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DEVELOPING LAWYERS' PROFESSIONAL SKILLS
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF TALENT MANAGEMENT:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE LEGAL ENVIRONMENT OF
MONGOLIA

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to examine the development of lawyers' professional skills in Mongolia within the theoretical framework of talent management and to identify deficiencies in the current legal regulatory environment. Specifically, it evaluates the extent to which existing legislation meets the requirements of talent management and seeks to formulate policy recommendations to address identified gaps.

As of 2020, a total of 5,893 lawyers were registered with the Mongolian Bar Association, representing approximately 1.7 lawyers per 10,000 people. The number of law students increased by 60.9 percent, from 8,825 in 2016 to 14,201 in 2025. As of 2025, 76.1 percent of students are enrolled in bachelor's programs, 21.2 percent in master's programs, and 2.7 percent in doctoral programs. On average, approximately 2,900 graduates complete legal studies annually, consistently accounting for around 10 percent of total university graduates. In 2024, 63.1 percent of the 2,386 graduates were female.

Pursuant to Articles 26.1.4 and 23 of the Law on the Legal Status of Lawyers, every licensed lawyer is required to complete continuing professional development (CPD) training with a specified number of credit hours each year, and failure to comply constitutes grounds for suspension of the right to practice. According to the regulations of the Mongolian Bar Association, lawyers must accumulate no fewer than six credits within two years, and non-compliance may result in suspension of their license. However, the absence of clearly defined statutory standards for credit hours represents a significant regulatory gap.

In terms of professional structure, as of 2025, the Mongolian Bar Association registry includes 5,318 legal professionals, comprising 2,272 lawyers, 2,046 advocates, 615

prosecutors, 126 judges, and 259 notaries.¹ Compared to the figure of 5,893 in 2020, the decrease may be attributed to stricter enforcement of CPD requirements and the suspension of licenses of professionals who failed to meet such requirements. From a theoretical perspective, this study is grounded in the “War for Talent” model proposed by Ed Michaels et al. (2001) and the strategic talent management framework developed by David G. Collings and Kamel Mellahi (2009), highlighting why these models are essential for structuring systems of professional development for lawyers.

The system established under the Law on the Legal Status of Lawyers—comprising specialized lawyers (Article 32), accreditation (Article 58), and credit-hour calculation (Articles 44 and 45)—forms the legal foundation for talent management; however, this study demonstrates that its implementation remains insufficient.

The findings identify four key deficiencies in the legal environment governing talent management for lawyers: First, although the Mongolian Bar Association requires the accumulation of six credits within two years, there is no clearly defined statutory standard for CPD hours. Second, there is no unified professional competency standard aligned with international best practices. Third, career development pathways are not legally defined. Fourth, mentorship systems are implemented informally without a legal framework. Comparative analysis shows that CPD requirements in other jurisdictions are more clearly regulated: the United States requires 12–15 hours annually, the United Kingdom 16 hours, and China 40 hours. In contrast, Mongolia’s requirement of six credits under the Mongolian Bar Association’s regulations is not explicitly codified in law, and oversight mechanisms remain inadequate.

Based on these findings, the study proposes policy recommendations, including the incorporation of clear CPD hour standards into legislation, the development of unified competency standards, and the legal institutionalization of mentorship systems.

Keywords: talent management, lawyers’ professional skills, continuing professional development (CPD), legal environment, human resource development, Mongolia

¹ www.mgl.br

INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, the legal profession is undergoing significant transformation worldwide. There is an increasing demand not merely for professionals with legal knowledge, but for “legal talent” possessing leadership ability, communication skills, and strategic thinking.²

As of 2020, a total of 5,893 lawyers were registered with the Mongolian Bar Association, of whom 56.8% were female and 43.2% were male.³ Between 2016 and 2020, approximately 7,500 law graduates participated in the bar examination, indicating that an average of 1,500 candidates take the qualification exam each year.⁴

From the perspective of the education sector, during the 2023–2024 academic year, 145,345 students were enrolled in 64 higher education institutions in Mongolia, while in the 2024–2025 academic year, 150,282 students were enrolled in 65 institutions.⁵ The proportion of law students among these continues to increase annually, suggesting a trend toward intensified competition in the legal labor market and a growing importance of professional differentiation.

