TORINO PROCESS

2018-20

National report

TAJIKISTAN

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Contents

ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AE	Adult Education
AEC	Adult Education Centre
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CVET	Continuous Vocational Education and Training
ELM	External Labour Migration
ETF	European Training Foundation
ETS	Engineering Teaching Staff
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBE	General Basic Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSE	General Secondary Education
HE	Higher Education
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MLMEP	Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of the Population
NSD-2030	National Strategy for the Development of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period until 2030
NSDE-2020	National Strategy for the Development of Education of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period until 2020
ES	Educational Standard
pp	percentage point
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
SVET	Secondary Vocational Education
TJS	Tajik Somoni (currency)
TRP	Torino Process
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VTLs	Vocational Technical Lyceums

THE NATIONAL REPORTING FRAMEWORK

Building block A: Highlights of the country and national system of Vocational Education and Training (VET)

A.1. Country information

A.1.1. Introduction

The Republic of Tajikistan (hereafter Tajikistan, unless in formal document titles) is a landlocked country situated in Central Asia. Approximately 9 million people live in Tajikistan: 41% are under 18 and 66% are under 30 years of age, which makes the population among the youngest in Central Asia; women account for 49% of the population. The country is the 86th largest in the world and is in possession of huge deposits of hydro-electric and water resources, and multiple forms of precious metals. The terrain and climate mean the country is conducive to growing ecologically clean products and has the opportunity to actively develop eco-tourism, which fits the basic premises of human development in the context of access to natural resources.[1]

The state border is 700 km from west to east, 350 km from north to south. To the west and north, the country borders the Republic of Uzbekistan and Republic of Kyrgyzstan; to the south, the country borders Afghanistan; and to the east it borders China. Tajikistan is a typical mountainous country with absolute peaks from 300 m to 7 495 m. Overall, 93% of its territory is mountainous: to the north is Ferghana Valley; to the north-west and in the central part are the Turkestan, Zerafshan, Hissar and Alay ridges; to the south-east is the Pamir range; and to the south-west it is part lowland, with Vakhsh, Hissar and other valleys. The rivers and lakes have glacial headwaters. The total length of the 947 rivers that are over 10 km long is over 28 500 km. Huge deposits of snow and ice are concentrated in the high altitude areas: the eternal snow line lies at 3 500 m to 3 600 m in the west and rises up to 5 800 m in the east. Glaciers cover more than 8 476 square km. Tajikistan is also rich in lakes: up to 1 300 cover a total area of 705 square km. The largest of these is Karakul Lake, and there are two earthquake created lakes: Sarez Lake and Yashikkul. The lakes are mainly situated at an altitude of 3 500 m. Many deposits of rare and precious metals have been discovered within the country, including zinc, lead, bismuth, molybdenum, wolfram, gold, silver, antimony, mercury, fluorspar, gas and oil (Agency on Statistics, 2018).

In the period after the fourth phase of the Torino Process, the economy of Tajikistan retained its steady growth. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the period 2016 to 2018 increased by 0.4 percentage points (pp) and amounted to 7.3% in 2019 (see Table AA1 in the Appendices). For this period, the share of total GDP for the service and industry sectors (including energy) increased by 2.7 pp and 2.2 pp respectively to 32.9% and 17.3% respectively. GDP per capita has an average of 10% annual growth (see Table AA2 in the Appendices).

At the same time, the domestic private sector played a limited role in the country's economy. It accounted for only 15% of the total volume of investments, 30% of industry produce and near to 13% of formal employment. In 2019, Tajikistan was ranked 106 out of 189 countries in the Ease of Doing Business report (an improvement from position 128 in 2016). In future, prioritised reports for the improvement of the business climate will be necessary, as will providing enterprises with the opportunity for successful competition in the domestic and neighbouring regional markets to enable creation of salaried jobs with the aim of alleviating poverty. Investments in human capital are important for ensuring productivity and competitiveness of the young and increasing population of Tajikistan in the economy of tomorrow.[2]

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[1] National report on the process of realisation of strategic documents of the country in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals: https://untj.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/NationalReport-RU.pdf
[2] https://www.vsemirnyjbank.org/ru/country/tajikistan/overview

A.2. Outline of VET

A.2.1. Organisation and regulatory basis

Tajikistan's education system has five levels: Initial Vocational Education (IVET), Secondary Vocational Education (SVET), first stage of Higher Education (HE), called Baccalaureate, second stage of SVET, called Magistratura, and postgraduate stage (PhD) (see Figure A1).

We will first look at IVET and SVET, which combined are called VET. It includes also the Adult Education (AE) system, which in European countries often equates to Continuous Vocational Education and Training (CVET) ..

Presently, the IVET and AE system is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of the Population (MLMEP), while the system of SVET is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Sciences (MES).

Figure A1. Tajikistan's education system
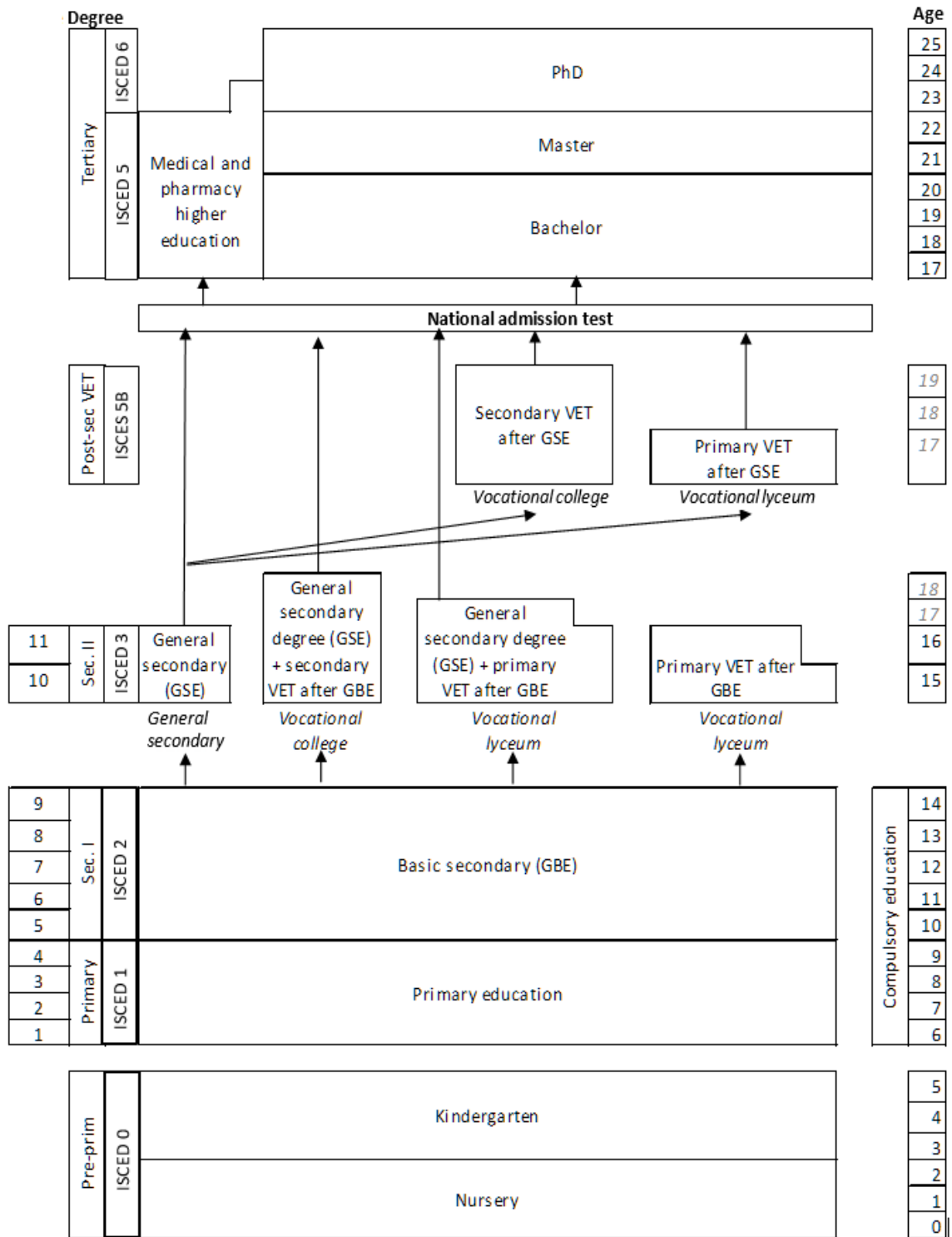
Note: ISCED: International Standard Classification of Education

A.2.1.1. Initial vocational education

VET in Tajikistan also includes the subsystem of AE, in particular CVET for 'labour professions/vocations'. As mentioned above, this overall current system of education is therefore called IVET. This system is regulated by the 2013 Law on Education, the 2003 Law on Initial Vocational Education and the 2017 Law on Adult Education.

The State Executive Agency of Management in the sphere of IVET is the MLMEP. The state standards of education and lists of the vocations/professions of the IVET system were approved by Decree #388 on 2 August 2010.

