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Principles and general objectives of education

Education in the Kyrgyz Republic is organized in a comprehensive system of upbringing and training established in the interest of the individual, the society and the State in order to assure the moral, intellectual and physical health of the nation. Article 2 of the Law on Education, adopted in 1992 and amended in 2003, stipulates that all citizens have the right to education regardless of sex, nationality, language, social status, political or religious belief.

Education in the country is based on the principles proclaimed in international agreements and pacts, as well as in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It adheres to the humanistic values of the nation and world culture as well as the principles of democracy. Article 3 of the Law on Education established the following basic principles of education in the Republic:

- all citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic have equal rights to education;
- mandatory and free primary and basic education for every citizen and free access to general secondary education in public and municipal educational institutions;
- education shall be humanistic in character, placing priority on universal values in combination with a national cultural heritage, fostering civic mindedness, diligence, patriotism and respect for human rights and freedoms;
- the focus is on scientific achievement and attaining international educational standards;
- education shall be systematic and have continuity;
- education shall be independent from political and religious institutions;
- education in State educational institutions is entirely secular in character;
- conditions shall be created for selection of talented and gifted students.

The overall development plans and strategies for the education sector to 2010 are reflected in the Education Development Concept. The Ministry of Education emphasizes developing an education system that provides students with knowledge and skills to meet the demands of a market-oriented economy, and is committed to improving both the quality and the effectiveness of education. The Education Development Concept, prepared by the Ministry of Education in 2002, proposed a number of basic principles for a democratic education system. They included democratization, accessibility to high-quality education, decentralization, international quality standards, openness and mobility. (ADB, 2005).

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The 1992 **Law on Education** in the Kyrgyz Republic (amended in 1997 and 2003) lays down the State education policy, the basic principles of education and the conditions for functioning of the education system. In accordance with the Law on Education, a number of legal documents on the functions of educational institutions have been adopted.

To improve the education system and taking into account growing demand for a new generation of high-skilled specialists, the programme entitled *Kadry XXI veka* was adopted by Presidential Decree in 1995. The year 1996 was declared the year of education by Presidential Decree. The objectives were to further the development of education and its adaptation to the new socio-economic conditions and speed up reforms. A new educational programme was adopted, the *Bilim*. Its basic principles are: improvement of the legal and normative basis of education; preservation of access to education; increase educational quality and efficiency; improvement of the technical basis of educational institutions; improvement of the education management and financing system; social support for students and teaching staff; integration into the world educational arena.

The **Law on the Status of Teachers** of 2001, amended in 2005 and 2009, defines the principles of state policy, regulates the legal, economic and social relations associated with the activities of teachers.

The **Law on Preschool Education No. 198** of June 2009 defines the basic principles of State policy on preschool education and child development, as well as the legal, institutional and financial framework of the preschool education system. The Law defines preschool age as a period of physical, mental and social formation of the child from birth to 7 years of age and a preschool educational organization as an organization designed for children from 6 months to 7 years.

As a rule, children begin their education not later than their seventh birthday. In accordance with the **Constitution**, amended in 2007 and 2010, every citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic has the right to education; general basic education shall be compulsory and free of charge. (Article 32 of the 2007 Constitution).

Administration and management of the education system

Until recent years, the central executive body for State education management was the Ministry of Education and Culture, which in March 2004 was reorganized with the removal of the culture section. The **Ministry of Education and Science (MES)** is responsible for education policy and its implementation, education strategy development, state education standards, ensuring the right to education and equal development between regions, the introduction of innovative practices, curriculum development, state examination procedures, the training and upgrading of teachers for general education, statistical support and monitoring, and international cooperation. It also administers national institutions (some vocational and specialized secondary



schools and colleges, as well as higher education institutions) and determines, according to norms, expenditure for education on behalf of local government. (ADB, 2005).

The Ministry is headed by a Minister nominated by the President. The departments in the Ministry are: higher and secondary professional education; general secondary education; and preschool education. The departments are independent structural subdivisions of the Ministry which perform executive functions and coordinate the State policy. The activities of these departments have been established in accordance with the Constitution. The departments are directed via decisions of: the *Jogorku Kenesh*; Government decrees and directives; and Ministry decisions. Under the leadership of these departments, State educational standards are applied.

