

## SECTOR ASSESSMENT (SUMMARY): EDUCATION

### 1. Country context

1. The education system of the Kyrgyz Republic comprises pre-school, general, vocational, and higher education. General education is offered at three levels: primary (grades 1–4), basic (grades 5–9), and secondary education (grades 10–11). Primary and basic education (grades 1–9) are compulsory. Education is provided in public and private educational institutions. Education challenges include: (i) old or dysfunctional infrastructure, (ii) outdated curriculum, (iii) weak teacher competency with respect to subject knowledge and pedagogical skills, (iv) teaching and learning materials are outdated or absent, (v) lack of effective quality assurance mechanisms, and (vi) weak management of educational institutions.

2. While these challenges apply to the entire education sector, they are of particular concern in technical and vocational education and training (TVET). The Kyrgyz Republic labor market has many skilled workers and technicians who were trained when the country was part of the former Soviet Union, and are now approaching retirement. The current TVET system is unable to meet the labor force replacement rate, which is up to five times higher than the number of skilled workers and technicians entering the workforce.<sup>1</sup> Labor market forecasts conservatively predict that about 70,000 jobs will be created annually in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2018–2020. About 90% of new jobs will be for semi-skilled and skilled workers.<sup>2</sup> In addition to quantitative shortfalls, the quality and relevance of TVET is a concern, and accounts for high dissatisfaction among employers regarding employee skills.<sup>3</sup>

3. Overall education sector expenditures as a percentage of total government spending is considerably above the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average,<sup>4</sup> but TVET has remained underfunded. Only about 6% of education funding was allocated for TVET in 2017. Basic financial data on education sector and TVET financing are in Table 1.

**Table 1: Financing for Education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training**

Item	Expenses in 2015 (\$ million)	Expenses in 2016 (\$ million)	Budget for 2017 (\$ million)
<b>Education Total</b>	348.6	305.1	406.6
<b>Primary TVET Financing (share of education financing, %)</b>	14.9 (4.3%)	15.6 (5.1%)	17.1 (4.2%)
<b>Secondary TVET Financing (share of education financing, %)</b>	5.5 (1.6%)	5.3 (1.7%)	6.5 (1.6%)

TVET = technical and vocational education and training  
Source: Ministry of Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic.

<sup>1</sup> *Technical and Vocational Education and Training - System Rationalization: Strategies and Implementation Plans*. (study conducted by ADB. Kyrgyz Republic. [Second Vocational Education and Skills Development Project](#)).

<sup>2</sup> *Labor Market and Employment Policy in the Kyrgyz Republic*. (study conducted by ADB. Kyrgyz Republic. [Skills for Inclusive Growth](#) (TA 9212-KGZ)).

<sup>3</sup> World Bank. 2014. *The Skills Road: Skills for Employability in the Kyrgyz Republic*. Washington, DC.

<sup>4</sup> Education sector expenditures in Kyrgyzstan as a percentage of government expenditures—2013: 19.4%; 2014: 18.8%; 2015: 18.0%; 2016: 13.3%; 2017: 18.6% (projection). Latest available OECD average (2014): 11.3%. OECD. 2017. *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

## 2. Sector Performance, Problems, and Opportunities

4. TVET in the Kyrgyz Republic includes two levels—primary and secondary TVET. The Agency for Vocational Education is responsible for primary TVET, while secondary TVET is directly under the Ministry of Education and Science (MOES). Primary TVET is provided in lyceums to train skilled blue-collar workers for occupations, and secondary TVET in colleges to prepare specialized technicians. The standard entry into both programs follows completion of grade 9, with a typical program duration of 3 years. However, unstructured variations have developed—for example, primary TVET courses are offered for durations of 1 year or less.

5. While there are many skilled occupations (434) and specializations (243), few (about 10%) are actually taught. The low diversity of training programs makes vocational education less attractive,<sup>5</sup> and skews the gender distribution in lyceums and colleges. In 2016, 70% of primary TVET students were male, and 30% female; in secondary TVET about 56% of students were female, and 44% male. This may imply that the training offered in primary TVET does not correspond to female learning and employment interests, and that secondary TVET specializations are biased toward female-oriented occupations. Secondary TVET student numbers have increased significantly,<sup>6</sup> but instruction in colleges remains highly theoretical.