The IVET system includes 61 state-sponsored Vocational Technical Lyceums (VTLs), 28 state-sponsored Adult Education Centres (AECs), 3 Schools of Vocational and Continuous Education of the University of Central Asia (in Dushanbe, Khorog and Bokhtar), and more than 260 private centres of professional/vocational and supplementary education.

In the public VTLs, the following types of curricula are implemented:

- Uniform integral general and vocational education programme on the basis of the main general education (9 grades) for up to 3 years.[3]
- IVET programmes on the basis of the main general education (9 grades) without completing GSE lasting 1 to 2 years.
- VET programmes on the basis of completed GSE (11 grades) lasting up to 2 years.[4]
- Vocational training and supplementary vocational education, including retraining and advanced training, for up to 1 year.

In the AECs, short-term vocational programmes are implemented (up to one year) on the basis of the main general education and General Secondary Education (GSE). Upon completion, graduates receive a certificate of labour vocation.

Apart from this, VTLs and AECs implement short-term VET programmes after grades 9 and 11, upon which certificates of vocational/professional qualification are issued.

VTLs and AECs cover 19 sectors in 96 vocational specialities; examples of the 19 sectors are economics, technology, transportation and equipment, electronic equipment/installation, energetics, chemical industry, light industry, mining industry, architecture and construction, agriculture, metallurgy, telecommunication, tourism and hospitality, consumer services, and public catering.

Within IVET, the Engineering Pedagogical College of Dushanbe implements CVET curricula and prepares masters/instructors of industrial training for the IVET system.

Within the same IVET domain, there is also the Republican Centre of Methodological Support and Quality Assurance of IVET.

The goal of IVET is provision of the first level of vocational education to graduates of general and secondary education. Diplomas of IVET and certificates of the GSE are granted after successful completion of the respective programmes. Detailed analysis of the content of the IVET curricula shows that the blocks of vocational education corresponds to 58% to 73% of the learning time, with the practical training accounting for 72% to 82% of the time. Because of the lack of interaction with enterprises, the major part of practical skills training takes place in the workshops of the education institutions.

Most students at VTLs study free of charge, paid for from the state budget. In the 2018/19 academic year, 86% of students fell into this category.

Approximately one-fifth of IVET students are female (22% in the 2018/19 academic year).

The subsystem of VET, including state centres of AE and VTLs, is engaged in the process of vocational training and retraining of unemployed people registered with the public employment services. These measurements are financed mainly from the social security funds of the population. Starting in 2016,[5] state centres of AE also conduct validation (official recognition) of the vocational skills obtained in the process of informal education. These measures mainly relate to labour migrants.

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[3] Up till 2014, the Law on Primary (Initial) Vocational Education stipulated three-year terms for such programmes, but in 2014 some changes were introduced to allow programmes to last two years.

[4] The Decree of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan #568 from 5.10.2017 *Order of Validation of Skills of Adults* was passed.

[5] Decree #568 from 5.10.2017: Regulation of Validation of Adult Skills.

One of the leading vocational education institutions is the School of Professional and Continuing Education of the University of Central Asia, run by the Aga Khan Foundation. It provides paid for vocational training through short- and long-term VET courses in Dushanbe city, Khorog and Bokhtar (former Kurgan-Tube administrative centre of the Khatlon Oblast).

A.2.1.2. Secondary vocational education

SVET is also regulated by the main Law on Education and Law on Secondary Vocational Education passed in 2015. The State Executive Agency of Management in the sphere of SVET in Tajikistan is the MES. The state standard of SVET is approved by the decision of the country's Government #418 from 1.10.2016.

In the 2019/20 academic year, there were 75 vocational colleges, and they implemented the following two types of curricula:

- Uniform integral programme of general and SVET on the basis of the main general education (9 grades) for up to 4 years.
- Programme of SVET on the basis of completing GSE (11 grades) lasting up to 3 years; for medicine and culture courses, in accordance with the specifics of the specialities, the duration is 4 years.

On average, 80% of students following a SVET programme have completed GSE.

A.2.2. Institutional and management mechanisms

IVET is managed by the MLMEP. State institutions (e.g. VTLs and AECs) organisationally belong to the structure of this ministry and its subordinate institutions and are therefore financed through the MLMEP.

Private IVET institutions (comprised mainly from training/education centres for supplementary education) are assigned to the MES. The MES manages the process of issuing licences for educational activity, approval of education plans, and fulfilment of requirements for the state education standards (accreditation).

State IVET institutions are centrally state-owned, meaning the local (oblast, municipal/district) agencies do not take part in the management of the system. Similarly, the MES functions (licensing, attestation and accreditation) are carried out by the central departments/offices of the ministry; the local (oblast, municipal/district) structural subdivisions (education departments) and local agencies of authority do not take part in the management of IVET.

A similar situation is in place for SVET, with the sole difference that the state agency of management is assigned to the MES. Also, in the SVET system, part of the organisation of these institutions is assigned to ministries related to the subject and financed through them; for example, medical colleges organisationally belong to the Ministry of Public Health, teaching colleges belong to the MES, and technical and technological colleges belong to the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies.

Professional/vocational standards for IVET are approved by the MLMEP, while for SVET this is done by the MES.

Representatives of the interested parties (employers and students), as a rule, take part in the management of IVET and SVET systems at the level of educational institutions. Some but not all education institutions include the following in the management of the school: pedagogical council, representatives of the students' parents and employers. There is also the practice of participation of representatives of employers and specialities of the IVET and SVET systems. It needs to be mentioned that traditionally (stemming from the Soviet period), the heads of the state examining commissions are appointed from industry employers related to the course speciality. Such a practice is not observed in the SVET system.

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade takes part in the quantitative and departmental planning related to the acceptance and admissions of students into IVET and SVET, while the Ministry of Finance is responsible for financing these systems from the state budget. The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade is also entrusted to manage the process of applying for external (foreign) support for IVET and SVET.

A.2.3. Basic VET statistics

The main indicators for IVET are shown in Tables AA4 and AA5 in the Appendices. These tables show that nearly all the indicators in 2018 had decreased quantitatively in comparison with 2016. For example, the VTLs decreased by one unit, to 61 in 2018. The number of students at VTLs also decreased by 240 for that period of time, though the number of girls increased. The number of students accepted to education institutions also decreased by 971 students, including girls (by 512). The number of graduates also decreased by 1 334, including girls (by 233).

The number of masters of industrial training likewise decreased from 2016 to 2018 by 42, including women (by 7), though the number of teachers/instructors increased by 167, including women (by 89). Such a development is naturally the outcome of the reduction of the number of education institutions. From 2008 to 2018, the number of education institutions reduced by 12.

In SVET, the situation is the opposite (refer to Table AA6 in the Appendices): in the period 2016 to 2018, the number of education institutions and students increased by 9.1% and 16.7% respectively and reached 72 and 85 579 respectively in 2018.

Figure A2. Some indicators of SVET, 2014–2018 (%)
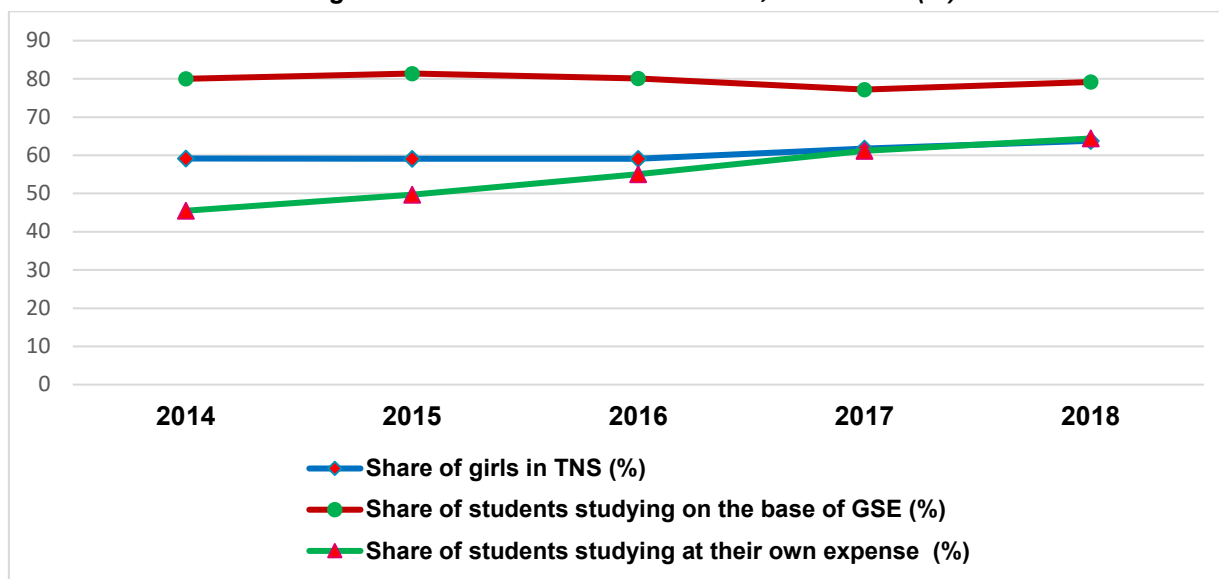
It is interesting to note that the share of self-funded students has been increasing, reaching 64.4% in 2018 (see Figure A2).