Research Objective: To examine how the current legal framework of Mongolia meets the requirements of talent management for lawyers, to identify gaps in the legal environment, and to propose policy recommendations to address these deficiencies.

Research Methodology: Document Analysis A content analysis was conducted on relevant provisions of the Law on the Legal Status of Lawyers (2012), the Labour Law (as amended in 2021), the Law on Advocacy (2017), and the Law on Education (2023).

Quantitative Data Analysis Statistical analysis was carried out using data from the 2020 report of the Mongolian Bar Association, statistical data of the Ministry of Education and Science for the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 academic years, and data from the National Statistics Office (1212.mn) to analyze trends in the legal profession and legal education.

Comparative Legal Analysis A comparative analysis was conducted based on the models of the American Bar Association (ABA), the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) of the United Kingdom, and the system of the China.

² Tansley, C. (2011). What do we mean by the term 'talent' in talent management? *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 43(5), 266–274.

³ Galbataar, L. (November 25, 2020). The Implementation of Certain State Functions by the Mongolian Bar Association [Presentation]. Council Member's presentation. Ulaanbaatar: Mongolian Bar Association.

⁴ Mongolian Bar Association. (2020). Statistical Data on the Lawyers' Professional Examination, 2016–2020. Ulaanbaatar.

⁵ Ministry of Education and Science of Mongolia. (2024). Statistics of Higher Education for the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 Academic Years. Ulaanbaatar: Ministry of Education and Science. Source: moe.gov.mn

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study of talent management was first advanced by Ed Michaels, Helen Handfield-Jones, and Beth Axelrod (2001), who described the competition among organizations for skilled human resources as the “war for talent,” demonstrating that the ability to attract and retain highly skilled employees constitutes a strategic advantage for organizations.⁶

In the study by David G. Collings and Kamel Mellahi (2009), strategic talent management is defined as the process of identifying key strategic positions that have the greatest impact on organizational performance and aligning human resource systems to ensure a continuous supply of capable talent for those positions.⁷

These two models are of primary importance to the system of professional development for lawyers for the following reasons.

First, in Mongolia there are only 1.7 lawyers per 10,000 people, which is significantly lower than international benchmarks (United States: 40; South Korea: 4.6). Under such conditions of limited supply of legal professionals, attracting and retaining talent becomes a strategic advantage in line with the model proposed by Ed Michaels et al.

Second, although approximately 1,500 candidates sit for the bar examination each year, there is no systematic framework to support their professional career development. Therefore, following the model of David G. Collings and Kamel Mellahi, there is a critical need to establish an internal talent pool capable of continuously filling strategic positions (such as senior lawyers and partners).

Third, the legal profession requires a combination of competencies, including professional skills, ethics, and mental well-being. Accordingly, talent management must go beyond purely technical training and evolve into a comprehensive system of human development.

At the international level, lawyers’ professional competencies are generally defined as follows:

Competency Area	Capabilities	Link to Talent Management
Foundational Knowledge	Legal knowledge, theory, practice	Recruitment and placement
Professional Skills	Case handling, drafting	Development and evaluation

⁶ Michaels, E., Handfield-Jones, H., & Axelrod, B. (2001). *The War for Talent*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

⁷ Collings, D. G., & Mellahi, K. (2009). Strategic talent management: A review and research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review*, 19(4), 304–313. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2009.04.001>

	documents	
Communication Skills	Negotiation, persuasion, advocacy	Internal training
Leadership Competency	Team management, strategic thinking	Leadership pipeline development
Ethical Competency	Professional ethics, accountability	Organizational culture

The mentorship program implemented by the Mongolian Bar Association since 2022 consists of three core components:



This structure is fully aligned with the widely used **Knowledge–Skills–Attitude (KSA)** model in international human resource research.