The seven provinces (*oblast*) in the Kyrgyz Republic are divided into forty districts. In every province and district (*raion*), a **Department of Education** has been established by the local authorities. Provincial departments of education are responsible for secondary education, and administer vocational, technical, and higher education. District departments of education are responsible for preschool and primary education and administer secondary education. *Aiyil okmotu* (rural administrations) administer their schools and are responsible for providing maintenance and materials. (ADB, 2005).

The **Kyrgyz Academy of Education** (KAE) under the MOE is responsible for developing the curriculum and textbooks and learning materials in all curriculum subjects, at all grades, in the four approved languages of instruction; generating authors' manuscripts; and approving textbooks and learning materials. National coordination of teacher training is the responsibility of the **National Institute for Raising the Qualifications of Teachers and Teacher Training** (NTTI) under KAE. In oblasts, in-service teacher training is handled by a network of seven teacher training institutes (TTIs). Primary vocational education (PVE) at the senior secondary level is administered by the Department for Vocational Training and Education (DVTE) under the **Ministry of Labor and Social Protection** (MLSP), while mid-level vocational education at the postsecondary level falls under the responsibility of the MOE. (ADB, 2005). Senior vocational education is also provided by other ministries and agencies, including among others, the Ministry of Health, the MLSP, the State Commission on Culture, the Kyrgyz Union of Consumers, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Transport. (ADB, 2007).

Principals of state preschools, schools, and professional educational institutions are appointed by the State Authorities/Commissions of Education. Representatives of higher education institutions are elected by the teaching staff and upper class students. Their appointment must be approved by representatives of central educational authorities. Principals of private institutions are appointed by the founder(s).

The highest authority of an educational institution is its **Council**. Higher and secondary professional institutions and secondary schools have freedom in curriculum choice and selection within the State educational standards. Higher and secondary professional institutions also identify the demand for various types of specialist training, based on which the Ministry develops the enrolment plan.

Structure and organization of the education system

Kyrgyz Republic: structure of the education system

8	Postgraduate education <i>(Postgraduate courses, doctorate, etc.)</i>			24
7				23
6	Complete Higher Education			22
5	<i>Master degree</i>	<i>Speciality</i>	Higher education	Additional education
4	Basic Higher Education		Professional	
3	<i>Bachelor degree</i>		Education	
2		Incomplete Higher		18
1	Secondary	education	Professional-Technical Education	17
11	Professional Education	<i>3rd stage</i>		16
10		Complete Secondary Education		15
9	<i>2nd stage</i>			14
8	Basic Secondary education			13
7				12
6	School Education			11
5				10
4	<i>1st stage</i>			9
3	Primary education			8
2				7
1				6
0	Preschool education			5
Years				Age

Pre-school education

Preschool education caters to children in the age group 6 months to 6/7 years and is not compulsory. Kindergartens cater to children aged 3-6/7.



Primary education

Primary education, the first stage of general secondary education, lasts four years (grades 1 to 4) and children start attending school at the age of 6 or 7. Primary education is compulsory.

Secondary education

Basic secondary education is the second stage of general secondary education; it lasts five years (grades 5 to 9) and is compulsory. Complete general secondary education requires two additional years of study (grades 10 and 11) and is provided free of charge in State-owned educational institutions. Primary vocational education schools (including professional lyceums and vocational technical colleges) offer three types of courses: (i) three-year programmes combining a vocational specialty with general education, and providing students with the necessary certificate to study further in a higher education institution; (ii) two-year programmes that are designed for grade 9 graduates and provide vocational education with some general education, but without the necessary components required for higher education; and (iii) ten-month courses that strictly target vocational skills, and are marketed to both youth and adults. Mid-level vocational education is provided in *technicums*, training institutions offering post-secondary, tertiary-level vocational training. *Technicums* require an entry qualification of grade 11 and offer diploma and bachelor's degree programmes. (ADB, 2005 and 2007).