6. There are currently no pathways for students between the two levels: secondary TVET is not a continuation of primary TVET. Students often do not choose education programs on the basis of employment opportunities, but rather on the perceived prestige of certain professions in society. About one-third of the colleges providing secondary TVET are affiliated with a higher education institution; their primary goal is to prepare students for higher education. When entering higher education, graduates of the colleges are given credit for their previous education. This alters the secondary TVET system—making it a step toward higher education—and decrease its importance for the labor market. The few tracer studies undertaken by the Government of secondary TVET graduates indicate that about 75% do not directly enter the labor market. The proposed program will finance a series tracer studies of both primary and secondary TVET graduates.

7. One-third of firms in the country identified an inadequately educated workforce as a major constraint to business development—well above the regional average of 22%.<sup>7</sup> The proportion of the workforce that is skilled (currently about 20%) should increase, with skills that better meet needs in key economic sectors. A recent national study indicates (i) very low rates of vocational participation—only 10.6% of youth aged 15–24 study in TVET, with 2.3.% in primary and 8.3% in secondary TVET; (ii) a large proportion of youth (27.9%) are not in education, employment or training, and in some regions this proportion exceeds 30%; and (iii) among school graduates (grades 9,10, and 11), 27.9% enroll in TVET, while 21% enter higher education, and over 51% enter labor market or join the pool who are not in education, employment, or training, and lack any skills training.<sup>8</sup>

8. In addition to increasing TVET enrollment, there is a need to improve TVET quality and relevance. Criteria for skills quality and mechanisms to assure quality are absent, and the skills

<sup>5</sup> For each 100,000 youth aged 15–24 only 16 programs are offered in vocational lyceums and 26 programs in vocational colleges, for a total of 42 programs.

<sup>6</sup> Since 2000, the number of secondary vocational education colleges doubled and the number of students enrolled more than tripled.

<sup>7</sup> World Bank. 2014. *The Skills Road: Skills for Employability in the Kyrgyz Republic*. Washington, DC.

<sup>8</sup> *Technical and Vocational Education and Training - System Rationalization: Strategies and Implementation Plans*. (study conducted by ADB. Kyrgyz Republic. [Second Vocational Education and Skills Development Project](#)).

profile of vocational education graduates does not correspond to economic priorities in Kyrgyzstan's regions (on average, the skills profile of graduates deviates from the sectoral profile of regional labor forces by 75%). For instance in Chui oblast, where the most construction activity is concentrated, there are no TVET programs for training skilled construction workers or technicians. In addition, labor force participation by women (currently at 53%) must be increased to make economic growth more inclusive.

9. Basic data on TVET institutions and students are in Table 2.

**Table 2: Technical Vocational and Training Institutions and Students<sup>a</sup>**

Sub-Sector	Institutions	Students	Teachers <sup>b</sup>	Admissions	Graduates
Primary TVET	100	28,845	3,548 <sup>c</sup>	29,100	25,700
Secondary TVET	139	89,605	6,725	31,800	27,100

TVET= technical and vocational education and training.

<sup>a</sup> Data for the academic year 2015/2016 with the exception of the numbers of institutions, which are given as per June 2017. Source: National Committee of Statistics.

<sup>b</sup> "Teachers" includes all TVET system teaching staff (including teachers of general and profile-specific subjects, and workshop instructors).

<sup>c</sup> Includes school management and leadership positions.

Source: Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic.