Figure A1 also shows that the share of girls in the total number of students in SVET has stayed around 60%, although from 2016 to 2018, this indicator increased by 4.7 pp and had reached 63.8% in 2018. This is linked to the fact that the share of humanitarian specialities (especially in the sphere of health care and education (see Table AA6)) prevails in this subsystem: from 2016 to 2018, this indicator increased by 4.2 pp to reach 90.3% in 2018.

A.2.4. Concept of VET and main initiatives for reforms

The most important requirement for socio-economic development of Tajikistan is improvement of the quality of training, especially considering the country's strategic development priority direction. Within this, focus is on organisation and planning of VET in the context of prioritising the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the National Strategy for the Development of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period up to 2030 (NSD-2030), and sectoral and state-based strategies and programmes of development, as well as bringing the goals of national VET in line with the requirements of international policy in the sphere of human resources development.

The NSD-2030 includes the following main problems related to the country's socio-economic development:

- imbalance of the educational services and labour market; and
- low quality of education and skills of the labour force, especially for females and the rural population.

Based on this, section 4 of the NSD-2030 ('Widening of Efficient Employment') prioritises the following:

Priority 1:

- Reform the education and science system through provision of equal and accessible education.
- Improve the quality at all levels of education.
- Ensure financial sustainability and effectiveness of the education sector.
- Establish and develop a national vocational network of scientific-technical working groups with the emphasis on resource-efficient technologies to address the unemployment across the country.

Priority 4.1:

- The quality and scale of the vocational education should guarantee competitiveness of the country's economy.
- There should be close connection between education and the labour market, ensuring balance between the supply of specialists with the demands of the labour market.

- In the sphere of vocational and tertiary education, support to develop the systems of primary and SVET should be coordinated with the priority directions of the development of the economy (strengthening of the material-technical basis, mutual connection with enterprises and organisations) and the increasing effectiveness of the career guidance system for young people.

Priority 5.2:

The new model of growth envisaged in NSD-2030 will generate conditions for the mass creation of new high-performance jobs and workplaces, outstripping growth in the formal employment and registered sector of the economy. As mention in the NSD-2030, 'It is important to provide productive employment in the sectors oriented towards export, which can exert substantial multiplying effects on other sectors and economy in general, for example, such sectors as the textile and food industry, chemical and engineering industries, transportation and communication services, education and public health, and tourism. Institutional breakthrough points in this case can become the target territorial programmes of promotion of employment.'

Within the sphere of employment policy in NSD-2030, the priority to increase the outcomes of vocational education has been identified. To achieve this, the following are envisaged:

- formation of a competitive environment, in particular in the development of educational institutions;
- development of the engineering-technical education system;
- creation of programmes and mechanisms for appraisal of specialists' competences (national system of mapping of competences); and
- formation of sustainable mechanisms of provision of access for young people/graduates at education institutions to the systems supporting employment.

In the Programme of Middle-Term Development of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period 2016–2020, the most important tasks related to raising the productiveness of human capital are as follows:

- Provide interconnection of professional/vocational knowledge and practical skills through formation of education and qualification standards for specialities of various profiles with the involvement of enterprises and organisations.
- Implement training systems with the help of large enterprises and establishment of production sites for training.
- Support development of primary and SVET, coordinated with the priority directions for development of the country's economy, for example strengthening of the material-technical basis, interconnection with enterprises and organisations, development and increase of effectiveness of career guidance system, and establishment of regional competitions for labour/professions (e.g. WorldSkills Tajikistan).

To raise the output of vocational training, a system of sustainable interaction between vocational training and the labour market is recommended:

- Train the specialists of various professions/vocations to meet modern requirements/demands.
- Expand and diversify the primary and SVET technological programmes.
- Work out regulations for state agencies to issue competences and qualifications certificates.
- Improve the planning system for competences and qualifications.
- Develop and improve the career orientation/guidance mechanism.

A.3. Context of VET

A.3.1. Socio-economic context

For the period after the fourth round of the Torino Process (2016 to 2018), economic growth in Tajikistan was quite sustainable at 7.1% on average. This was mainly due to development in the agriculture and service sectors. For the last 10 years, remittances from labour migrants, together with state capital investments in the industry and construction sectors, were important sources of economic growth and reduction of poverty in Tajikistan. In 2018, the remittances remained at a high level (31% of GDP in 2018), mainly coming from the Russian Federation. Apart from this, growth of the emergence of debt problems in the country is high, considering heightened level of state and guaranteed by the state debt (53% of GDP in 2018) and average landing rate. Therefore, fiscal space is extremely limited and in the event of an external shock, the government would not be able to play a countercyclical role (World Bank, 2015).

It is important to mention that Tajikistan was included in the list of 10 countries with the fastest reduction of poverty in the last 15 years (ibid.). The poverty rate dropped from 81% in 1999 to 29.7% in 2017. The ultra-

poverty rate decreased from 73% to 14%.[6] At the same time, the economy of Tajikistan does not create enough jobs for its fast-growing labour force, as a result of which the most precious asset – human capital – generally is not being fully utilised. From 2016 to 2018, although there was average annual GDP growth of 7.1%, the employment rate only increased by 0.6%. At the same time, the working age population, defined as persons aged 15 to 64 years old, increased from 5.22 million in 2016 to 5.43 million in 2018 (refer to Table AA7 in the Appendices).

To ensure faster creation of jobs and improve their quality, it is necessary to change the existing model of growth urgently.

In this context, the NSD-2030 defines the expansion of productive employment as one of the strategic goals. Besides, further strengthening of the development of human capital is considered a complex inter-sectoral priority in the NSD-2030, incorporating issues of education, public health, social security and gender equality.

Moving away from the dominance of employment in agriculture is becoming an important part of reforming employment and growth of labour productivity and, in accordance with the priorities of the Programme of Middle-Term Development of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2016–2020 and the NSD-2030, is connected with the structural reconstruction of the real sector. According to the NSD-2030, the share of employed people in agriculture should be reduced by at least half. In parallel, the share of employed people in service and industry should increase. From the standpoint of expansion of productive employment, this means that about 70% of the growth of labour resources in rural areas for 2016 to 2030 should be in industrial branches and the social sphere, with an increase in study at vocational education institutions to ensure these needs are met. Formally, employment should increase from 40% up to 60% to 65% in general numbers of employed people.

It is worth noting that the opening of the first two generators of the Rogun Hydropower Plant in 2018 and 2019 drastically increased the volume of electricity produced in the country. In turn, this has facilitated development of industry.

In 2016 and 2017, over 300 micro, small and medium-sized enterprises were created. In 2017, around TJS 558 million was invested in industry. In 2016 and 2017, investments increased by 16.0% and 21.3% respectively. The volume of industrial products exceeded 20 million tonnes for the first time. The number of employed people in industry increased to 26.3 thousand in 2018 in comparison with 2015. Production of cement has increased by 2.2 times (3.1 million tonnes in 2017 against 1.4 million tonnes in 2015); the share of processing cotton fibre increased by 16.1 pp (22.2% against 6.1%). Growth in the volume of industry products increased the share of industry in the country's GDP: from 12.8% in 2015 to 17.3% in 2018 (source: NSD-2030).

These trends highlight the issues associated with the demand for vocational skills. In connection with this, the NSD-2030 envisages that no less than 30% of graduates should be involved in primary and SVET, which will require doubling the provision of this level of education.

A.3.2. Migration and refugees

Officially, there are 4 500 Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in Tajikistan today. The flow of refugees seeking shelter on Tajik soil has not reduced in recent years. Due to the worsening of the situation in the north of Afghanistan, Tajikistan sees an inflow of 30 Afghan families monthly (In-depth Individual Interview 3). According to experts' assessments, the flow of refugees and asylum seekers from Afghanistan does not create a significant issue in the socio-economic space of Tajikistan.[7]

A.3.3. Context of education sphere

See Figure A1 and section A.2.1 for an overview of the education system.

The share of ninth-grade graduates having entered primary and SVET follows a positive trend at first glance. In 2017, it accounted for 10%, which is 1.5 pp higher than 2016; however, if compared against the identified indicators of the PMD-2020, there is a significant lagging behind, both in 2016 and in 2017, by 5.5 and 10 pp, respectively.[8]

The share of graduates of general education schools, primary and SVET having entered tertiary education institutions significantly lags behind the indicators set by the PMD-2020. In 2017, this indicator was at 33%, which is 1.7 pp lower than in the previous year. Yet, in comparison with the indicator set in the PMD-2020, the 2017 rate is as much as 17 pp lower. The reason for this is the disparity of access to quality educational

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[6] Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, https://stat.tj/
[7] https://www.dw.com/ru/
[8] National Report on Implementation of Country's Strategic Documents in the Context of Sustainable Development Goals https://untj.org/wp-content/uploads/ 2018/11 / NationalReport-RU.pdf

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services for various reasons, such as the place of residence (city/village) and the family's economic situation.[9]

A.3.4. Context of lifelong learning

By Decree #28 from 25 January 2017, the Government of Tajikistan adopted the Concept of Continuing Education in the Republic of Tajikistan for the period 2017–2023,[10] based on the requirements of the Programme of Innovative Development of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period 2011–2020, which was approved by Decree #227 on 30 April 2011. Section 15 of this concept indicates that 'The degree of competitiveness of the modern innovative economy is increasingly determined by the quality of professional staff members, by the degree of them being socialised and cooperative. A necessary condition for formation of an innovative economy, of any given state, is the creation of a system of constantly renewing knowledge and competencies of the staff members. The introduction in the economy of modern science intensive technologies dictates increased requirements for the qualifications of employees, the employees' sense of responsibility, and constant willingness to learn new approaches to vocational activities.'