The professional skills component includes areas such as court administration, law firm management, client relations, legal counseling, business development, and alternative dispute resolution methods. The ethical component of the legal profession encompasses issues such as maintaining client confidentiality, avoiding conflicts of interest, and reporting unethical conduct. The work–life balance component includes determining professional direction and goals, protecting mental health, and reducing risks related to substance abuse, demonstrating an awareness of the unique pressures inherent in the legal profession.

However, several shortcomings can be identified.

First, the requirement that mentees must have “passed the bar examination” allows the inclusion of newly qualified lawyers, but there remains a lack of a continuous professional development system for experienced practitioners.

Second, the program does not have a mandatory legal status, resulting in voluntary and inconsistent participation.

Third, the absence of an evaluation system to measure the program’s effectiveness indicates a lack of a systematic approach to talent management.

Lawyers in Mongolia: Quantitative Analysis

According to the 2020 report of the Mongolian Bar Association, a total of 5,893 lawyers were registered with the association, which corresponds to approximately 1.7 lawyers per 10,000 people in Mongolia. By comparison, in the United States, as of 2016, there were 1,315,561 registered lawyers, representing approximately 40 lawyers per 10,000 people.

Indicator	Number / Percentage	Source
Total registered lawyers (2020)	5,893	MBA, 2020
Percentage of female lawyers	56.8%	MBA, 2020
Percentage of male lawyers	43.2%	MBA, 2020
Number of bar exam participants (2016–2020)	~7,500	MBA, 2020
Average annual bar exam participants	~1,500	MBA, 2020
Lawyers per 10,000 population	~1.7	Estimate

These quantitative indicators demonstrate the urgent need for a systematic approach to the development of lawyers’ professional skills and talent management in Mongolia. In particular, although approximately 1,500 new candidates take the bar examination each year, there remains a lack of a legal framework to support their subsequent career development.

Based on statistical data from the education sector:⁸

Academic Year	Total Students	Law Students	Law Graduates	Share of Total Graduates
2022–2023	161,891	12,707	2,340	10.0%
2023–2024	145,345	12,727	2,989	10.8%
2024–2025	150,282	14,201	2,386*	10.0%

The number of law students remained relatively stable between 12,707 and 14,201 during the period 2022–2025, accounting for approximately 8.3–9.4 percent of the total student population. Law graduates consistently constituted around 10 percent of all university graduates annually between 2022 and 2024. *The number of graduates for the 2024–2025 academic year is not yet fully available; therefore, the 2024 data has been used.* Within the framework of legal education, although law schools are implementing continuing professional

⁸ www.1212.mn

development programs, it cannot yet be concluded that a unified standard and a solid legal regulatory foundation have been established.

Analysis of the Legal Environment

The Law on the Legal Status of Lawyers (2012) establishes the framework for the bar examination, licensing, and the system of professional ethical responsibility for lawyers. However, the requirement for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) remains only at the level of recommendation rather than a binding legal obligation.⁹

Article 26.1.4 of the Law on the Legal Status of Lawyers stipulates the obligation for lawyers to “participate in continuing training and meet a specified number of credit hours”; however, clearly defined standards for the number of hours and effective enforcement mechanisms remain insufficient. Furthermore, although Article 23 of the revised version includes provisions on continuing training, it does not establish a minimum required number of hours.

Article 45 of the Labour Law (2021) imposes an obligation on employers to provide professional development training for employees; however, it does not contain specific provisions tailored to lawyers. One of the core functions defined by the Law on the Mongolian Bar Association is to “organize continuing and informal training for lawyers and calculate credit hours” (Articles 44 and 45 of the Law on the Legal Status of Lawyers), which indicates that the CPD system has been legally recognized.

According to the continuing education regulations adopted by the Mongolian Bar Association, lawyers are required to accumulate no fewer than six credits every two years. Of these, 1–2 credits must be obtained through mandatory ethics training, while the remaining credits are fulfilled through specialized elective courses. Credit accumulation is not limited to classroom-based training; it also includes lectures, seminars, and webinars delivered by accredited organizations, teaching activities (counted with a weighting coefficient), publication of articles in professional journals, and recognition of equivalent training provided by foreign institutions.