Higher education

Higher education institutions include universities, academies, specialized higher education institutes, and institutes. Admission to university is subject to the results of the entrance examination. The duration of programmes at universities and colleges depends on the level of the institution. At the universities with three-level programmes for specialists, the duration of courses at the first level is two years; at the second level (undergraduate level), two years; and at the third level (graduate level), one or two years. Courses leading to the degree of specialist with higher education lasting not less than five years (six years in the case of medicine and architecture) are also offered under the traditional education programme. Higher education institutions also offer *aspirantura* and *doctorantura* programmes for the training of scientists and researchers. *Aspirantura* programmes lead to the candidate of science degree. Applicants to *aspirantura* must have completed higher education (holders of a specialist diploma or a master's degree). The duration of *aspirantura* programmes is three years for full-time students (four years for part-time students).

As a rule, the school year begins in September and ends in May. The school year consists of thirty-three working weeks in grade 1 of primary education and not less than thirty-four weeks in the other grades. The duration of the vacation period during the school year is not less than thirty calendar days; in summer, not less than eight weeks. At the higher education level, in most institutions the academic year starts in September and ends in June. It is divided into two semesters, each consisting of 17-18 weeks at the undergraduate level and 15-16 weeks at the postgraduate level.

The educational process

Pre-primary education

The basic purpose of preschool education is the preparation of children for school, namely training in literacy, numeracy, drawing, and music. Infant schools admit children in the age group 1.5-3 and kindergartens cater to children aged 3-6/7.

On the basis of the 2009 Law on Preschool Education, the main tasks of early childhood education and early childhood development are: preserving and strengthening the physical, mental and spiritual health of the child; ensuring civic education, patriotism, respect for state symbols, state, official and native language, respect for different cultures and the environment; developing the creative abilities of the child according to his/her age, intellectual and physical disabilities; ensuring the harmonious development of preschool children, including physical, social, emotional, psychological, spiritual, moral, intellectual and aesthetic development; ensuring safety of the child during his/her stay in preschool educational institutions; and preparing children for school.

Article 7 of the Law lists the following types of preschool education organizations: (i) nursery for children aged 6 months to 3 years or for children aged 6 months to 7 years; (ii) kindergarten for children aged 3 to 7 years; (iii) specialized center for children with disabilities; (iv) children's home, an educational organization for orphans and children left without parental care (3 to 18 years); (v) orphanage, for health care and social protection of orphans and children deprived of parental care, as well as for children with special needs up to 3 years; (vi) child development centre, which provided physical and mental development, early identification of the individual child's needs, diagnosis and provision of special education and related services; (vii) pro-gymnasium, the kind of preschool educational organization that provides comprehensive child development in innovative schools (grammar schools, high schools, etc.); (viii) parent school, an organization with short-stay and full day of children not attending kindergartens, including interactive learning for children and adults; (ix) community kindergarten, a structural unit of local governments designed for children aged 6 months to 7 years, which provides care and education on a full- or part-time basis; (x) kindergarten with short-term stay (3-5 hours per day) and an additional model type of preschool educational organization, created to make optimal use of resources and programmes to increase enrolment in preschool education. Preschool education organizations can be established on the basis of the state, municipal and private ownership.

Due to the economic crisis, the number of preschools has decreased and the enterprises network of preschool establishments has practically been destroyed. Furthermore, attendance has been reduced by the high fees required for preschool services. In 1998, there were 468 kindergartens with 46,500 children enrolled (in 1991, the number of preschools was 1,604 with about 190,000 children enrolled).

In 2004, the government started the process of revising the national policies that orientate and control the provision of a broad range of early childhood development and family support activities. In February 2005, the Concept Paper on



Preschool Education was ratified. In 2002, 9.5% of children between 1–6 years of age were enrolled in 416 preschools, down from about one in four enrolled before independence. Urban enrolment rate was 24.7%, and in rural areas it was estimated at 3.8%. (ADB, 2005).