At the same time, the formation of the basic framework of a modern system of continuous education requires certain conditions to be established, in particular legislative conditions, for resolution of the following interrelated tasks:

- development of a competitive educational environment and saturation of this environment with different educational services;
- establishment of infrastructure for continuing education.
- induction of contemporary training technologies into lifelong education; and
- introduction of new financial mechanisms in lifelong education.

A.3.5. Context of international cooperation: Partnerships and donor support

One of the important events in the sphere of adults' IVET was the launch of the Strengthening of Vocational Education and Training project. The project is implemented with the 0452-TAJ and 0453-TAJ grants, as well as 3309-TAJ credit agreements with the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The documents regarding financing the Strengthening of Vocational Education and Training project were signed between the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the ADB on 16 November 2015, and the Majlisi Namoyandagoni Majlis Oli (the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan) ratified these agreements on 9 March 2016.

The project aims to strengthen implementation of reforms in the IVET system of the MLMEP, which is demand-oriented and quality-assured in Tajikistan. This project includes the modernisation of training methodology, recovery of the material basis, broadening access to quality training, and also strengthening the system's managing functions at the sectoral and institutional levels. The project duration is five years. The project's objectives are as follows:

1. **Refinement of the normative basis of the IVET system.** Within the frames of this outcome, the project will develop competency standards and assessment tools in accordance with the four-level European Qualifications Framework, adapted to the conditions of Tajikistan. On the basis of competency standards, gender-sensitive curricula and materials will be worked out. The training of the competency appraisers will take place in 17 professions/vocations.

2. **Refinement of physical conditions in selected IVET institutions.** The project will undertake modernisation of the physical and training facilities in 29 selected IVET institutions (21 lyceums, 7 AECs and the Institute of Energy of Tajikistan in the Kushoniyon District). Modern training equipment required for implementation and maintenance of the proposed competency-based training programme will also be provided. The project will also support gender-sensitive changes to dormitories, which will make the IVET system more accessible for girls, especially those from remote areas.

3. **Refinement of the methodology of the IVET system**. The project will strengthen the personnel's potential and update the material and technical basis of the State Institution of Dushanbe Engineering Pedagogical College. This college will be equipped with a training management system for conducting professional development courses using information and communication technologies and mixed-method training.

The capacity and potential of the Training and Methodological Centre and Monitoring of the Quality of Education institutions will also be increased during the inception and development stages of the standards of competences, curricula and materials.

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[9] Ibid.
[10] http://base.mmk.tj/view_sanadhoview.php?showdetail=&sanadID=543

Within the framework of the project, an inclusive and market-oriented training programme will be developed and implemented to appraise the competences and certify graduates of lyceums, AECs and other applicants, including migrants who have obtained practical skills through work experience abroad or in the country. The model-based Programme of Gender Equality envisages training of girls in non-traditional vocations and will be piloted in five selected lyceums.

4. **Strengthening the governance and management of the IVET system**. The project will support the establishment and functioning of sectoral advisory committees in separate institutions of the IVET system, as well as the establishment and functioning of sectoral Task Forces and afterwards sectoral associations in five priority sectors. In selected vocational technical education institutions, training on modern methods of management will be conducted.

Within this component, the project will strengthen the secretariat of the National Coordinating Council on IVET, develop and conduct monitoring, project appraisal and information management systems of selected education institutions, and create a National Resource Centre and four Regional Resource Centres to facilitate coordination and provide efficiency in implementation of the project.

The second important project in the sphere of IVET in Tajikistan is the European Commission's project, Technical Assistance to the MLMEP, in the field of professional development of teachers. The project is financed by the European Union (EU) within the framework of the implementation of the Quality Education Support Programme in the Republic of Tajikistan. The programme has been developed with the aim of achieving the separate national priority tasks of the National Strategy for the Development of Education of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period until 2020 (NSDE-2020). The objective of the programme is to support effective and quality education services at the secondary and primary levels of VET in order to improve learning outcomes. Technical assistance is provided by a consortium from GOPA, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ, the German Society for International Cooperation) and DVV (Institute for International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V. (DVV), the German Adult Education Association), under the leadership of GOPA consultants. The project launched on 1 February 2017 and lasted until 31 July 2020.

The project aims to support the establishment of a contemporary and effective system of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for teachers/instructors of VET institutions, which to a better degree meets the individual needs of teachers and heads of VET institutions; it is based on successful national and regional best practices and meets the needs of the labour market. The project will strive to provide active involvement of local partners by means of strengthening all-round institutional capacity and development of key staff members of the institutions and management structures of the IVET system, ministries and local stakeholders in all subject areas of the project, using a participatory approach.

The expected outcomes and activities are as follows:

1. Work out and create regulatory acts that define the roles and responsibilities of various ministries and their departments responsible for the development and leadership of the IVET sector.

2. Work out and establish a framework of competences and system of appraisal of pedagogic and management staff at IVET institutions.

3. Strengthen the potential of education services providers for professional/qualifications development training to ensure effective improvement of the pedagogical and professional skills of teachers and management personnel.

4. Create mechanisms of cooperation with the business community to improve the level of professionalism of IVET employees (management staff and teachers of vocational disciplines).

5. Strengthen the overall potential of the MLMEP in the field of development and leadership of the IVET sector.

Building block B: Economic situation and state of the labour market

I. Thematic issues

B.1. IVET, economy and the labour market

B.1.1. Labour market situation

In Tajikistan the labour market still has a labour surplus, meaning that the supply of labour is much greater than the demand for it; this is in spite of continued sustainable growth of the economy. From 2016 to 2018, the average annual growth rate of labour resources was 2.1%, with the number of employees increasing by only 0.6%. To speak in quantitative terms, if during this period the quantity of labour resources increased up to 208.5 thousand people, then the number of employed people only increased by 40.7 thousand – the later indicator is more than 5 times lower than the first.[11]

The changes in these indicators during the last 10 statistically available years is shown in Figure B1.

One of the main problems in the labour market, as in employment of the population, is the expansion of the informal sector.

As per the outcomes of the Labour Force Survey (LFS, 2016), informal employment in the total employed population constitutes about 60%, which almost equally involves agrarian (30.6%) and non-agrarian (29.4%) sectors of the economy. In 2018, 60.9% of the total employed population were employed in the agricultural sector. Informal employees not engaged in the agricultural sector were almost equally distributed between the formal (46.6%) and informal (53.4%) sectors of the economy. Hence, based on the LFS 2016 data, beyond the agrarian sector, 116 178 people were informally employed in the country's formal sector. Overall, 75.9% of the informal employees (beyond the agrarian sector) are male, while 64.5% of them reside in rural areas.

Figure B1. Changes in the annual growth rates of GDP, labour resources (LR) and employed people (EP) from 2009 to 2018 (%)
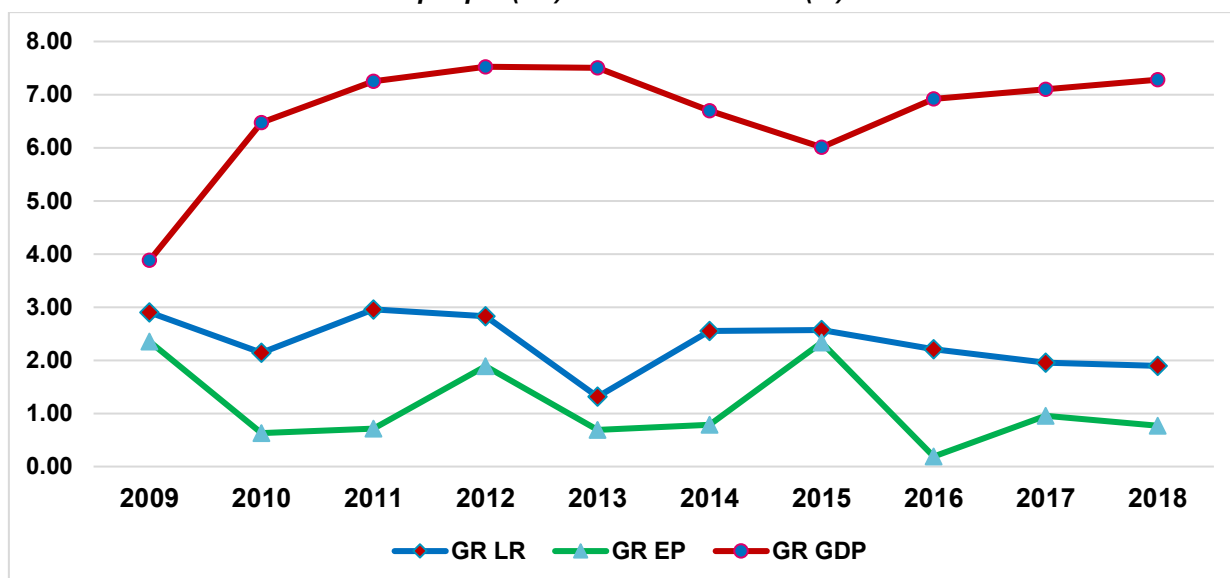
Source: Agency on Statistics, Labour Market in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 2019, p. 294.

