

SECTOR ASSESMENT (SUMMARY): EDUCATION

Sector Road Map

1. Sector Performance, Problems, and Opportunities

1. Basic education in the Kyrgyz Republic starts at age seven and is mandatory for 4 years of primary and 5 years of lower secondary education. An additional 2 years of upper secondary (grades 10–11) and secondary technical and vocational education is also provided. In school year (SY) 2011/12, 1.015 million students were enrolled in grades 1–11 in 2,204 schools: 413,000 students in primary, 481,000 in lower secondary, and 121,000 in upper secondary. More than 98% of students attended public schools, and 69% of enrolments were in rural areas. The transition rate from primary to lower secondary education is nearly universal with the net enrolment rate in lower secondary at about 90%. Public education is provided in four languages: Kyrgyz, Russian, Tajik, and Uzbek. Gender parity in enrolment has been achieved. In SY2011/2012, girls accounted for 49.2% of total enrolments, which was consistent through primary and secondary grades. The average number of years of schooling among 15–19 year old females (10.05 years) is slightly higher than for males (9.89 years). However, the disaggregated data show a slow decline in the enrolment of rural girls in primary education from 2006 to 2011. In SY2011/2012, 75,502 teachers were employed in grades 1–11, an increase of 3% over 2006. Almost all primary school teachers are female; about 80% of secondary school teachers and managers are female. About 84% of teachers have university diploma. Teacher–pupil ratios are 1:14 nationally, 1:16 in urban areas, 1:12 in rural areas, and 1:9 in private schools.

2. Gaps and Challenges in the Education

2. Considerable progress was made in the education sector since 2000, including (i) the government's prioritization of education; (ii) increased financing for education (the government's expenditure on education was 6.9% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2012, higher than in comparator countries); (iii) the national increase in teachers' salaries; and (iv) the creation of the Educational Development Strategy (EDS) for 2012–2020, which provides a single framework to strengthen the education system and coordinate efforts by the government and development partners. However, many outstanding problems remain.

3. The quality of education remains a key issue. In 2005, 44.2% of tested pupils passed a national reading literacy test, a significant decline from 59.1% in 2001. Success on math tests fell from 81.4% to 58.8% over the same period.¹ The Kyrgyz Republic ranked last of 65 countries in both mathematics and literacy in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test of student abilities in 2006 and 2009. More than half of all students performed below basic levels in literacy, mathematics, and sciences in the 4th and 8th grade national student achievement tests in 2007 and 2009 (girls performed consistently better than boys in all three subjects). In PISA 2009, the gap in reading literacy between 15-year-old students in the Kyrgyz Republic and the average for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) corresponded to 4.5 years of formal schooling. Student achievement differs significantly between urban and rural areas and between different geographical regions with Osh, Jalalabad, Batken, and Talas having the lowest PISA scores. PISA scores in the south were much lower than elsewhere in the country and corresponded to a difference of about half a standard deviation, which is high by international standards. Significant differentials are also found in the education outcomes in different languages of instruction. On the Single National Graduation

¹ D. Lewis. 2011. *Drivers of Change in Kyrgyzstan*. London: Department for International Development.

Test for higher education entrance in 2012, students in Russian-language schools performed significantly better than those in Kyrgyz- and Uzbek-language schools—and the difference in average scores is increasing.² The contributing causes of low-quality outcomes and national differentials in student achievement are discussed in paras. 4–9.

