

SECTOR ASSESSMENT (SUMMARY): EDUCATION¹

Sector Road Map

A. Sector Performance, Problems, and Opportunities

1. The education system in the Kyrgyz Republic follows the model adopted when the country was part of the former Soviet Union. It comprises (i) preschool education; (ii) 11 years of general education, including primary (grades 1–4), lower secondary (grades 5–9), and upper secondary education (grades 10–11); (iii) primary vocational education and training (PVET); (iv) secondary vocational education and training (SVET); and (v) higher education. Under the country's 1993 constitution, primary and lower secondary education is compulsory and free to all children. The Ministry of Education and Science (MOES) manages all the levels of the education system except for PVET, which is under the management of the Agency for Vocational of Education of the Ministry of Youth, Labor and Employment. Some secondary vocational training institutions are under MOES, while others are under other ministries or agencies. Recurring costs of the public education system are funded through national and local budgets as well as by private sources. Preschool and general education is funded mainly through local budgets. Vocational and higher education, as well as sector administration, are mainly funded through the national budget.

2. The quantity and quality of education services started to decline after independence in 1991 due to a lack of resources. Government revenues shrank as the gross domestic product (GDP) fell by 50% from 1991 to 1995. The education budget declined sharply from 8%–9% of GDP before beginning a gradual increase from a low of 4% of GDP in 1999 to 6% of GDP in 2010. A significant increase in education funding during the 2013–2017 period is unlikely due to a very tight fiscal position. This makes it essential to achieve efficiency gains through increased cost recovery from students and increasing private financing by encouraging the private sector to play a larger role in the sector.

3. Education is a strong determinant of the probability of being poor. An International Business Council 2012 survey indicated that a lack of qualified personnel was the most serious problem facing investors. This skilled labor shortage has become a binding constraint on economic growth. In addition to an excess of unskilled workers in general, the Kyrgyz Republic has an oversupply of professionals and holders of law, economics and management degrees but not enough university graduates in scientific, technical and engineering fields, or those qualified for middle-level employment requiring technical and other specific skills. The low quality of education remains the issue at all levels. The government must overcome daunting challenges if it is to modernize education and thereby produce graduates with skills relevant to a market economy.

1. Preschool Education

4. **Limited access and poor quality.** Government support to preschool education declined substantially after independence. As a result, the number of children in preschool decreased from 211,000 in 1990 to 85,236 in 2010. The number of kindergartens fell from 1,696 in 1990 to 465 in

¹ This summary is based on: ADB. 2011. *Evaluation of the Social Sector (Education and Health) Assistance Program*. Manila; ADB. 2011. *Diagnostic Assessment of the Education Sector of the Kyrgyz Republic*. Manila; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2010. *Kyrgyz Republic 2010. Lessons from the Programme for International Student Assessment*. Paris; Government of the Kyrgyz Republic. 2012. *Education Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2012–2020*. Bishkek.

2006, before rising to 873 in 2011. Preschool education is underfinanced. The adoption of a law on preschool education in 2006, together with intervention of international development partners, including ADB, has improved this situation. Positive trends include new forms of preschool institutions (community-based private kindergartens) and the introduction of innovative education methods. The government is aware of the scarcity of coverage and the challenges associated with preparing children for primary education. It has initiated 100-hour and 240-hour school preparation programs in schools to support social adaptation. In 2010, 70,000 children took part in a school preparation program, representing about 73% of the eligible age group. The preschool system needs to be enhanced and made more accessible so that children in poor and remote areas are not left behind and women with preschool age children are enabled to work outside the home.

2. General Education

5. **Wide access and equity.** After independence, school enrollment rates dropped. In response, the government focused on primary and lower secondary education and increased the number of institutions from 1,759 in 1990 to 2,204 in 2010. It maintained high gross enrollment rates (97% in 2010) in basic school 1–9 grades. Gender balance is roughly even, although slightly more boys are out of school than girls.