According to the Ministry of Education, 448 preschool establishments (kindergartens and nurseries, kindergartens, and school-kindergartens) with a total coverage of 50,700 children were functioning in 2006, also thanks to the establishment of 30 community-based kindergartens under the community-based early childhood development project financed by the Asian Development Bank. The project extended preschool education programme coverage to an additional 1,700 preschool pupils who live in remote and poor regions of the country. In 2005/06, around 30,000 children of preschool age were involved in short-term preschool preparation programmes. About 56% of preschool establishments were located in urban areas. In 2005 the estimated coverage of the age group 1-6 was 6.3% (24.7% in urban areas and 3.8% in rural areas). There were about 3,600 teachers at this level, and in recent years the qualification levels of the staff have fallen significantly. (MES, 2007).

With the aim of supporting education reform, enhancing accessibility to quality education and children care, the Ministry of Education and Science elaborated the National Standard for Preschool Education and Childcare (0-7 years old), which was approved by Government Resolution No. 17 on 16 January 2007. Criteria presented in the standard are focused on four categories of services in the preschool and childcare areas: preschool groups and preschool classes with clearly defined hours of lessons according to a timetable; services related to full-day childcare for children up to 5 years old; services related to childcare outside preschool establishments; and home-based care and education of children. (*Ibid.*).

According to the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS), in 2006 preschool institutions were attended by 19% of children aged 36-59 months. Rather significant differences were found between urban and rural areas, as well as between regions. One third of children attended preschool institutions in towns, while this indicator was around 10% for rural areas. The highest attendance percentage (41.9%) was in Bishkek city, and the lowest in Batken region (at 6.6%). The analysis of the ethnic composition of children showed that Russian children had the highest rate of preschool education during preschool age (42.6%). For Kyrgyz children this indicator was 17.3%, for Uzbek children the percentage was 14.9%. Wealthy people (47.4% in the richest quintile) more often than others (7.1% in the poorest quintile) expose their children to preschool education. Overall, 20.2% of children who were aged 7 and attending the first grade of primary school were attending preschool the previous year. Almost two out of five urban children (39.5%) had attended preschool the previous year compared to 8.8% among children living in rural areas. (NSC & UNICEF, 2007).

Primary education

Primary education lasts four years and is compulsory. Primary education should provide pupils with mastery of basic skills in: reading, writing, and arithmetic; elements of theoretical thinking; elementary skills in self-monitoring of educational activities; culture of behaviour and speech; personal hygiene and healthy living.

The following table shows the lesson timetable for primary education in 1996:

Primary education: weekly lesson timetable (1996)

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade			
	I	II	III	IV
First language (Kyrgyz/Russian)	7	7	8	8
Second language (Russian/Kyrgyz)	3	3	4	4
Mathematics	4	3	5	6
Motherland	2	2	2	2
Art education	1	2	2	2
Foreign language	1	2	2	2
Music	1	2	2	2
Physical training	2	2	2	2
Ethics	1	1	1	1
Total weekly periods	22	24	28	29

Note: Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

According to the Ministry of Education, in 2005 the total enrolment at the primary level was 422,480 children (of whom 205,745 were girls). The total number of teachers at the primary level was 17,775, of whom 17,172 were female teachers; all teachers had the required academic qualifications and were certified to teach according to national standards. In 2006, the transition from primary to secondary education was almost universal. (MES, 2007).

According to the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS), out of the total number of children at the primary school entrance age of 7 years only 72.6% of children attended primary school in 2006. Throughout the Republic, 98.6% of school children complete their primary school education and pass to the fifth grade. The primary school completion net ratio on average throughout the country is 79.2%, and the transition rate to the secondary level is 99.1%. The primary school completion net ratio for boys was 78.1%, and for girls 80.3%. The primary school completion net ratio in urban areas was nearly 81%, and 78.4% in rural areas. Some 89.2% of children at the relevant age attended the middle or senior stages of secondary school in 2006. In urban areas this included 90.9% of children of relevant age, while in rural areas the figure was 88.4%. (NSC & UNICEF, 2007).

Secondary education

Complete general education provides for students' development in the context of a basic general educational programme. It provides the conditions needed for the development of personal interests, abilities and social self-determination.