4. The education system has been underfunded for many years. GDP per capita in the Kyrgyz Republic is one of the lowest in the region, and education costs per student are also low. Following increases in 2011, salaries for teaching and nonteaching staff amounted to 5.0% of GDP compared with 3.7% in 2010. Salaries accounted for more than 70% of the education budget in 2011, leaving other education budget items underfunded. Although the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) is responsible for the education sector, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) controls the budgets. Budgets are divided into two categories: (i) secured budgets covering remuneration and utilities, which are guaranteed; and (ii) unsecured budgets, where disbursements of allocated funding depend on the availability of funds. The unsecured budgets, including textbook funding, are not guaranteed to be available or may not be released when required, which has caused delays in textbook deliveries to schools. Since MES participation in the budget process for the sector is limited, it has difficulties linking policies and planning with financing. Most of the funding allocated to the education system from the national budget is not distributed through the MES. Instead funding flows through local authorities, which may hold up disbursement or divert funding. This has the effect of dividing accountability for education outcomes. Per-student spending varied significantly between urban and rural areas, partly because of different levels of local tax revenues and household incomes, as well as the willingness and ability of parents to contribute to the costs of education. To make the allocation of resources more equitable, the MES is implementing per capita financing in schools across the country.

5. The curriculum still demonstrates many of the characteristics of the former Soviet curriculum. It is academic, theoretical, and overloaded. The focus is on the memorization of facts rather than competencies, critical thinking skills, and the practical application of knowledge. There is a bias towards language learning, particularly in primary grades where more than half of the contact hours are allocated to learning three languages (four in Uzbek- and Tajik-language schools). Secondary grades also show a similar lack of balance. Grade 9 students, for example, study 18 subjects and have no choice of the subjects they study. As a response to low learning outcomes and weak skills competencies, the government has introduced comprehensive reforms, including a new competency-based curriculum for grades 1–4. Curricula for grades 5–9 are being developed with assistance from the World Bank.³ Policy and investment support is critical to complete the revision of the curriculum and learning and teaching materials (LTMs) for grades 10–11. An evaluation of the new curriculum for primary education is also needed to inform the reform of the secondary education curriculum.

6. Textbook shortages and disparities in their distribution and availability are ongoing. In addition, the content and page design are outdated, and pedagogical approaches are often inconsistent with new curriculum requirements. These problems have diminished student test scores. The government's annual budget of Som100 million for textbooks is only 40% of the amount required to renew and maintain textbook stocks each year for all grades. In SY2011–2012, the MES estimated that only 43% of students had access to the specified textbooks. There are significant regional differences in the provision of textbooks and in the provision for different languages of instruction. Many schools continue to use old stocks of textbooks. The delivery of the new curriculum has been undermined by poorly coordinated (i) textbook

² ADB. 2013. *Higher Education in the Kyrgyz Republic*. Consultant's report. Manila.

³ World Bank. 2013. *Sector Support for Education Reform Project*. Washington, DC.

development; and (ii) evaluation and pilot-testing procedures, which have led to long delays in the approval, production, and delivery of textbooks for grades 1–3. Schools will struggle with the delivery of the new curriculum if essential supportive learning and teaching materials are delivered unpredictably throughout the school year.

7. Until the 2011 increases in salaries, teacher shortages and the relevance of their professional skills were issues of concern that affected the delivery of the new curriculum. The teaching force was aging with a significant proportion of teachers in the third and fourth quartiles of their careers. The school system had shortages of qualified and experienced teachers in foreign languages, sciences, and information and communication technology. However, the 2011 salary increases have attracted new entrants and improved teacher commitment and motivation to learn and develop the pedagogic skills required to support the curricula reforms. Teacher levels were eliminated in 2012, resulting in a lack of career progression. There is a need to re-introduce teacher levels to enhance incentives for teachers and improve chances for promotion. While teachers are required to attend in-service teacher training courses every 5 years to be recertified, only a small proportion of teachers attended these courses because of budget constraints. In addition, the courses were not relevant to the teachers' needs. Chronic underfunding of the education system means teacher training institutes lack incentives to improve teacher training programs. The adoption of the new student-centered curriculum puts a premium on effective teacher training and requires in-service training institutions to provide a range of professional skills required by schools to effectively deliver the curriculum. Sector performance data is lacking, and what information is available is poorly used for planning, policy, and management purposes. The MES does not have a clear mandate to collect or process education statistics, which inhibits the collection and use of data throughout the system. This, in turn, weakens planning and policy making. Many stakeholders—including schools, district education departments, the MES, and the National Statistics Committee—are involved in uncoordinated data collection, which has led to inconsistent data. As a result, system management and system monitoring are weak.