6. **Low quality of instruction.** The education system is beset with quality issues. In 2006 and 2009, the Kyrgyz Republic participated in the Programme for International Student Assessment for 15-year old students. The Kyrgyz Republic ranked last among the participating countries. The results showed weak skills in reading, math, and science. The poor quality of instruction results from several factors, including low qualification standards for teachers, an outdated curriculum, an inadequate supply of textbooks, and textbooks with contents that do not match curriculum requirements. Curricula are nonetheless overloaded and do not provide the students with analytical thinking skills. The ADB-assisted Second Education Project initiated curriculum reform and provided grade 1 students with new learning and teaching materials.² In addition, a new curriculum revised under the project has been being piloted and gradually implemented through various grades from 2011. It is expected to replace the existing outdated curriculum in all 11 grades by 2020.

3. Vocational Education and Training

7. **Inefficient governance structure.** The vocational education and training (VET) subsector is fragmented between the groups of providers—the public primary vocational schools (PVSs), secondary vocational schools (SVSs), and the private VET institutions. These groups operate independently of each other. A central mechanism is needed to coordinate their plans and programs in a way that responds effectively to the needs of their clientele and of the labor market. Under the ADB-financed Investment Climate Improvement Program, the government established the National Professional Skills Development Council to strengthen the coordination between the private sector employers and public sector VET providers.³

8. **Limited enrollment.** PVS education is free and students from poor families get free boarding and stipends. Most SVS students pay fees. The combined enrollment of the PVS and

² 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.

³ ADB. 2012. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Policy-Based Grant for Subprogram 2 and Technical Assistance Grant to the Kyrgyz Republic for the Investment Climate Improvement Program*. Manila.

SVS systems is about 22% of general secondary enrollment, with women constituting 29% of PVS and 57% of SVS enrollment. Overall enrollment is small when compared with the potential number of clients who could benefit from their training. This includes youths progressing from general education, out-of-school youths, unemployed adults, and even employed workers who need to upgrade their skills. Two main reasons for this low enrollment in vocational education are (i) the perceived low social status of vocational education; and (ii) the focus on long courses (1–3 years). Although the PVSs have offered more short courses since 2005–2006 as part of the strategic thrust of the ADB-assisted Vocational Education and Skills Development Project (VESDP), the output is still small relative to its potential.⁴ The SVSs have so far focused exclusively on long courses, leaving a big portion of the target clientele unserved. The extent to which the courses offered in PVSs are attractive to women also needs to be reviewed.

9. **Low quality and lack of relevance.** Graduates do not meet employer expectations, particularly in the area of practical skills. The quality and relevance of training in the VET subsector needs improvement through innovation and the introduction of flexibility in training methods. The VESDP helped the PVS system introduce short, modular, quality-assured, competency-based training programs for 18 priority occupations. These were based on certified practical skills and were responsive to the requirements of the labor market. Gender imbalance in subjects in both VET and higher education remains an issue.

10. The VET subsector is primarily state-supported. All PVSs are public and only 29 of the 117 SVSs are private. Public partnerships with the private sector can create synergies for the sharing of scarce resources, inputs, and responsibilities and thereby help both partners reach common objectives at various levels in VET. No policy framework is now in place to encourage this. The National Professional Skills Development Council will provide an institutionalized mechanism at the national level. The VESDP assisted the PVSs in the creation of school advisory boards chaired by representatives from the industry or local governments.

4. Higher Education

11. **Low quality and lack of relevance.** Higher education has experienced rapid growth since independence. The number of institutions rose from 9 in 1990 to 52 in 2010. Enrollment increased from 58,800 to 230,000 in same period. Access to higher education expanded when public higher education institutions (HEIs) were permitted to accept contractual or paying students. In 2008–2009, public HEIs accounted for about 91% of total enrollment, 88% of students were fee-paying, and these fees made up 75% of financing flows to public higher education. Each year, the state supports 5,000 scholarship students, selected by a national test. In 2012, 90 scholarship slots for physics were unfilled due to lack of high quality applicants. Rapid growth in higher education was not matched at lower levels with the necessary improvement in preparatory education to ensure quality of instruction and diversity of fields. Higher education in the country needs to be modernized so that it can respond to the needs of a small economy.