### 3. Government's Sector Strategy

10. The government recognizes the importance of improving TVET to address the serious gaps between workforce supply and demand. The Education Development Strategy for 2012–2020 stresses that the TVET system does not meet basic requirements in infrastructure and equipment, teacher preparation and professional development.<sup>9</sup> The next long-term strategy for education, which MOES has started to prepare, will place high importance on comprehensive reform of vocational education, including by developing enabling policies, strengthening system management and efficiency, and improving quality and delivery of programs and the relevance of graduates' skills by linking reforms closely with national and regional economic priorities. The government recognizes that to achieve this mechanisms must be established that ensure close and sustainable collaboration between TVET institutions and labor market stakeholders. Long-term structural changes will also be needed, including potential merging of primary and secondary TVET into a system that provides students with adequate skills development pathways.

### 4. Asian Development Bank Sector Experience and Assistance Program

11. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been a key development partner in the education sector since 1997, with four completed projects, including a vocational education investment project completed in 2012. A second vocational education project will end in 2018.<sup>10</sup> ADB has mostly supported primary TVET, particularly to improve its quality, facilities and equipment; and focus on skills that can lead to immediate employment. ADB projects have helped introduce important labor market-oriented methods, such as: (i) occupational standards formulation through sector skills councils, (ii) competency based training, and (iii) teachers' in-service training.

12. ADB has provided support to about 75% of all primary TVET lyceums in the country. While

<sup>9</sup> Government of the Kyrgyz Republic. 2011. *Education Development Strategy*. Bishkek.

<sup>10</sup> ADB. Kyrgyz Republic. [Vocational Education and Skills Development Project](#); and ADB. Kyrgyz Republic. [Second Vocational Education and Skills Development Project](#).

this assistance has been important and improved primary TVET, it has not resulted in rapid changes in the primary TVET system and performance of TVET lyceums. The proposed new program will concentrate on establishing centers of excellence (COEs) by upgrading five secondary TVET colleges, and linking these to primary TVET lyceums. The program will provide the CEOs with technical support, and support to modernize facilities and equipment. The development of the CEOs' profiles and skills programs will be closely linked with economic priorities in their areas. The CEOs are expected to serve as innovative pilot models for system reform, linking and aligning primary and secondary TVET systems, and ensuring that programs are in line with priorities.

13. The Sectoral Skills Councils has proven ineffective at the national level in the Kyrgyz Republic. With the help of ADB's investment projects, the operations of the councils have been decentralized to regional institutions to provide more specific advice and assistance on selection of priority occupations, curricula development, skills assessment, and employment of graduates. With support of the new program, the councils will be closely linked with the CEOs.

14. The proposed new assistance program will build on prior lessons and achievements, including the innovative skills development fund established with the help of the current ADB-financed vocational education project. The fund helps the private sector to purchase skills training. The new program will help institutionalize this successful fund and will include more extensive support to secondary TVET. More support for collaboration with employers and inclusion of entrepreneurship education reflect a logical progression in ADB's assistance.

15. Following two conventional investment projects in vocational education, ADB's proposed new assistance program will use a sector development program modality, which also reflects a logical progression in the design of ADB assistance. Important aspects of the new program include helping the government to (i) provide an enabling policy environment for vocational education reforms, (ii) finance the cost of reforms, and (iii) implement reforms on the ground. The government recognizes the need to proceed with major policy reforms, but experience indicates that the investment project modality is not suitable for providing the necessary support to the government for comprehensive policy development and reform implementation.

