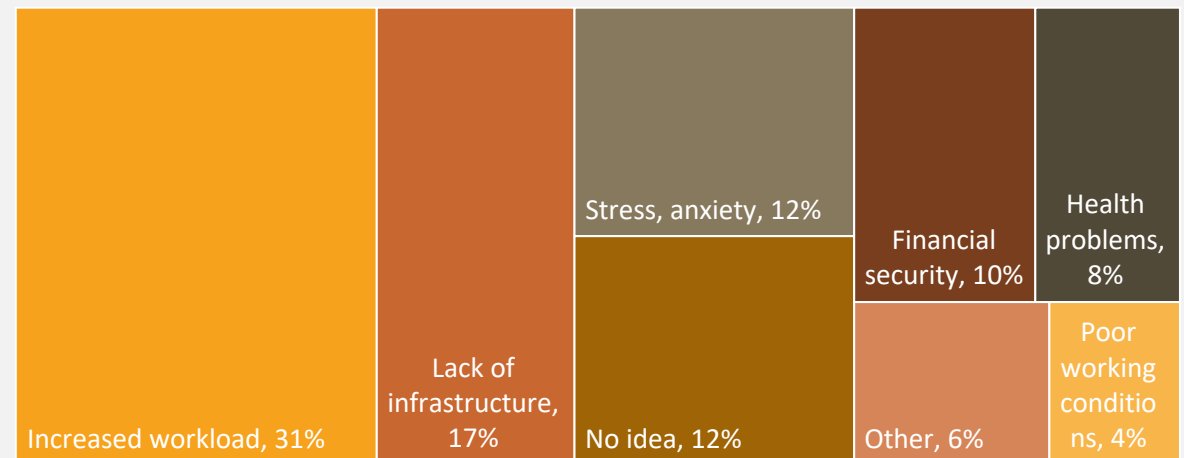| Communication tool	Percentage
Khudulmur khunii tuluu Facebook group	35%
Messenger group chat	22%
Science Trade Union Confederation Facebook group	21%
CMTU website	19%
FMESU website	16%
Other	8%
Email	1%

COVID-19 AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

Education is the most affected sector by the COVID-19 in terms of increased workload and operational interruptions (MNCCI, 2020).

- the education sector was in immense need of a digitally literate workforce in order to adapt to the new working environment.

- another limiting condition for the digital transition is the insufficiency of both hard and soft infrastructures.

- in order to adapt to the COVID-19, 56% of the education workers needed financial support including extra allowance for the extended workload.

- an increasing amount of workload became one of the prominent problems, which has a negative influence on the quality of life of education workers.

Support that needed for the digital transition during the COVID-19

Category	Percentage
Equipment, computers	70%
Digital skills	15%
Supportive policies	14%
Financial support	56%
Internet, connectivity	34%

The problems faced during COVID-19

Increased workload, 31%

Lack of infrastructure, 17%

Stress, anxiety, 12%

No idea, 12%

Financial security, 10%

Other, 6%

Health problems, 8%

Poor working conditions, 4%

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Organizational development	B. Professional development of members	C. Communication	D. Members' engagement
▪ Reflect opportunities of digital economy in development strategies ▪ Develop a monitoring and evaluation system with specific measurements that tracks implementation of the action plan and detects deficiencies. ▪ Automate the reporting of implementation and financing of the action plans of the committees and make them available to the relevant members. ▪ Reduce manual tasks through automation in the process of membership registration, creating databases, consolidating records, and archiving ▪ Conduct research on whether it is necessary to increase the structure and staffing in order to prepare for the digital transition and ensure the stability of the internal IT system.	▪ In order to identify new areas of the union's activity, conduct a vote among grassroot members and the vote process can be reorganized in an innovative way. For example, organize a case writing competition and a hackathon for all members to learn from international experiences. ▪ Take the lead in creating a policy environment to address issues such as e-learning, e-resources, related copyright issues, digital labor and its evaluation. ▪ Initiate activities to increase the digital competency of human resources in the education sector, help acquire the necessary skills ▪ Create more professional development incentives to expand membership in private schools rather than focusing on labor relations and social	• Introduce sustainable channels to ensure information transparency at all levels and solve them through digital platform • Provide top-down and bottom-up information flow, reduce the involvement of committee supervisors in the process of disseminating information to members • Establish an internal petition system, shorten the application processing time and guarantee the anonymity of the applicant, if requested. • Report the feedback and survey results to the members or surveyors for more discussions and recommendations.	• Organize a series of events to introduce new members to the advantages of unionizing, and change the content of introductory training into a member-centered content. • Ensure that the knowledge and information for new members is provided at the same level in each primary committee regardless of the personnel in charge, possible through digital platform. • Organize extracurricular activities in an integrated manner to create a community atmosphere • Establish an incentive system for active members, regularly evaluate individual initiatives and activities, implement key performance indicators, reward them according to the points collected, and take measures to introduce them to the community (change the current methods of rewards and incentives to make them more inclusive, sustainable and competitive). • Make information about FMESU and its activities available to the general public or non-members (improve current website and social media visibility).