The following table shows the lesson timetable for complete general secondary education in 1996:

Complete general secondary education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade						
	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
First language (Kyrgyz/Russian)	5	4	3	3	3	2	2
Second language (Russian/Kyrgyz)	4	4	4	3	3	3	3
Foreign language	4	3	3	2	2	2	2
Literature	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Mathematics	6	6	6	6	5	4-5	4
Applied mathematics	-	-	-	1	2	1	1
Physics	-	-	2	2	3	4	3
Chemistry	-	-	-	3	2	2	2
Biology	-	2	2	2	2	1	1
Geography	-	2	3	2	2	2-1	1
Astronomy	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
History	2	2	2	2	2	3	3
Society and human beings	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
Introduction to economics	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Physical training	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Practical skills	2	2	2	2	2	-	-
Military training	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Drawing	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
Art education	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Music	1	1	1	1	-	-	-
Total weekly periods	30	32	34	35	36	32	33

(Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes).

The curriculum is defined by the Ministry of Education on the basis of the State educational standards, developed in 1996 and revised in 2002 and 2004.

According to the Law on Education, general education institutions are expected to realize the citizens' right to education in their mother language. Basically, education is provided in the State language (Kyrgyz) and the official language (Russian). Instruction is also provided in Uzbek and Tajik. (Ministry of Education, 1999).

In 2002, enrolment at the lower secondary level was 92.8% (92.6% for boys and 93% for girls), and at the upper secondary level was 72% (68% for boys and 76.1% for girls). In 2004, there were 2,045 day-time general education schools, of which 351 were urban and 1,694 rural. Of the total, 137 schools were primary only, 164 were basic (grades 1 to 9), and 1,722 were complete secondary schools. The large majority of schools (1,323) taught in Kyrgyz. There were 148 schools providing instruction in Russian, 132 schools in Uzbek, and one school in Tajik. Two or more languages of instruction were offered in 421 schools. Out of 1.144 million students enrolled in 2004, 716,572 used Kyrgyz as their language of instruction, 273,223 used Russian, 151,163 used Uzbek, and only 3,078 used Tajik. There were 380 state schools with a focus on certain subjects enrolling 147,767 students, 110 state gymnasiums with an enrolment of 60,300 students, and 54 state lyceums with 18,624 students enrolled. Most general education schools (1,525, or 75%) operated two shifts. In addition, 105 schools with an enrolment of 18,109 students operated three shifts. Overall student/teacher ratios were 15.7:1 in 2002 and 15.5:1 in 2003. (ADB, 2005).



Out of a total of 26 boarding schools, twenty schools (12 in rural areas) enrolled 2,456 students with special needs in 2004. Of these special students, most were mentally disabled, 205 were blind or had vision difficulties, 530 had hearing disabilities, 237 were hearing feeble, and 277 had grave speech disabilities. Another 250 children with mental disabilities attended inclusive classes in daytime boarding schools. The number of children in inclusive classes rose from 377 in 1999 to 674 in 2002 but dropped to 250 the following year. (*Ibid.*).

As mentioned, there are two separate systems of vocational education: primary vocational education (PVE) and secondary vocational education (SVE). PVE at the senior secondary level is administered by the Department for Vocational Training and Education (DVTE) under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, while mid-level vocational education at the postsecondary level falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. In 2004, DVTE administered 113 PVE institutions (of which 65 were rural): 27 vocational technical colleges (VTCs) and 86 professional lyceums. The goal of PVE is to train young people to satisfy the demand for skilled labor; the entry qualification for professional lyceums and VTCs is grade 9. Professional lyceums follow the Soviet system and offer three-year combined general and vocational education programmes in 125 skills areas. Programmes are largely supply driven, hence graduates do not find jobs easily due to lack of employable skills. In 2004, 25,972 students including 9,258 female students enrolled in PVE. Many PVE students come from poor families, who cannot afford higher education. The curriculum for PVE is developed by the Research and Methodology Center (RMC) under DVTE. The RMC has developed 150 curriculum modules for PVE and 100 training courses for adult retraining programmes. Industry involvement in curriculum development is limited and current curricula are not regularly revised to reflect changing technology and market demand. Cooperation between the RMC and curriculum development divisions in the Ministry of Education is limited. (ADB-TAR, 2005).