Another negative trend observed in this area is a decrease in the share of waged employment in the total number of employed people. Changes in the structure of the status of employed people for 2009 compared with 2016 are shown in Table B1.

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[11] Calculations based on https://www.stat.tj/tj/macroeconomic-indicators and
http://stat.ww.tj/publications/June2019/labor-market-2018.pdf

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Table B1. Structure of the status of the employed population in 2009 and 2016

	Employees	Self-employed	Employers	Assistance for members of household
LFS 2009	52.2%	46.7%	0.4%	0.4%
LFS 2016	34.8%	45.5%	10.7%	8.5%

As can be seen in the data in Table B1, in 2016, the share of waged employment decreased to 34.8% and the share of self-employed (excluding the category 'employers') increased to 54%. This testifies to the beginning of a period of 'depression of the labour market', since self-employment is something happening outside the labour market.

Yet one more problem in the sphere of employment of the population is the large number of unskilled labour. Analysis of the educational structure of those engaged in the country's economy (refer to Table AB1 in the Appendices) demonstrates that 1.8% have no education, 13.8% have general basic education, 57.7% have general secondary education, 3.6% have primary professional/vocational education, 8.2% have secondary professional/vocational education, and 14.8% have Higher Education (HE). Hence, 73.3% of employed people have no professional education.

It has been noted in previous national reports on the Torino Process as well as in most state strategic documents (NSD-2030, p. 30; NSDE-2020) that the low level of qualifications of the workforce (the quality of human capital) and its incompatibility with the labour market and economic demands are key problems for the economy and need to be resolved as soon as possible.

A drop in the share of employed young people aged 19 to 25 is also a conventional problem in the employment sector in Tajikistan. According to the LFS 2016, the share of employed young people has been constantly decreasing, from 43.7% in 2004 to 37.4% in 2009 and to 31.1% in 2016.

One of the main problems is that so many labour market participants are employed in the agricultural sector, which traditionally has low wages. According to official statistics,[12] the agricultural sector in 2017 accounted for 60.9% of all employed people, with the average monthly wage amounting to TJS 451.46, the equivalent of USD 52.8 (see Table AB2 in the Appendices).

At the same time, the service sector is gradually increasing its share of employment. Between the 2009 and 2016 labour force surveys, the service sector share in the total number of people employed in the economy increased by 7 pp, reaching 39% in 2016 (LFS, 2016).

B.1.2. Challenges and opportunities: Inadequacy of vocational/professional skills

The Government of Tajikistan views IVET as one of the most important components of its education system, as it supplies the national economy with a highly qualified workforce and makes a significant contribution to the development of the country's socio-economic life and citizens' prosperity. However, currently, serious problems have accumulated in the IVET system (NSDE-2020). As noted in the previous section, the underdevelopment of the labour force's qualifications and its inadequacy to meet the needs of the labour market and the economy in general are of particular concern. This poses one of the main challenges to the country's vocational education system in general, and to the VET system in particular. The low quality of vocational education and incompatibility of its content and final result with the needs of both the labour market and the economy as a whole are mentioned in all strategic state documents, which look at the development of both education and the economy in general. For instance, it is ascertained in the NSDE-2020 that the development of primary and SVET and the improvement of their quality are inhibited by:

- physically and contextually outdated educational and production bases;
- shortage of modern textbooks, teaching aids and other educational-methodological materials, especially in the official language;
- low level of qualifications of instructors and masters of industrial training;
- inadequate involvement of employers and other social partners in the formation of orders for the training of specialists, technical and service personnel; and
- lack of uniform basic regulatory and educational documents (professional standards, professional curricula and plans) for vocations and specialities.

The NSD-2030 establishes that with 'the low quality and inefficient use of human capital, with the increasing coverage of the population in general secondary education, a shortage of qualified specialists in technical specialties is being observed; there is surplus employment in agriculture, the public sector and other

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[12] Labour market in Tajikistan/Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2018 (p. 2098); [URL: http://stat.ww.tj/publications/June2019/labor-market-2018.pdf]

sectors, while a significant part of qualified workers are forced to look for employment opportunities outside the country.'

B.1.3. Challenges and opportunities: Migration

Research on the impact of migration flows on the employment sector of Tajikistan demonstrates that the main force is represented by External Labour Migration (ELM) to foreign labour and service markets. Conventional migration growth in Tajikistan remains negative: that is, the number of those leaving the country exceeds the number of those arriving in the country. For example, in 2017, this indicator in the context of external migration was -2 738 people, or -0.3 per 1 000 people.[13]

There is a significantly high rate of ELM and it clearly mitigates tension on the internal labour market. According to specialists' estimations, ELM mitigates the tension on the internal labour market by five to six times (Ashurov, 2010). According to the LFS 2016, during the study term, 555.9 thousand members of the country's labour force were abroad, which makes up for 26.5% of the employed labour force within the country (see Table AB3 in the Appendices). According to official statistics, in 2018 these indicators were 484.2 thousand and 20% respectively.

Many studies have shown that ELM provides a higher degree of social security and economic efficiency of labour migration.

B.1.4. Challenges and opportunities: Digital transformation

In the strategic field of the VET system, there is yet to be progress in the upcoming digitalisation of the economy, envisaged in the official concept of e-Government in the Republic of Tajikistan. In addition, in May 2019, the government tasked the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade with developing a State Concept of the Digital Economy,[14] as a result of which, at the end of 2019, the government adopted the Concept of the Digital Economy in the Republic of Tajikistan (Resolution #642 from 30 December 2019). This document covers a 20-year perspective – until 2040 – and divides the actions into three stages: the first until 2025, the second until 2030 and the third until 2040. This concept primarily calls for 'the assessment and development of human capital necessary for digital transformation'.[15] In this context, the first stage calls for 'training highly qualified personnel and management staff for inducing digital projects, as well as creating a system for training qualified personnel both at universities and in enterprises, and for developing digital skills among the general population'.[16] This sets forward a qualitatively new challenge for the country's VET system.

Description of policy measures

B.1.5. Strategic political responses, touching upon education and VET

The NSD-2030 (p. 47) states that 'human capital is an important factor in development of production and the economy, and its quality is closely related to the development of all industries. It ranks first among the long-term factors in the development of the future economy (in comparison with natural resources, real and financial capital). In this regard, the development of human capital has been identified as a priority area for the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan.' This strategic document also states, in particular, that 'Long-term prospects for the development of the education system of the Republic should be based on the following key principles and requirements: all levels of education have to meet quality standards; the quality and scale of vocational education should ensure the competitiveness of the country's economy; there should be a close connection between the education system and the labour market, ensuring a balance of the supply of specialists of different levels with the demands of the labour market; the education system at all levels must contribute to the formation of knowledge and skills necessary for promotion of sustainable development.'

The potential of the VET system to respond to the demands of the economy, the labour market and society depends on four key factors: the regulatory system; the educational and methodological system; the material and technical training; and the staff base.

During the period under review of this report (2016 to 2020), through the joint efforts of the MLMEP and donor organisations (ADB and European Commission), significant positive shifts in the above-mentioned areas have been observed.

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[13] Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2019 / Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2019 (p. 25).

[14] https://tj.sputniknews.ru/country/20190510/1028873779/tajikistan-sozdadut-cifrovaya-ekonomika. html.

[15] Concept of the Digital Economy in the Republic of Tajikistan / Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Decree #642 from 12/30/2019, p. 2.

[16] Ibid, p. 4.

Analysis shows that in the period after the adoption of the State Standard for IVET up until 2017, professional standards for the IVET specialities were not developed. Since 2017, within the framework of the ADB project Strengthening IVET in the Republic of Tajikistan, professional standards (referred to as competence standards) have been set up for 10 specialities of IVET. It should be noted that these standards have been agreed with the respective 119 employer representatives and 833 industry experts in total.[17] In 2019 and 2020, the plan was to develop such standards for another seven IVET specialities. In addition, specialists of the MLMEP in the period 2016 to 2019 developed professional standards for 16 IVET and AE specialities (In-depth Individual Interviews 1 and 2).

As for the material and technical training base of the system, significant improvements have also been achieved. Within the framework of the above-mentioned ADB project in the period 2017–2019, capital repairs of buildings and structures of IVET education institutions were carried out, and training equipment and tools were purchased. It should be noted that such achievements had not been previously observed (In-depth Individual Interview 1 and 2).

In the matter of strengthening the staff base of the system, noticeable positive shifts have also been observed. Within the framework of the European Commission's project, Technical Assistance to the MLMEP in the Field of Advanced Training of Teachers of the System of Primary Vocational Education and Training in 2018, masters of industrial/vocational training underwent an advanced training course in sewing children's school clothes. Nevertheless, one of the main factors hindering the sustainable development of the VET system is the poor quality of knowledge and skills of the Engineering Teaching Staff (ETS) (discussed in more detail later in the file).