12. The Kyrgyz Republic aspires to join the European Higher Education Area. To achieve this, aggressive steps are being taken to implement the Bologna 3-cycle academic process.⁵ As a first stage, the 2-cycle bachelor's degree-master's degree program was in 2003. In 2013, the

⁴ 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.

⁵ The Bologna agreement of 1999 established the mechanism for harmonization of higher education programs offered in different countries of the world. It focuses on five key issues including adoption of a two cycle Bachelor/Master system of education, subsequently extended to a 3-cycle system including the PhD.

government has enacted a law to create an independent quality assurance body to perform program accreditation first, before moving into institutional accreditation. Higher education in the Kyrgyz Republic has established international linkages with various European Union programs as well as through the Soros Foundation, the Eurasia Foundation, and United States Agency for International Development.

B. Government's Sector Strategy

14. In its Education Development Strategy for 2012–2020 (EDS 2020), the government envisages a new structure for the education system.⁶ Features include specialized education for all students in grades 10 and 11 and systematic implementation of two-level higher education programs (bachelor's and master's degrees). The strategy's focus in the VET subsector is on improving the quality and relevance of training by selecting new programs based on national priorities, teacher training, and upgrading of facilities, while strengthening the link with industries and social partners. In the case of higher education, the government priority is on improving the quality assurance system, reducing the gap between labor market needs and higher education curricula, improving science and innovation, in-service training, and financial reform. The government will need a lot of help from its development partners. A sector-wide approach (SWAp) is currently in progress to develop adequate, comprehensive assistance programs to support the government in implementing an EDS 2020 action plan for 2012–2014.

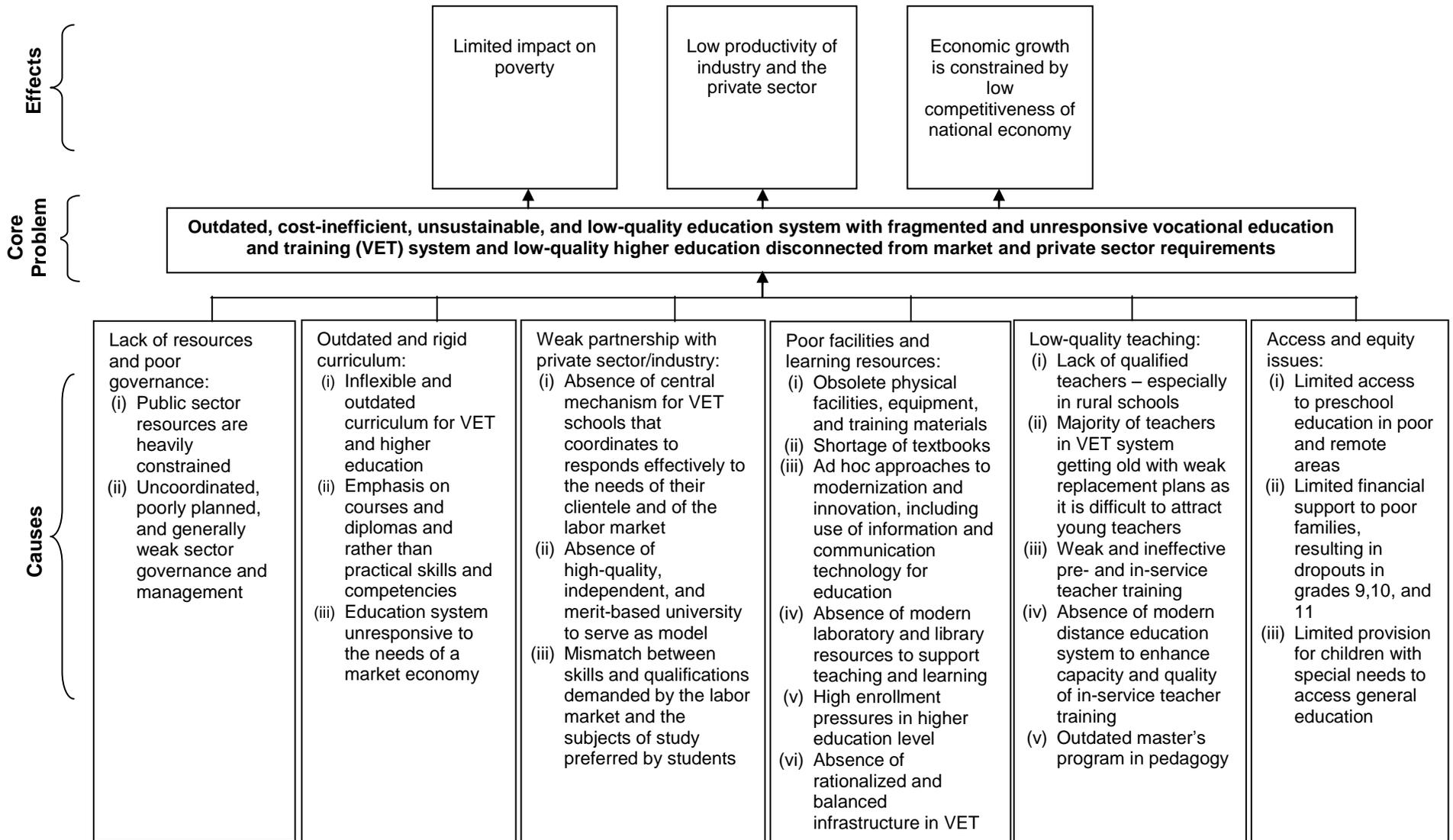
C. ADB Sector Experience and Assistance Program