PVS offer three types of courses: (i) three-year programmes combining a vocational specialty with general education, providing students with the necessary certificate to study further in a higher education institution (56% of PVE students are enrolled in the three-year programme); (ii) two-year programmes designed for grade 9 graduates and providing vocational education with some general education, but without providing the general education components required for higher education; and (iii) ten-month courses that strictly target vocational skills, and are marketed to both youth and adults. In addition, some PVSs offer limited short-term skills courses for adults, mainly sponsored by the Employment Services. (ADB, 2007).

SVE is provided by various ministries and agencies, which offer post-secondary programmes below the level of higher education. The SVE institutions do not represent a 'system' in the same way as the other sectors of education. In 2005, 70 institutions offered SVE programmes with a total enrolment of about 27,000 students. Sponsors of SVE institutions include: Ministry of Education (22 institutions), Ministry of Health (10), State Commission on Culture (9), Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (MLSP) (3), Kyrgyz Union of Consumers (2), Ministry of Economics and External Trade (1), State Commission Tourism and Sports (1), Ministry of Interior (1), Ministry of Transport (1), Association of Cooperatives (1), SVE institutes attached to Higher Education Institutions (11), and private institutions



(8). The curriculum needs to be adjusted to incorporate student-centered, modern teaching methods with emphasis on practical training. To enhance the flexibility of graduates to respond to labor market demands in a timely manner, a modernized curriculum should aim at providing multi-skills training and include entrepreneurial skills. Textbooks and learning and teaching materials are seriously outdated. (*Ibid.*).

In 2003, the MOE administered 74 *technicums* with 3,019 faculty members. *Technicums* require an entry qualification of grade 11 and offer diploma and bachelor's degree courses. In 2003 around 27,000 students were enrolled in *technicums*; 64% were female. No tracer studies are available, but anecdotal evidence suggests that a large number of graduates have difficulty finding employment after course completion. (ADB-TAR, 2005).

According to the Ministry of Education, in 2005 the total enrolment at the secondary level was 1,106,397 students (of whom 548,985 were girls). The total number of teachers at the secondary level was 41,088, of whom 33,801 were female teachers; all teachers were certified to teach according to national standards. In the same year, the total enrolment in technical and vocational education and training at the secondary level was 64,203 students. (MES, 2007).

“In contrast to the situation for compulsory education, there are significant differences in enrolment rates by gender, parental education, and household income after the nine-year basic education, when schooling is no longer compulsory and opportunity costs of school attendance are higher. Continuation from the compulsory cycle to upper secondary education (grades 10 and 11) is much lower for rural population, for lower income quintiles, and for children of less educated parents. Continuation rates are particularly low for Jalalabad, Naryn, and Talas oblasts – the oblasts with some of the highest incidences of poverty.” (World Bank, 2005).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

“Because school examinations in the Kyrgyz Republic are school-based, they do not provide an objective basis for comparing student learning achievement across schools or regions. External assessment of school performance at the compulsory level is currently limited to the Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) surveys which were carried out with assistance from UNICEF and UNESCO for grade 5 pupils in November 2000, and for grade 8 students in October 2002. The findings from these surveys reveal systematic variations in learning achievement by average income, by urban-rural location, and by language of instruction. Further information on differences in learning achievement is available in the form of applicant scores on the external examination for university entrance, which was introduced in the country with USAID support in 2002. The 2002 MLA survey documents the sizeable differences in basic education learning achievement across oblasts. Batken, Talas, Osh, and Naryn oblasts have the highest incidence of low learning achievement; Bishkek has the lowest. Much of the difference in learning achievement by oblast reflects the lower performance of students in rural areas, where poverty is more widespread, where cash income is scarce for many households, and where parental educational attainment is lower than in urban areas. Average scores in grade 8 arithmetic and biology in rural schools were less than half as high as in urban areas, implying levels of learning achievement well below national standards. Another