If the required credits are not completed within the prescribed period, disciplinary measures may be imposed, including the suspension of the license to practice. To restore the

⁹ **State Great Khural of Mongolia. (2012, as amended in 2024).** Law on the Legal Status of Lawyers, Article 26.1.4 (obligation for continuing training), Article 23 (continuing training). Available at: legalinfo.mn/mn/detail?lawId=8661. **State Great Khural of Mongolia. (2021).** Labour Law, Article 45 (workplace training). Available at: legalinfo.mn/mn/detail?lawId=16230709635751

license, the missing credits must be completed. Nevertheless, the quality of implementation and oversight mechanisms remain inadequate (Continuing Education Regulations of the Mongolian Bar Association; mglbar.mn, 2025).

In addition, the Mongolian Bar Association is authorized to accredit law schools (Article 58 of the Law on the Legal Status of Lawyers), which forms a foundational element of talent management in legal education. However, the lack of practical implementation of this function represents a systemic weakness, as it is not effectively linked to the framework for continuous professional development.

Deficiency	Current Situation	Required Regulation
CPD Requirement	6 credits every 2 years (MBA regulation); no hours in law	Mandatory legal requirement
Competency Standard	Regulated only at the level of knowledge	Competency-based standard
Career Development Path	Not clearly defined in law	Senior lawyer (career progression) system
Mentorship Regulation	Implemented informally	Institutionalized system
Performance Incentives	At the discretion of employers	Performance-based system

Comparative analysis indicates that Mongolia lags behind international standards in terms of CPD requirements. The experiences of the United States and the United Kingdom demonstrate that regulating talent management for lawyers at the legislative level has a decisive impact on improving professional quality.¹⁰

Country	CPD Requirement	Competency Standard	Mentorship
USA	12–15 hours per year	Competency-based	Regulated by law

¹⁰ American Bar Association. (2016). National Lawyer Population Survey. Chicago: ABA. Эх сурвалж: www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/market_research/national-lawyer-population-10-year-total.pdf

(ABA)	(mandatory)		
UK (SRA)	16 hours per year	SQE-based assessment	Training contract system
China	40 hours per year	State licensing examination	Supervised regulatory system
Mongolia	6 credits every 2 years	Partially regulated	No formal system

The development of the Mongolian Bar Association can be characterized as having progressed through three distinct stages, each closely aligned with the evolution of the talent management system.

First Stage (1960): The Mongolian Bar Association was established as a voluntary membership organization, forming the initial structure of a professional community of lawyers.

Second Stage (2012): Following the adoption of the Law on the Legal Status of Lawyers, the Association was reconstituted as a mandatory membership body with legally defined powers. This stage laid the legal foundation for the bar examination, licensing, CPD, and the system of specialized lawyers.

Third Stage (since 2022): The Association introduced a mentorship program and expanded its membership by 267 new lawyers, marking the beginning of the practical implementation of talent management.¹¹

The system of “specialized lawyers” provided under Article 32 of the Law on the Legal Status of Lawyers corresponds closely to the career progression framework reflected in the strategic talent management model of David G. Collings and Kamel Mellahi (2009), whereby a legally defined pathway exists: junior lawyer → senior lawyer → specialized lawyer. However, the absence of internal mentorship and CPD systems to support transitions between these stages hinders the full implementation of talent management.

In addition, the Mongolian Bar Association is authorized to provide awards and incentives, with such relations regulated by the Council (Article 9.6 of its Charter). This establishes a legal basis for a performance-based incentive system; however, its practical implementation remains insufficient.

In Mongolia, approximately 1,500 candidates take the bar examination annually, yet the total number of lawyers (5,893) remains low relative to the population compared to

¹¹ mglbar.mn/p/s/2, 2025

international standards. This indicates, on the one hand, a growing demand for legal professionals and, on the other hand, an urgent need to establish a systematic talent management framework.