The main problem in this direction is the low level of participation of employers in the training process. As noted in the national report on the Torino Process (TRP) in 2014, in 2012 the Parliament adopted the Law on Training Specialists Taking into Account the Needs of the Labour Market, which is designed to regulate the relationship between vocational education institutions and employers' representatives and establish a permanent mechanism for matching the demand for vocational skills with their supply. However, as noted in the previous national TRP report for 2016–2017, the implementation mechanism for this legislative act has not yet been worked out.

Determining the demand for vocational skills and coordinating supply with demand remain key tasks for the development of the VET system in Tajikistan and require speedy resolution.

B.1.6. Role of VET in resolution of the problems through active labour market policy measures

The active labour market policy is implemented through the Agency for Labour and Employment (the State Employment Service) under the MLMEP. Among the key components of this policy is vocational training and retraining, as well as training in entrepreneurial skills, which requires professional development. Traditionally, this process has involved the country's IVET system, including VTLs and AECs of the MLMEP. It needs to be noted that from 2007 to 2013, when the IVET system functioned within the structure of the MES, it was divorced from the active labour market policy. In such a context, conventionally the SVET system, which functions within the MES, is not engaged in the realisation of active labour market policy measures.

Quantitative indicators of this process are shown in Table AB4. The data demonstrates that for 2016 to 2018, an average of about 45 000 people went through short-term vocational training or retraining courses in the IVET system, with the share of women accounting for about one-third.

Another area of active labour market policy is promotion of self-employment of unemployed citizens by means of training them in entrepreneurial skills and providing them with interest-free loans to start their own business. In 2018, a total of 3 961 unemployed people benefited from these measures, with credit resources amounting to TJS 12 243.[18]

B.1.7. Determining skills needs and their impact on VET

One of the established and functioning methods of identifying employers' professional skills requirements is the submission of vacancy details to the Agency for Labour and Employment of the Population by employers. This legislative norm is installed in Article 19 of the Law on Promoting Employment of the Population: 'Employers must submit to the state employment agency information about all vacancies, in accordance with the qualification requirements established in organisations, up to ten days from the day of their appearance, as well as information about the movement of personnel and the actual number of employees.' The procedure for providing such information is established by Decree #205 of 2 April 2009:

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[17] Speech by the Minister of Labour, Migration and Employment of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan at the final meeting of the Ministry (10.01.2019) / MLMEP RT.
[18] Report of activity of MLMEP for 209/ MLMEP RT.

Rules for the provision of information by employers on the availability of vacancies to state employment agencies[19]).

Quantitative indicators of the implementation of this are shown in Tables AB5 and AB6 in the Appendices, wherefrom it follows that:

- in total, only 2.0% of enterprises and organisations in 2018 followed the legislative norm in place, and 76.1% of them were state legal entities, of which only 9.0% belonged to the industrial sector (see Table AB5); and

- in total, only 43.1% of the vacancies presented in 2018 related to blue-collar occupations, a 12 pp increase compared to 2016 (refer to Table AB6 in the Appendices), only 18.1% of which related to the industrial sector.

Despite the low rate of vacancies being announced, the Agency for Labour and Employment of the Population regularly analyses the professional structure of the vacancies presented by employers and provides educational institutions with this information. It needs to be mentioned that it is rarely possible to promptly fill these vacancies from unemployed people registered with the Agency, since they lack the appropriate vocational skills; according to official statistics for 2018, 79.6% of these unemployed people did not have vocational skills. At the same time, the share of unemployed people without VET has been increasing (see Figure B2).

The capacity per vacancy (the ratio of unemployed people to the announced vacancies) in 2018, in comparison with 2016, decreased by 0.5 pp and reached 5.3. In addition, since 2009, the Agency for Labour and Employment of the Population has been organising job fairs with the participation of employers, where some representatives of employers announce their vacancies. IVET institutions also participate in these fairs, advertising their services to employers and citizens. In 2018, 722 such events were organised (refer to Table AB7 in the Appendices).

This mechanism of identifying labour market demand is not sufficiently widespread such that a full-scale picture of the situation is not available in this important sphere.

Figure B2. Change in the percentage of unemployed people without VET, 2015–2018 (%)
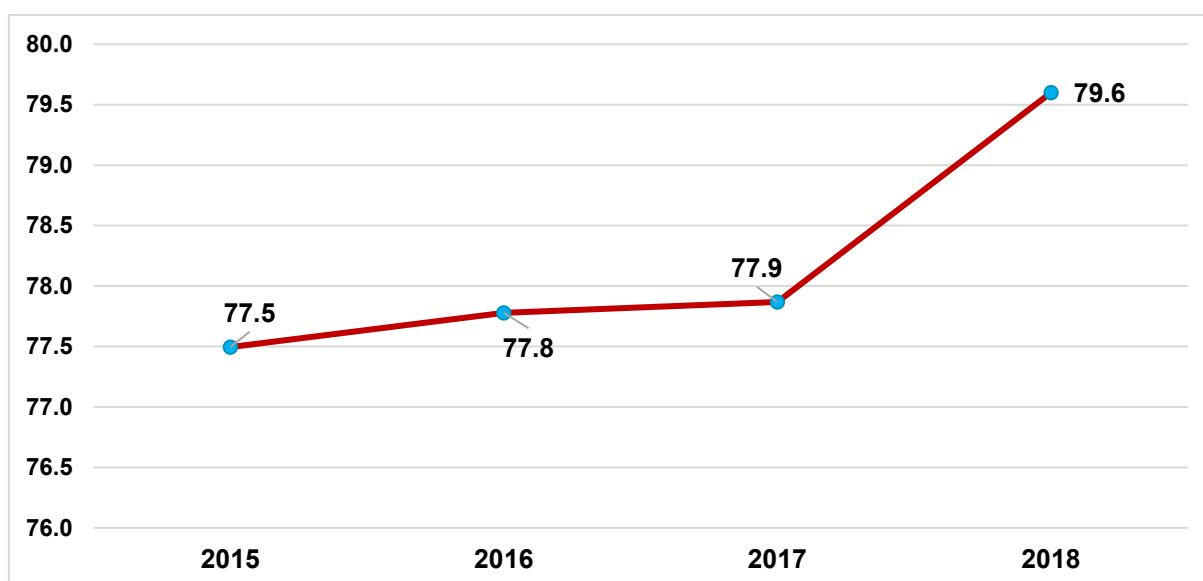
B.1.8. Supporting migrants and refugees by means of VET

As mentioned in section B.1.3, migration growth in Tajikistan has a negative value, and the main force in this is represented by ELM.

As mentioned in section A.3.2, the present trend of the flow of refugees and asylum seekers from Afghanistan does not create a significant context in Tajikistan's socio-economic space. Approximately 4 500 Afghan refugees temporarily residing in Tajikistan are being integrated into society within the

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[19] http://www.adlia.tj/show_doc.fwx?rgn=14486

framework of a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) project. The main part of the project is to help employable refugees undergo vocational training in the MLMEP's AECs (In-depth Individual Interview 3).

As for the outward flow of migrants from Tajikistan, as noted in B.1.3, ELM visibly mitigates the tension of the internal labour market.

In this regard, in the IVET system, special integrated three-component (vocational, cultural/linguistic, and legal) programmes to help prepare potential labour emigrants for the demands of foreign labour markets have been created (In-depth Individual Interview 1; 2). In addition, for official recognition of vocational skills acquired in the process of non-formal education, the government adopted Provision #568 from 5 December 2017 on the Procedure for Recognition (Validation) of Adult Competencies. This procedure mainly applies to ELMs who have acquired certain (quite low level) professional skills in the process of working. For this category of labour resource, for legal employment in the destination countries, there is a need for relevant official documents that confirm their level of qualifications.

B.2. Entrepreneurship

Definition of the problem

B.2.1. Job creation and VET

As mentioned in B.1.1, the share of self-employed, excluding employers, in the total number of employed people in 2016 was 54%. Moreover, the analysis shows (refer to Tables AB1 and AB9 in the Appendices) that the share of those with primary and SVET among employed people is 11.8%, while among ELMs this is 8.3%. Under these conditions, graduates of the IVET system enter the self-employment sector. However, there is no data about the employment status of VET graduates.

Description of policy measures

B.2.2. VET policy measures for entrepreneurship development

Currently, in Tajikistan, there is nopractice of tracking the labour route of the VET graduates.

Taking into account the downward trend in the share of capacity of waged employment (refer to B.1.1), the central government encourages development of self-employment. The NSDE-2020 states that educational programmes in primary and SVET should include components on management and entrepreneurship. Moreover, it is envisaged in this strategic document that there should be 'an updated education system, which, in accordance with modern global trends, is based not on knowledge, but on a competence-based approach, and which should provide the students with the opportunity to master key competencies and social skills, such as responsible decision-making and professional career planning, lifelong learning orientation, communication competencies, vocational training in high demand in the labour market, knowledge and skills necessary for self-employment, healthy lifestyle skills, as well as instill [in the students] the values of civil society.'