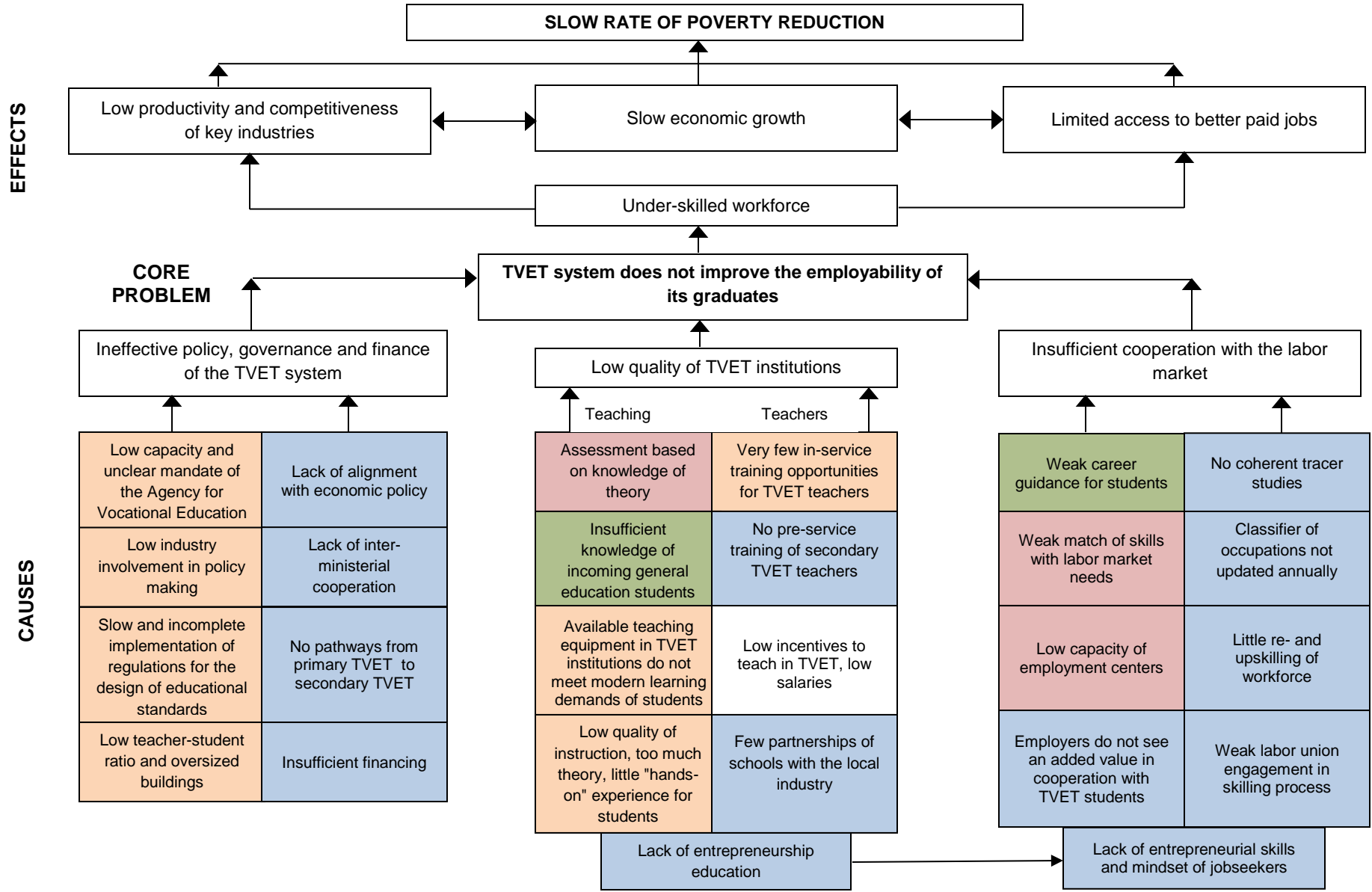
16. ADB is the leading development partner in vocational education in the Kyrgyz Republic. The vocational education support provided by other development partners primarily involves technical assistance, and is smaller in scope and scale than the ADB support. The comprehensive reforms to be supported by the program will serve as a framework for MOES to improve development partner coordination.<sup>11</sup> Both the ADB country partnership strategy, 2013–2017 for the Kyrgyz Republic, and the new strategy under preparation, are closely aligned with national priorities, including the increasing importance of skills development.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Development partners supporting vocational education in the Kyrgyz Republic include Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, International Labour Organisation, United Nations Development Program, and the European Training Foundation.

<sup>12</sup> ADB. 2013. *Country Partnership Strategy: Kyrgyz Republic, 2013–2017*. Manila.

### Problem Tree Analysis



**Abbreviations**

GIZ – Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit  
 TVET - technical and vocational education and training

**Legend**

- Proposed program
- Ongoing ADB projects and coordinated donor support
- EU budget support
- GIZ projects