Based on the findings of this study, the legal environment governing talent management for lawyers exhibits several key deficiencies: although CPD requirements exist, they remain at the level of recommendation; there is no unified competency standard; clear career development pathways are not fully defined in legislation; and mentorship systems are implemented without formal legal institutionalization.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Legislative Amendments

- Introduce a mandatory requirement of at least 20 hours per year for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) into the Law on the Legal Status of Lawyers.
- Clarify in the Labour Law the obligation of employers to cover the costs of lawyers' professional development.
- Make the implementation of mentorship programs mandatory at the level of the Mongolian Bar Association. Although the mentorship program introduced in 2022 covers professional ethics, law firm management, and work–life balance, it has not yet been formalized as a legally binding requirement.

Organizational-Level Recommendations

- Law firms and legal institutions should develop competency frameworks and integrate them with performance evaluation systems.
- Establish clear career development pathways within internal regulations—such as junior lawyer, senior lawyer, and partner—and systematically implement the three core components of the mentorship program (professional skills, ethics, and work–life balance) within organizational talent management systems.

Recommendations for the Education System

- Introduce mandatory courses on leadership skills and talent management theory within law school curricula.
- Strengthen legal clinical programs as a primary channel for developing practical professional skills.

CONCLUSION

As of 2020, a total of 5,893 lawyers were registered in Mongolia, and between 2016 and 2020, an average of approximately 1,500 candidates participated in the professional qualification examination each year. However, a unified legal framework to support their professional development remains insufficient. The number of law students increased from 8,825 to 14,201 between 2016 and 2025, representing a 60.9 percent growth. In 2025, of the total 14,201 students, 76.1 percent were enrolled in bachelor's programs, 21.2 percent in master's programs, and 2.7 percent in doctoral programs. Between 2019 and 2024, an average of approximately 2,900 graduates completed legal studies annually, consistently accounting for around 10 percent of total university graduates. In 2024, 63.1 percent of the 2,386 graduates were female. These indicators clearly demonstrate that the pool of legal professionals is expected to expand in the future, thereby underscoring the urgent need to establish a systematic talent management framework.

Comparative international analysis shows that legal regulation of talent management for lawyers has a decisive impact on improving professional quality. While mandatory CPD requirements amount to 12–15 hours annually in the United States, 16 hours in the United Kingdom, and 40 hours in China, Mongolia lacks a clearly defined statutory minimum. Although Articles 26.1.4 and 23 of the Law on the Legal Status of Lawyers impose an obligation to participate in continuing professional development, enforcement mechanisms such as the suspension of licenses for non-compliance remain insufficient in practice.

From a theoretical perspective, the study confirms that two major talent management models are of primary importance in developing lawyers' professional skills. First, the "War for Talent" model proposed by Ed Michaels, Helen Handfield-Jones, and Beth Axelrod (2001) emphasizes that attracting, retaining, and developing skilled professionals constitutes a strategic advantage for organizations. Under conditions of lawyer scarcity in Mongolia (1.7 per 10,000 people), the systematic identification and development of talent is essential for enhancing market competitiveness.

Second, the strategic talent management model of David G. Collings and Kamel Mellahi (2009) requires aligning career progression pathways such as junior lawyer, senior lawyer, and partner with internal human resource systems. To effectively integrate these models into the Mongolian legal system, priority should be given to establishing clear statutory standards for CPD hours, developing unified competency frameworks, and legally institutionalizing mentorship systems.

The introduction of a mentorship program by the Mongolian Bar Association in 2022 represents a significant step in this direction; however, the study finds that its scope and oversight remain insufficient.

Directions for Future Research

Within the scope of future research, the following areas are of primary importance:

First, to conduct a comprehensive analysis of detailed statistical data on law students, as well as the dynamics of bar examination participants and successful candidates;

Second, to evaluate the effectiveness of talent management systems through a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods;

Third, to analyze the quality of CPD implementation and oversight mechanisms in relation to improvements in lawyers' professional competence;

Fourth, to develop a model of talent management for lawyers that is tailored to the specific socio-cultural context of Mongolia, which constitutes a priority research direction of both theoretical and practical significance.

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