**Kyrgyzstan**

*Updated version, May 2007.*

**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, 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;
- education is provided free of charge in all State institutions within the framework of State standards;
- tuition fees can be charged for education and training, including at the State educational institutions;
- education shall be humanistic in character, placing priority on values common to all mankind;
- 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;
- alternative educational institutions and non-State educational establishments will have the opportunity to function;
- institutions can be diversified in terms of legal ownership patterns, forms of training and education, and types of activities;
- conditions shall be created for selection of talented and gifted students.

Current educational priorities and concerns

In 1991, Kyrgyzstan became an independent State and adopted social, political and economic reforms. The Constitution, approved in 1991, laid the foundation for a new democratic statehood. The country has moved away from the old planned economic system. On the basis of the Constitution, a new system has been created, which includes: a multiparty system (more than twenty parties); principles of free democratic choices; diversity of ideas and openness concerning the rights of human beings.

The economy has to be guided from a planned to a free market system. In this context, the privatization of many State enterprises has been carried out; and many private and joint-ventures have appeared. Simultaneously, the country has entered a difficult post-independence economic period, punctuated by recession and the general overall decrease in industrial indexes.

The economic crisis has also affected the social sphere—particularly the education sector. For example, as a result of the decline in education financing, the number of pre-schools has decreased. To solve such problems, the Ministry of Education launched some key initiatives. The system of educational management was changed, as well as the academic programmes. Linkages were deepened and strengthened with secondary and professional schools. A basic curriculum for secondary schools, as well as for higher and secondary professional education, was developed and approved.

The educational reforms being realized in the country encompass a number of measures that will result in fundamental changes the educational economic, legal and structural situation.

The Law on Education, the Education Development Concept until 2010, and the Education for All (EFA) National Action Plan define the framework for the Government’s policy and strategy in developing education and set goals. The EFA Plan includes primary and secondary education and aims to ensure universal enrollment by encouraging students not to drop out, promoting inclusion, fostering innovation, improving the curriculum and textbooks, upgrading facilities and equipment, strengthening community and parental participation, improving assessment, and introducing certification systems. Commitment to improving both the quality and effectiveness of education is a key element of the Government’s economic strategy. State educational standards were developed in 1996 and subsequently revised in 2002 and 2004. 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. A number of these principles have been followed, but not always with desired consequences. For example, more responsibility has been decentralized to local government agencies, but most have such limited financial resources that schools struggle to finance utilities.
and maintenance and have no funds left for other expenditures. Other reforms, however, have proven positive. School committees have been formed and have become involved in decision making in schools. Despite financial constraints, some local administrations have been very supportive of their schools. (ADB, 2005).

The National Action Plan on EFA aims at universal enrolment in general education and highlights the importance of primary vocational education and the development of an adult education system. (ADB, 2007).

**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.

As a rule, children begin their education not later than their seventh birthday. Basic secondary education is compulsory and free of charge. Complete general secondary education is free of charge in State educational establishments.

**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** (MOE) 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 pre-school 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 six provinces (oblast) in the Kyrgyz Republic are divided into forty-one 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 pre-school and primary education and administer secondary education. Aïyl okmotu (village authorities) 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 pre-schools, 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.

Compiled by UNESCO-IBE (http://www.ibe.unesco.org/)
### Structure and organization of the education system

#### Kyrgyzstan: structure of the education system

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<tr>
<th>Years</th>
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<th>2nd stage</th>
<th>3rd stage</th>
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<th>Higher education</th>
<th>Additional education</th>
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#### Pre-school education

Pre-school education caters to children in the age group 1-7 years and is not compulsory. Infant schools admit children in the age group 1.5-3 and kindergartens cater to children aged 3-7.
Primary education

Primary education, the first stage of general secondary education, lasts three or four years 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 V-IX) and is compulsory. Complete general secondary education requires two additional years of study (Grades X-XI) and is provided free of charge in State-owned educational institutions.

Primary vocational education schools (PVSs, 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 students from Grade IX 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 postsecondary, tertiary-level vocational training. Technicums require an entry qualification of Grade XI and offer diploma and bachelor’s degree programmes. (ADB, 2005 and 2007).

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 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 candidates 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 I 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.

The financing of education

The main sources of education financing are the State and local governments. Additional funds come from enterprises, private sponsors, credits, tuition fees, etc. State-run higher institutions are financed from the State budget. However, the higher
The educational process

Pre-primary education

The basic purpose of pre-school education is the preparation of children for school, i.e. training in literacy, numeracy, drawing, and music. The number of pre-schools providing foreign languages is also growing. Infant schools admit children in the age group 1.5-3 and kindergartens cater to children aged 3-6(7).

Due to the economic crisis, the number of pre-schools has decreased and the enterprises network of pre-school establishments has practically been destroyed. Furthermore, attendance has been reduced by the high payments required for pre-school services. In 1998, there were 468 kindergartens with 46,500 children enrolled (in 1991, the number of pre-schools 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 Pre-school Education was ratified.