In practice, in the IVET system, entrepreneurship skills are taught through two-month specialised courses, Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship, amounting to 256 academic hours. In addition, the short-term vocational training courses include 12 academic hours on the Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship, while the same amount of time is given to this topic for one-year programmes in IVET (vocational lyceums).

The development of entrepreneurship in order to create jobs or promote self-employment also depends on the business climate. In this setting, the NSD-2030 establishes that there is an insufficiently favourable business climate due to excessive and ineffective regulations, corruption, excessive tax burdens, a high level of monopolisation, and limited protection of property rights and the rights of entrepreneurs. Although Tajikistan has made it onto the list of 10 countries with the greatest progress in reforms to support business, a ranking of 106 in the Ease of Doing Business (2019) report shows the lack of development of institutions in support of entrepreneurship. As a consequence, the investment and export potential of products with increased added value is not being utilised to the full. Today, the following conditions are necessary for doing business: creating conditions for the protection and guarantees of property rights and attracting direct investments, and effective management of assets.[20]

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[20] HCP-2030 (стр. 30); [URL: http://kor.tj/doc/NSR-2030_russkij.pdf]

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III. Summary and analytical conclusions

1. Expansion of the informal sector and informal employment in Tajikistan remains one of the main problems in the employment sector. In 2016, this sector made up for 60% of the total employment sector's capacity, which was distributed almost equally between the agricultural (30.6%) and non-agricultural (29.4%) segments. In the non-agricultural sector, informal employment was distributed almost equally between the economy's formal and informal parts.

2. The low-waged agrarian nature of the employment sector in Tajikistan also persists. In 2018, 60.9% of the total employed population worked in the agricultural sector, and the average monthly wage in it was TJS 451.46, equivalent to USD 52.8.

3. The service sector is gradually increasing its share in employment. As per official statistics, this sector made up for 30.3% of the employed population in 2018, which is 1.3 pp higher than 2016.

4. Relatively high demand for unskilled labour in the employment sector of Tajikistan also persists. According to the LFS 2016, 71.1% of the employed population did not have vocational education.

5. A decline in the share of employed people among young people aged 19 to 25 is also a conventional problem in Tajikistan's employment sector. According to the LFS 2016, the share of employed young people is continuously declining: it dropped from 43.7% in 2004 to 37.4% in 2009 and to 31.1% in 2016.

6. The labour market of Tajikistan also retains its labour surplus, expressed in the economy's inability to create demand for the available labour force. This leads to labour emigration. According to the LFS 2016, up to 555.9 thousand members of the country's labour force had emigrated, which makes up for 26.5% of the employed population within the country. According to official statistics, in 2018 these indicators were 484.2 thousand people and 20%, respectively.

7. The large capacity for immigration creates for the IVET system a problem to provide resources for professional and social (cultural, linguistic and legal) training.

8. The low level of qualifications of the labour force and its incompatibility with the labour market and the economy's demands creates one of the main challenges for the entire vocational education system. This challenge to the vocational education system is ascertained in all official strategic and programme documents that concern the development of education and the economy in general.

9. The joint efforts of the MLMEP and donor organisations (ADB and European Commission) have led to significant positive changes in a number of factors impacting the quality of VET. For the period under review, up to 26 vocational standards for specialities in the IVET system were developed; up to 25 masters of industrial training benefited from professional development courses; and funds were allocated for the overhaul and reconstruction of buildings and structures of the IVET system, as well as for the purchase of training equipment and tools. The climate of social partnership between the IVET system and employers has improved. Such cooperation is expressed in the process of agreeing the developed professional standards with employers' representatives. Nonetheless, the level of managerial competences of the management teams of educational institutions remains unchanged.

10. Determining the demand for vocational skills and matching supply with demand remain key objectives of the development of the VET system in Tajikistan and require urgent resolution. The existing mechanism for identifying the labour market demand, expressed in registration of vacancies in employment services, is not widespread enough to draw a full-scale picture of the situation in this important sphere.

11. VET institutions are directly involved in the implementation of active labour market policies to promote employment prospects by means of vocational training and retraining and improvement of entrepreneurial skills. Use of these policies has followed an upward trend; in 2018, 75.2 thousand people went through the IVET's short-term skills development courses.

12. In the strategic field of the VET system, there has so far been no reaction or response to the impending digitalisation of the economy.

13. For the official recognition of vocational skills acquired in the process of non-formal education, the government adopted the Order of Recognition (Validation) of Competences of Adults.

14. Tracer studies for VET graduates have not yet been introduced. Nonetheless, analysis of the impact of some factors shows that the self-employment sphere is one of the main opportunities of employment for VET graduates.

15. In AE, entrepreneurship skills are taught through the implementation of two-month Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship courses. In addition, short-term vocational training courses and those at VTLs include 12 hours of Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship training.

16. Analysis of the base statistics for the VET system shows that diametrically opposed trends are operating in the subsystems of IVET and SVET: the IVET subsystem is oriented towards the manufacturing sector,

and the SVET subsystem is focused on the service sector (education, public health). Due to the economic situation currently in place in the country, the total number of educational institutions and students in the IVET subsystem is decreasing, while the numbers are increasing in SVET; girls prevail in the SVET subsystem (60%), while in IVET, girls account for less (20%). The share of self-funded students in SVET is about 60%, while in the subsystem of IVET it is only about 20%.

Recommendations

1. Start the process of forming a fully fledged mechanism for identifying the labour market demands for vocational skills in VET.

2. Start work on the formation of a mechanism for creation, approval and implementation of professional standards for all specialities and blue-collar occupations at all levels of vocational education. It is necessary to start working on designing and adopting the Law on Qualifications.

3. Strengthen the entrepreneurship component in all VET curricula.

4. Launch pilot tracer studies of VET graduates.

5. Improve the official base statistics of the VET system.

Building block C: Social environment and individual demand for VET

I. Thematic issues

C.1.1. Participation in VET

As noted in section A.2.3, in almost all indicators, the IVET system in 2018 compared to 2016 has followed a downward trend. The same situation is observed in the AE system.

One of the main reasons for this is the low quality of education in the IVET system, which leads to unattractiveness of the sector. However, this trend is also affected by the low level of economic and financial literacy of the system's target audience. IVET participants in general are from poorer backgrounds and have a poor level and quality of base education; in most cases, they are also not able to optimally plan and follow their chosen labour career. This situation is also worsened by the poor level of awareness of the opportunities and prospects for training in professional skills (Focus Group Discussion (FGD) 1).

Another factor that influences accessibility of the VET system is the lack of flexible training technologies and approaches, such as modular training, which allows learning 'piece by piece' for a certain level of qualifications.

Setting up mechanisms for the official recognition of professional skills acquired in the process of non-formal training can also contribute to raising the level of accessibility of VET (see B.1.6 for more detail).

Another factor affecting the availability of VET is the limited capacity of the system to attract people with disabilities.

At the same time, the degree of youth participation in the SVET subsystem has seen an upward trend. The analysis given in section A.2.3 shows that the changes in almost all of the SVET base indicators for the period 2016 to 2018 are positive. This is due to the fact that this subsystem is more oriented towards humanitarian vocations (90% in health care and education), in contrast to IVET, which is directed at engineering, technology and production.

Furthermore, the SVET subsystem has been getting closer to the HE system, with a tendency for SVET institutions to enter the structure of higher education institutions. Also, according to the functioning rules, graduates from secondary vocational schools can be admitted to a higher education institution based on the results of an interview without taking entrance exams (FGD 1).

C.1.2. VET opportunities for vulnerable and marginalised people

As mentioned in the previous section and noted in previous national TRP reports, the IVET system mainly takes in citizens from low-income and socially vulnerable family categories. Orphans and minors without parental care with low levels of base education are conventionally seen as 'clients' of this system. This is evidenced by the fact that it is in the Law on Primary Vocational Education that special attention is paid to individuals from this category. This law devotes a separate chapter – Chapter 4 – to the support of the most vulnerable citizens (people with disabilities, orphans and minors without parental care, and forced migrants).

Description of policy measures

C.1.3. Policy measures for improvement of access to VET

As indicated in section B, the key problem of the VET system of Tajikistan is the poor quality of education, which, in particular, hinders broader access to the system.

If attention is paid to the content of the two leading projects implemented in the IVET system (the Technical Assistance to the MLMEP and the Strengthening of Vocational Education and Training), it becomes clear that they are aimed precisely at improving the quality of education in the IVET system. For example, the ADB project, in particular, has begun the process of altering dormitories to increase the accessibility of the VET system for girls, especially those from remote districts.

In other fields, measures that have an impact on the accessibility of the VET system have not been observed.

C.1.4. Promoting access to VET for vulnerable and marginalised populations

The IVET subsystem tends to focus on vulnerable and marginalised groups. Chapter 4 of the Law on Primary Vocational Education, which is called 'Primary vocational education of persons who are provided with special social security', includes people with disabilities, orphans and minors without parental care and forced migrants in its category of socially vulnerable citizens.

Article 21 establishes that 'the state guarantees orphans, minors left without parental care and forced migrants preferential right to enter the institutions of primary public vocational educational. For the period

of study in public primary vocational educational institutions, the state assumes additional costs for their training and maintenance.'