3. Government's Sector Strategy

8. The EDS 2012–2020 provides an overall strategy and a single framework to strengthen the education system and coordinate all government and development partner inputs. It aims to ensure access, improve the quality of education, and improve sector management and performance. Among the many steps taken since 2009, the following are relevant to the proposed program: (i) approval of subject curricula for grades 1–4, (ii) introduction of the concept of profile (elective) education in grades 10 and 11, (iii) introduction of per capita financing of schools to help achieve a more equitable allocation of resources, (iv) significant increases in teacher salaries; and (v) initiation of a program to establish school boards of trustees to help manage schools more effectively.

4. ADB Sector Experience and Assistance Program

9. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been a key development partner in the education sector since the 1990s. The main objective of ADB's operations in the sector has been to promote the sustainability of earlier educational achievements in the face of declining resources and difficult economic conditions in the country. ADB support to school education included (i) the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP), 1998–2004;⁴ (ii) the Second

⁴ ADB. 1997. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loans and Technical Assistance Grant to the Kyrgyz Republic for the Education Sector Development Program*. Manila.

Education Project (SEP), 2006–2012;⁵ and (iii) the Improving Access to Quality Basic Education for Children with Special Needs Project, 2008–2011, supported by a grant from the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction.⁶ These projects assisted the MES with introducing a skills-oriented school curriculum in primary education, strengthening in-service teacher training, improving the learning environment in schools, and enhancing inclusive approaches to teaching and learning. The ESDP helped to rationalize the education system, improving cost recovery, enhancing management capabilities, and upgrading education content. Under the SEP, ADB supported initiatives in in-service teacher training (INSETT), development of curriculum and state education standards, enhancement of education management and planning, and rehabilitation of schools to improve learning environments. ADB's support also two projects to support vocational and technical education and training.⁷ ADB's continued support to education is essential to achieve inclusive growth by improving quality and expanding access to education and training, as well as ensuring that men and women from all language groups are able to benefit from the opportunities created by growth. The proposed program builds on the achievements made under ESDP and SEP, and incorporates lessons reflected in the project completion reports for those projects⁸ as follows: (i) ensure continuity of support for curriculum development; (ii) improve textbook provision; (iii) carry out reforms in INSETT; (iv) improve school facilities to enhance learning environments; (v) establish an independent body to monitor, periodically assess, and continually improve the curriculum; and (vi) use the sector development program modality to ensure sustainability of reforms.

10. Under the sector-wide approach (SWAp) umbrella, ADB is committed to helping the government finalize the school curriculum reform. Development partners and the government have agreed on the major sector problems and objectives, reflected in the EDS and the SWAp joint statement. Many funding agencies are planning to continue their investment in the sector, which requires better coordination and strong government leadership. The joint statement on SWAp provides a platform for both, but it has not yet been fully operationalized. ADB and the World Bank coordinate closely on activities related to curriculum, textbook development, and teacher training to harmonize development efforts. Planned outcomes and outputs of the proposed program complement the World Bank's Sector Support for Education Reform Project (footnote 3). While the World Bank project will revise the curriculum for grades 5–9, the proposed program will develop the curriculum for grades 10–11, thus completing the curriculum reform work initiated by the SEP. The World Bank's project will develop and supply textbooks and teachers' guides for grades 4–6; the proposed program will support textbook and teachers' guide development and supply in math and sciences for grades 7–9. The proposed program will be implemented under the joint World Bank–ADB project implementation unit; therefore, further coordination of activities will take place during implementation. The proposed program is aligned with ADB's country partnership strategy⁹ for the Kyrgyz Republic and supports ADB's education policy and education sector strategies.