15. ADB has been a key development partner in the education sector, providing support to early childhood development, preschool and general education, and VET. The main objective of ADB's operations in the sector was to promote sustainability of earlier educational achievements in the face of the decline in resources and difficult economic conditions in the country. ADB's continued support in education is essential to achieve inclusive growth by improving quality and expanding access to education and training and ensuring that men and women from all population groups are able to benefit from the opportunities created by growth. ADB will support the SWAp arrangement. The European Union will cover all levels except preschool education. The World Bank will focus on preschool and certain aspects of school education. United Nations Children's Fund will support preschool and cross-cutting issues of general education. Complementing ADB's support, GIZ is focusing on higher and adult education and VET.

16. Given shortages in the middle-level workforce, ADB will help the government further reform VET to make it a demand-driven, quality-assured, flexible system capable of effectively responding to the changing needs of the economy and the labor market. The reform process will comprise creation of a unified VET policy framework; the improvement of the VET teaching and learning environment; and the development of curricula, training and learning materials using the competency-based methodology and introducing short, modular courses responsive to the needs of the labor market. Under the SWAp umbrella, ADB will also help the government finalize the school curriculum reform. This will include support for (i) creation of new mechanisms for curriculum review; (ii) improvements in pre- and in-service teacher training, including capacity development programs in pedagogical institutions in universities; (iii) textbook provision; and (iv) improvements in school infrastructure. A higher education assessment will also be conducted.

⁶ Government of the Kyrgyz Republic. 2012. *Education Development Strategy for 2012–2020*. Bishkek.

Problem Tree for Education



Sector Results Framework (Education, 2013–2017)