In 2002, 9.5% of children 1–6 years of age were enrolled in 416 preschools, down from about one in four enrolled before independence. Urban enrolment was 24.7%, and rural 3.8%. (ADB, 2005).
Primary education

Primary education lasts three or 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:

**Primary education: weekly lesson timetable (1996)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Number of weekly periods in each grade</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>I</td>
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<tr>
<td>First language (Kyrgyz/Russian)</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second language (Russian/Kyrgyz)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motherland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign language</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Music</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical training</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Ethics</td>
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**Total weekly periods**

| 22 | 24 | 28 | 29 |

*Note: Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.*

In 2002, 96.8% of the primary school age group was enrolled in primary schools (97.8% of boys 95.8% of girls). (ADB, 2005).

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:
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% of boys, 93.0% of girls), and at the upper secondary level was 72.0% (68% of boys, 76.1% of 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 I-IX), and 1,722 were complete secondary schools. The large majority of schools (1,323) taught in Kyrgyz. There were 148 Russian-only schools, 132 Uzbek-only schools, and one Tajik-only school. 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 60,300 students, and 54 state lycées with 18,624 students. Most general education schools (1,525, or 75%) operated two shifts. In addition, 105 schools with 18,109 students operated three shifts. Overall student/teacher ratios were 15.7:1 in 2002 and 15.5:1 in 2003. (ADB, 2005).

Compiled by UNESCO-IBE (http://www.ibe.unesco.org/)
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 MOE. 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 IX. 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. DVTE employs around 3,400 teachers; about 50% are vocational teachers. 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 MOE is limited. (ADB-TAR, 2005).

PVE 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 students from Grade IX 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 postsecondary 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 and about 27,000 students were enrolled. Sponsors of SVE institutions include: MOE (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.).

Compiled by UNESCO-IBE (http://www.ibe.unesco.org/)
In 2003, the MOE administered 74 *technicums* with 3,019 faculty members. *Technicums* require an entry qualification of Grade XI 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).

**Assessing learning achievement nationwide**

Information is not available.

**Higher education**

Higher education in the Kyrgyz Republic train qualified specialists and scientists. Higher education institutions admit students with complete general secondary education or secondary vocational training. Higher education institutions include universities, academies, institutes (i.e. conservatory, higher military school, higher school of the Ministry of the Interior, etc.) and colleges.

In 1998, there were thirty-nine higher education institutions, of which twenty-six were State-owned. The total number of students was approximately 97,700. The teaching staff consisted of 5,641 instructors; 222 were holders of a doctorate and 1,368 had a candidate of science degree. State-run institutions offered courses in more than 220 specializations. Students are admitted in State higher education institution on the basis of their entrance examination results (oral or written exams, computerized tests, etc.) in no less than three subjects (language and literature being one of these).

Educational activities in higher education institutions are carried out according to the educational plans and the curriculum developed within the parameters of State standards established by the Ministry of Education. 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 are also offered under the traditional education programme.

The management of higher education institutions (including educational, research, methodological work, recruitment and preparation of scientific, pedagogical staff) is carried out by the Scientific Council, headed by the rector of the institution. The languages of instruction are established by universities in view of the opportunities available, as well as personal and methodological educational process factors.

Higher education institutions also offer *aspirantura* and *doctorantura* programmes for the training of scientists and researchers. *Aspirantura* programmes lead to the candidates of science degree. According to legislation, the leading institutions of higher education (for example. Kyrgyz State National University, Kyrgyz Technical University, Osh State University, Kyrgyz State Pedagogical...
University, etc.) can offer candidate of science degree programmes on the basis of the number of places scheduled. Aspirantura programmes cover 212 scientific specialities; doctorantura programmes are available in fifteen scientific fields. 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).

In 2005 there were 49 higher education institutions (34 in the public sector and the majority located in the capital, Bishkek) with some 231,000 students enrolled. Most of the private providers are located in urban areas and offer programmes in areas such as driver training, language tuition, short management courses, art and craft, and computer training. Some private training providers are also involved in “civics” education and other programmes that assist people to adjust to the new economic realities of the country and participate in democratic processes. (ADB, 2007). Among the 199,124 students enrolled in 2003, 103,577 were in day programmes, 1,251 in evening study, and 94,296 in distance-learning programmes. Fifty-four percent of the students in higher education were female, and 30,065 students received state funding. Nearly half of the students (96,874) studied humanities. Of these, 51% were in education (49,744 students). (ADB, 2005).

According to the World Bank, public higher education institutions admit both “state-supported” and “contractual” (fee-paying) students. State-supported students attend higher education institutions free of charge, but “contractual” students pay tuition fees set by each institution. On average, fee-paying students pay about Soms 3,000 per year. The estimated annual income from student fees was about Soms 50 million or 5% of the republican education budget. In recent years, most higher education institutions have depended heavily on income from student fees, which are used for basic operations and maintenance. The number of students paying fees has increased considerably in the past few years. In 1996, out of 49,744 higher education students, 21.6% were paying fees. In 1998, out of 13,580 first year students, 7,587 (or 56%) were fee-paying students. (Review of Kyrgyz Social Expenditures, Vol. 2, June 2001).