⁵ ADB. 2005. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Asian Development Fund Grant to the Kyrgyz Republic for the Second Education Project*. Manila.

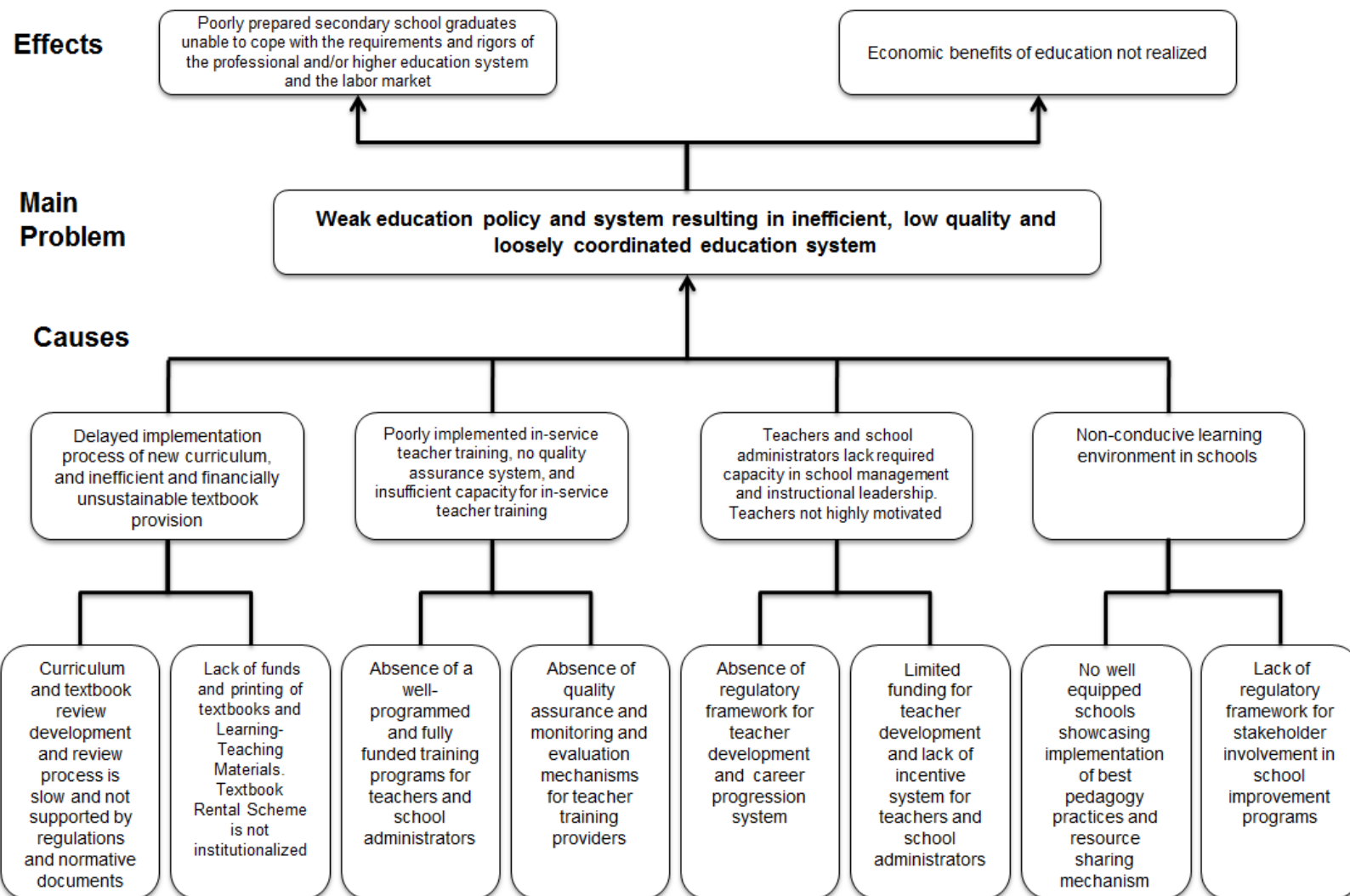
⁶ ADB. 2007. *Proposed Grant Assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic for Improving Access to Quality Basic Education for Children with Special Needs Project*. Manila.