Country Sector Outcomes		Country Sector Outputs		ADB Sector Operations	
Sector Outcome with ADB Contribution	Outcome Indicators with Targets and Baselines	Sector Outputs with ADB Contribution	Output Indicators with Incremental Targets	Planned and Ongoing ADB Interventions	Main Outputs Expected from ADB Interventions
Primary and Secondary Vocational Education					
<p>Modernized VET infrastructure and improved quality of training relevant to the labor market needs</p>	<p>Percentage of employed graduates on 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 to 80% in 2020 (2011 baseline: 40%)</p> <p>Percentage of occupational standards, 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%—in tourism)</p>	<p>Infrastructure for selected PVSs and SVSs improved, and VET system modernized</p>	<p>Number of accredited PVSs increased to 20 in 2014 to 40 in 2020 (2011 baseline: 0)</p> <p>Number of registered and accredited curricula increased to 20 in 2014 and 40 in 2020 (2011 baseline: 0)</p> <p>Number of established competence certification centers increased to 2 in 2014 and 9 in 2020 (2011 baseline: 0)</p> <p>Number of PVSs with staff trained in CBT increased to 5 in 2014 and 110 in 2020 (2011 baseline: 0); portion of pedagogues in SVS participating in retraining increased to 30% in 2014 to 50% in 2020 (2011 baseline: 3%)</p> <p>Number of occupational standards developed in partnership with employers increased to 49 in 2014 and 60 in 2020 (2011 baseline: 7)</p> <p>Number of inclusive programs for out-of-school youth and disabled in PVSs increased to 8 in 2014 and 25 in 2020 (2011 baseline: 3)</p> <p>50,000 students trained under an improved quality assurance system and benefiting from new and better education facilities (at least 30% are females)</p> <p>15,000 disadvantaged youths and adults (at least 30% females) trained using skills development fund</p>	<p>(i) Planned key activity areas: Modernization of physical facilities (75%) Introduction of CBT methodology (15%) Skills development fund (10%)</p> <p>(ii) Pipeline projects with estimated amounts: NA</p> <p>(iii) Ongoing project with approved amounts: Second Vocational Education and Skills Development Project (\$20 million)</p>	<p>(i) Planned key activity areas: Modernization of 459 workshops and 70 schools 63 priority study programs (47 for PVSs and 16 for SVSs) 20,000 disadvantaged youth and adults trained in short-term courses</p> <p>(ii) Pipeline project: NA</p> <p>(iii) Ongoing project: Modernization of 459 (159 + 300) workshops and 70 (25 + 45) schools 47 (18 + 29) priority study programs for PVSs and 16 for SVSs 20,000 disadvantaged youth and adults trained in short-term courses National VET coordination system under National Skills Development Council</p>
Secondary and Higher Education					
<p>Quality of school education strengthened</p>	<p>Annual coverage of teachers by in-service training courses increases to 20% in 2016 (2011 baseline: 8%)</p> <p>Net enrollment in grades 5–9 increases 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 increases to 30% in 2015 and 50% in 2020 (2011 baseline: 19.3%)</p>	<p>Quality improvements in key areas in secondary education</p> <p>Reformed pre- and in-service training system</p>	<p>Law on accreditation of university programs enacted and pedagogy program accredited in at least one reputed university in the country</p> <p>Learning environment improved in competitively selected schools, including in poor and harder-to-reach areas</p> <p>Curriculum updated and approved. (any gender bias in the curricula is removed)</p> <p>Learning and teaching materials developed and provided to students in grades 7–9</p> <p>Teachers' training Institutes initiate new e-learning modules</p> <p>4,000 teachers, including 85% female teachers, trained to deliver the new curricula, with quality or competency standards</p>	<p>(i) Planned key activity areas: Policy reforms to improve secondary education quality (50%) Quality improvement of secondary education (50%)</p> <p>(ii) Pipeline projects with estimated amounts: 2014—Education Sector Reform SDP (\$20 million) 2016–2017—Education project (\$20 million)</p> <p>(iii) Ongoing projects with approved amounts: NA</p>	<p>(i) Planned key activity areas: Improving quality of secondary education</p> <p>(ii) Pipeline projects: Curricula up to grade 11 and teaching learning materials for grades 7–9 developed Quality assurance system strengthened and quality of pre- and in-service teacher training improved Improved learning environment in selected schools</p> <p>(iii) Ongoing project: NA</p>

ADB = Asian Development Bank, CBT = competency-based training, NA = not applicable, PVS = primary vocational school, SDP = sector development program, SVS = secondary vocational school, VET = vocational education and training.

Source: ADB.