Special education

The government assumes complete responsibility for the education and the training of: orphans, children who are separated from their parents on the basis of a legal decision; and children of single parents who wish to bring up their children in the children’s house.

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 haring 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. (ADB, 2005).
**Private education**

The Law on Education recognizes the importance of private educational institutions. Private schools must obtain a license from the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education monitors the private educational institutions’ observance of State educational standards and conformity to quality standards. Monitoring activities are based on attestations provided by the non-State higher education institutions.

**Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure**

Textbooks and other teaching materials are published by the Kyrgyz Publishing House. During the period 1992-1997, 144 titles of textbooks and manuals were published. For schools in which Russian and Uzbek are the languages of instruction, some textbooks have been imported from Russia and Uzbekistan. Since 1995, national authorities began the preparation of new textbooks and manuals in order to meet the requirements of modern life and the national interests of the country. The lack of computers is a matter of concern. It is estimated that only 10% of schools are equipped with modern computers. Most schools do not dispose of modern communication technologies such as e-mail or the Internet. (Ministry of Education, 1999).

According to information made available by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), rural schools are dilapidated, lack learning materials and equipment, and suffer attendance problems (70% of the total population live in rural areas). Almost all schools in the country lack learning aids, including maps, didactic materials, and science models, as their provision has been discontinued since 1991 for lack of funds. In 2004, most general education schools (1,525, or 75%) operated two shifts. In addition, 105 schools with 18,109 students operated three shifts. Free distribution of textbooks to enrolled students was discontinued in 1994 due to severe constraints on expenditures. In 1999, the Government, with support from an ADB-funded project, introduced a textbook rental scheme to address the resulting problems of access to and affordability of textbooks, in particular for the poor. Eight schools offered evening classes for 1,238 working students in 2004. A total of 26 boarding schools enrolled 5,434 students in the same year, of which 873 students were without parental care and 496 disabled. (ADB, 2005).

The building construction and technology of primary vocational schools (PVSs) which have not yet benefited from rehabilitation measures are based on 30-year old construction standards that are inefficient in terms of use of materials, structural capacity, and energy performance. PVS facilities continue to deteriorate because of inadequate maintenance and investment. Training workshops and dormitories are in poor condition. Most training equipment in PVS was supplied during the Soviet era and is outdated or not functioning and only displayed for demonstration purposes. Hand tools, sufficient consumables, teaching aids, and learning materials are lacking in training workshops. Most PVSs do not have computers for either administration or teaching. Facility provision to cater to the needs of students with physical disabilities is largely nonexistent. Textbooks and learning and teaching materials in use are obsolete. More than 90% of 1,100 textbook

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titles were developed before 1980, and less than 5% of current textbooks have been revised since 1990. (ADB, 2007).

**Adult and non-formal education**

In order to maintain high adult literacy rates and prevent functional illiteracy, adult education centres are to be established by the State and non-governmental organizations. The adult education system will offer programmes enabling the adults to adapt themselves to the new socio-economic conditions. Training courses will include teaching of foreign languages, informatics, fundamentals of economics, marketing, accounting, and environmental protection. (Ministry of Education, 1999).

Out-of-school institutions (i.e. houses and children’s creativity centres; sport schools for young children; national crafts centres, etc.) independently develop their activity programmes, taking into account: children’s requests; needs of the family, educational institutions and public organizations; socio-economic development factors; regional, national and cultural traditions, etc. These institutions can make independent agreements with other organizations to undertake professional training of pupils on a fee-paying basis.

The current vocational education system performs poorly in terms of providing market-oriented skills training for adults and out-of-school youth. Most adults, particularly the poor in rural areas, lack access to skills training that would enhance their earning capacity. Relevant short-term training programs are offered in a limited manner by public training institutions and a few private providers, mainly in urban areas. Currently, no skills development strategy is in place to address adult training and retraining needs. (ADB, 2007).

**Teaching staff**

Only those with appropriate pedagogical qualifications have the right to teach in educational establishments. Under the current system, Grade XI graduates (complete upper general secondary education) who wish to become teachers have three options: (i) a programme of three to four years in a specialized school to prepare as teachers of pre-school or primary school; (ii) a programme of 4 to 5 years in a university or college to prepare as teachers of Grades V-XI; or (iii) a 4-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 (equivalent to some US$23.8) 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 MOE 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.).

Educational research and information

There are two research institutes under the Ministry of Education and Culture: the Scientific Research Institute for Higher Schools and the Kyrgyz Institute of Education. One of the main tasks of these institutes is to develop the scientific and methodological foundations for reforming the education system. In addition, scientific staff within the education system have the requisite foundation in scientific content and methodology. Therefore, they also are called upon to participate in research programmes that focus on priorities and trends in scientific research.

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