⁷ ADB. 2007. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Asian Development Fund Grant to the Kyrgyz Republic for the Vocational Education and Skills Development Project*. Manila; and ADB. 2012. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan and Grant to the Kyrgyz Republic for the Second Vocational Education and Skills Development Project*. Manila.

⁸ ADB. 2005. *Completion Report: Education Sector Development Program in the Kyrgyz Republic*. Manila; and ADB. 2013. *Completion Report: Second Education Project in the Kyrgyz Republic*. Manila.

⁹ ADB. 2013. *Country Partnership Strategy: Kyrgyz Republic, 2013–2017*. Manila.

Problem Tree for Education Sector



Sector Results Framework (Education Sector, 2013–2017)

9

Country Sector Outcomes		Country Sector Outputs		ADB Sector Operations	
Outcomes with ADB Contribution	Indicators with Targets and Baselines	Outputs with ADB Contribution	Indicators with Incremental Targets	Planned and Ongoing ADB Interventions	Main Outputs Expected from ADB Interventions
<p>Quality of school education strengthened</p> <p>Modernized TVET infrastructure and improved quality of training relevant to the labor market needs</p>	<p>Annual coverage of teachers by in-service training courses increased to 20% in 2016 (2011 baseline: 8%)</p> <p>Net enrollment in 5-9 grades increased to 90% in 2016 and 95% in 2020 (2012 baseline: 84.8%)</p> <p>Percent of higher education institution graduates with a specialist diploma who gain employment at schools increased to 30% in 2015 and 50% in 2020 (2011 baseline: 19.3%)</p> <p>Percentage of employed graduates on the basis of contracts signed between PVSs and employers' organizations increased to 30% in 2014 and 45% in 2020 (2011 baseline: 10%)</p> <p>Percentage of strengthened and modernized PVSs increased to 60% in 2014 and 80% in 2020 (2011 baseline: 40%)</p> <p>Percentage of occupational standards that are developed in cooperation with employers increased for PVSs to 49% in 2014 and 60% in 2020 (2011 baseline: 12%, or 18 out of 155), and for SVSs to 30% in 2014 and 60% in 2020 (2011 baseline: 2%)</p>	<p>Coverage of in-service training expanded and improved</p> <p>Textbook provision improved</p> <p>Competency based curriculum introduced in TVET institutions</p> <p>TVET facilities modernized</p>	<p>10,000 teachers trained</p> <p>Financially sustainable textbook provision introduced</p> <p>New competency standards developed by sector councils for 45 occupations in 7 priority sectors</p> <p>Rationalization strategy for primary TVET approved by 2018</p>	<p>Planned target subsectors</p> <p>School education (52% of funds)</p> <p>Technical and vocational education (48% of funds)</p> <p>Pipeline projects with estimated amounts</p> <p>Strengthening Education System Sector Development Program (\$22 million)</p> <p>Ongoing projects with approved amounts</p> <p>Second Vocational Education and Skills Development Project (\$20 million)</p>	<p>Planned target subsectors</p> <p>Regulations on in-service teacher training updated and approved</p> <p>Skills development fund approved and operational</p> <p>Pipeline projects</p> <p>At least 60 curriculum writers, textbook authors, and publishers for grades 7–9 subjects trained</p> <p>Ongoing projects</p> <p>15,000 disadvantaged youths and adults (at least 30% females) trained under skills development fund</p> <p>60 vocational schools rehabilitated and equipped</p>

ADB = Asian Development Bank, CBT = competency-based training, PVS = primary vocational school, SVS = secondary vocational school, TVET = technical and vocational education and training.

Source: Asian Development Bank estimates