parameter on which there is sizeable variation in learning achievement is language of instruction in schools, which is closely related to the majority ethnicity in communities. In the 2002 MLA survey, the average scores of students in Russian-language schools were consistently higher than those of students in Uzbek-language schools, or Kyrgyz-language schools. The average performance of students in Uzbek-language schools was above that of students in Kyrgyz-language schools in mathematics and physics, but below it in chemistry, biology, and physics. The survey found that lessons are cancelled most frequently in Kyrgyz-language schools, and almost never in Russian-language schools. The same study found that Kyrgyz-language schools are more likely to be staffed by younger and less experienced teachers, and to suffer from unsatisfactory condition and availability of teaching equipment.” (World Bank, 2005).

The National Assessment of Educational Achievements of Students (NAEAS) survey, which was conducted during the 2006/07 academic year by the Center for Assessment of Education and Methodologies within the framework of the Rural Education project of the Ministry of Education and Science, financed with a World Bank grant, demonstrated the low quality of education. It showed that over 60% of pupils in the fourth grade were below the basic levels in mathematics, reading, comprehension, and knowledge of Kyrgyzstan. This means that they lacked necessary knowledge and skills to successfully continue in the school programme. The results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which was conducted in 2007 to assess students’ functional literacy and readiness for independent lives in society, also demonstrated the low quality of education. Only about 13.6%, 11.7% and 11.8% of 15-year-old Kyrgyz students were able to pass reading, natural science, and mathematics tests, respectively, at the level of minimum international standards for their age. The average values for Kyrgyzstan among the 57 countries surveyed were very low for all three subjects. (Government of Kyrgyzstan & UN, 2009).

Teaching staff

Only those with appropriate pedagogical qualifications can teach in educational establishments. Under the current system, grade 11 graduates (e.g. with complete general secondary education) who wish to become teachers have three options: (i) a programme of three to four years’ duration in a specialized school for preschool or primary school teachers; (ii) a programme of four to five years’ duration in a university or college for grades 5-11 teachers; or (iii) a four-year bachelor’s programme at a university and a master’s degree thereafter to qualify as a university lecturer. Those completing the first option cannot proceed to further degree study; instead they are trained further through in-service course programmes. Those completing the second option can continue for a master’s degree but must pass a competitive examination to gain admission. Those in the third option can proceed to a master’s programme without a competitive admission examination. (ADB, 1997).

The in-service training system faces several problems and fails to ensure the systematic updating of knowledge and experience. According to legislation, all teachers must participate in in-service training courses every five years. Before 1991, a total of 5,000 teachers were involved in in-service training every year. In recent years, they were no more than 1,000. (Ministry of Education, 1999).



Recruiting qualified new teachers to replace retirees is proving difficult primarily due to very low salaries. Salaries for teachers and principals are usually well below the average monthly wage, and even the top monthly salary is below the poverty level. The government increased teachers' salaries by 15% in April 2004 and a further increase of almost 15% was approved in October 2004, leading to a cumulative increase of 30% in 2004. However, teachers' salaries remain very low, and teachers are reluctant to undertake assignments in rural schools. Teachers also have little motivation to improve their performance, as doing so does not bring salary increases or other forms of professional recognition. A 2003 study conducted by UNICEF found that, on average, half of the needed classes in mathematics, chemistry, geography, physics, biology, foreign languages, and ICT were not conducted due to teacher shortages in rural areas. Teacher shortages often arise from the inability of the education sector to compete with the private sector in attracting personnel with such skills. (ADB, 2005).

As mentioned, the national coordination of teacher training is the responsibility of the National Institute for Raising the Qualifications of Teachers and Teacher Training (NTTI). In oblasts, in-service teacher training is handled by a network of seven teacher training institutes (TTIs). The Ministry of Education finances in-service training conducted by NTTI, while oblast in-service training is financed mainly through oblast administration budgets. In some cases, there are limited fee-paying programmes. In other cases, oblast governments pay the training cost by allocating funds directly to TTIs, but travel, subsistence, and accommodation expenses are paid by the teachers themselves. Rural teachers cannot meet such expenses from a monthly salary of about US\$19 equivalent. (*Ibid.*).

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For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>