Article 23 states that 'For the training, education and treatment of adolescents with disabilities in physical development, as well as children with disabilities, specialised educational institutions of primary vocational education will be created. Students of public specialised educational institutions enjoy full support of the state.'

In practice, this chapter of the law gives vulnerable people access to vocational and technical lyceums. Since Soviet times, the only special vocational and technical educational institution for persons with disabilities has been in the city of Dushanbe, which has an educational base for four specialities.

A quantitative analysis of this category of students in the IVET system (refer to Table AC1 in the Appendices) reveals that annually, on average, 1 500 orphans and disabled people study in educational institutions.

C.1.5. Flexibility in providing training to support participation in VET

The analysis demonstrates that annually about 85 000 young people, after completing the GBE (grade 9) and GSE (grade 11), do not fall within the conventional vocational education system. This category of young people, who either could not or did not want to continue their studies, desire to enter the labour market as soon as possible and find employment (Ashurov, 2009). To counter this and to ensure a minimum amount of time spent on acquiring vocational skills, in 2008 the central government came to a decision to create an education system for adults. This system is designed to provide vocational development for workers by means of short-term vocational training courses.

However, in practice, due to the low quality of these courses, they remain in low demand. In addition, the Centre for Modular Training, established in the late 1990s in Dushanbe, has not yet been able to significantly improve the state of modular vocational training.

There are no other observable significant measures to improve the situation with regards to raising the level of accessibility of the IVET system for its potential clients.

C.1.6. Recognition of non-formal and informal training

The national reports of the previous rounds of the TRP (2014 and 2016–2017) identified the need to introduce mechanisms for official recognition of vocational skills acquired in the process of non-formal and informal (spontaneous) training. In this regard, during the reporting period, the first fundamental result was achieved: the government adopted the Procedure for the Recognition (Validation) of Adult Competences.

Gradually, the process of implementing this procedure is qualitatively improving. According to some experts (FGD 1; FGD 2; FGD 3; FGD 4), the content of this document requires further revision: it is necessary to strengthen the position of employers' representatives and to strengthen the methodological and organisational basis for the introduction of the validation process for vocational skills.

As noted above, in practice, this procedure mainly targets ELMs who have acquired a certain level of vocational skills in the process of actual work. This category of the labour force requires relevant official documents, confirming their qualifications, to ensure they can legally work abroad.

A quantitative analysis of the implementation process of this mechanism demonstrates (refer to Table AC2 in the Appendix) that in the two-year period for 2017 and 2018, almost 25 000 people successfully passed the certification of their vocational skills.

C.2. Equity and equal opportunity in VET

C.2.1. Learners' success in VET

As already noted, the main participants in IVET are young people who, after completing GSE (11 grades), do not have the opportunity (whether financial/material or educational or both) to carry on further with their studies (in professional educational institutions) or failed to qualify for higher education institutions or SVET. Therefore, the majority of IVET participants have a weak base level of education.

It also should be noted that the share of students dropping out from school is growing each year: this indicator in 2018 went up by more than 1.5 times (by 3.5 pp) compared to 2015 and made up for 8.8% of the total number of students (refer to Table AC3 in the Appendices). The share of graduates who graduated with honours (with an 'excellent' mark) in 2018 compared to 2017 dropped by 0.06 pp and accounts for 2.11% of the total number of IVET graduates (refer to Table AC4 in the Appendices).

In the SVET subsystem, the situation differs slightly as the base knowledge of students is comparatively higher than those in the IVET subsystem.

C.2.2. VET students requiring additional learning support

It follows from the data in Table AC1 in the Appendices that in the period 2015–2018, on average, 6.4% of the IVET students are orphans and minors without parental care, while 15% of these (0.9% of the total number of students) are students with disabilities. Orphans and minors without parental care often need a place of residence, and students with a disability often need suitable facilities and access; both of these elements require additional financial and human resources. The VET system is also short of experience for organising training for students with disabilities.

No other practice related to material and educational support for socially vulnerable students has been observed.

Description of policy measures

C.2.3. Measures aimed at the promotion of equity in VET

No legislative or regulatory act of the state violates the principle of equality/equity in the VET system. In addition, as noted above, for vulnerable people, a series of benefits for admission to IVET institutions and social support measures are legally established. Any other educational measures are not currently observed. It should be noted that for a more viable implementation of the measures established to support vulnerable students, the IVET system is hindered by the limited financial and organisational capabilities (FGD 1; FGD 2; FGD 3; FGD 4).

C.2.4. Inclusive education and VET

Inclusive education is one of the priorities for the development of the education system at all levels. In NSDE-2020, the 'introduction of inclusive education' is included in the main strategic tasks for the further development of education. Moreover, the following are envisaged:

-   training of teachers, health workers and social workers with knowledge and skills in inclusive education; and
-   establishment of social, pedagogical and economic models and teaching and educational technologies for inclusive education.

During the period under review, a significant and positive shift in this direction has been observed. This takes place within the framework of the Promoting Social Change and Inclusive Education project, implemented by the Representative Office of DVV International in the Republic of Tajikistan with financial support from the EU and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. This project aims to promote social development and give young people with disabilities the right to education and a decent profession. This project is being introduced in three pilot regions of the Republic.

The framework of the implementation of this project currently addresses the following:

-   The needs of young people with disabilities in the field of vocational training have been investigated.
-   A list of professions/vocations most in demand in local labour markets and suitable for young people with disabilities depending on the type of disability (limited movement, limited vision, limited hearing and learning difficulties) has been drawn up.
-   A list of the requirements for material, technical and personnel training at AECs in pilot districts has been drawn up for the selected specialities.
-   Material-technical and educational-methodological bases of training in three local AECs have been created.
-   The process of training young people with disabilities in relevant vocations has started.

C.3. Actively supporting employment

Definition of the problem

C.3.1. Employability of VET graduates

The VET system in Tajikistan, in practice, as in other stages of the professional education system, has not yet introduced tracer studies for graduates.

Nonetheless, the results of the LFS 2016 demonstrate that the employment rate of those with IVET is the highest (63.3%) in comparison with other levels of education (excluding those with specialist and master's degrees, which is 64.5%). The employment rate of those with IVET within the labour force is also the highest. The participation level of persons with IVET in the labour force is also high (66.1%) compared to other levels of education (except for HE, at 69.2%). According to these indicators, the SVET subsystem has the worst indicators compared with other levels of vocational education (refer to Table C1 and also AC5 in the Appendices).

Table C1. Some indicators on the employment sphere by education levels in 2016 (%)

	HE*	HE**	SVET	IVET	GSE	GBE
Labour force participation rate	69.5	68.0	60.3	66.1	42.0	27.8
Employment rate	64.5	62.3	57.3	63.3	38.8	26.1
Labour force employment rate	92.8	91.5	95.0	95.7	92.5	93.6
Migration rate	6.8	6.2	9.5	11.8	13.7	6.1

Source: LFS 2016

* Persons with specialist and master's level education; ** Persons with bachelor's level education bachelor

C.3.2. Economic factors influencing the school-to-work transition

Notwithstanding with the presence of positive tendencies among graduates of the IVET system in comparison with graduates of other levels of education, the 36.7% unemployment rate among IVET graduates is an alarming signal (see Table C1). This is partly a consequence of the labour surplus in the economy described in section B.1.1. It also links to the high level of ELM of IVET graduates (11.8%) compared to graduates of other levels of professional education.

Another factor for this high unemployment rate for IVET graduates is the low quality of education in this system which leads to mismatches between supply of vocational skills with labour market demands.

Other factors (socio-demographic and cultural) affecting the employment of young people in Tajikistan were identified in a study conducted in 2017 with the support of the University of Bamberg (Germany) (Ashurov, 2018).

Description of policy measures

C.3.3. Review of policy measures to support employment opportunities and transition to employment

The key factor affecting the employment process and minimising the school-to-work transition time is the quality of education. Therefore, a set of measures to improve the quality of education is fundamental in the sphere of supporting employment opportunities and transition to employment for IVET graduates.

Another important measure in this area is the development of a regulatory framework (refer to section B.1.6) and the start of its implementation to validate the professional skills acquired in the process of non-formal and informal education.

No significant changes have been observed in other possible areas of action to support employment opportunities and the transition to employment of VET graduates.

C.3.4. Career guidance

A key part of effective vocational development and convergence of the education system to the needs of the labour market is an efficient career guidance system. The responsible state governing body in this sphere is the MLMEP, including the Republican Centre for Vocational Guidance. As shown in Table AC6 in the Appendices, on average up to 26 500 registered unemployed people made use of these services each year in the period under review.

The need to reform the activities of public agencies responsible for career guidance was mentioned in the 2016–2017 national TRP report. However, no significant change in this sphere has been observed so far. The work carried out has traditionally been ineffective (FGD 1).

III. Summary and analytical conclusions

1. Poor quality of education, low level of economic and financial literacy of the IVET target audience, low level of awareness about the opportunities and prospects of training in vocational skills, lack of flexible training technologies, and restricted possibilities of the system to attract people with disabilities gradually reduce the capacity of the system to attract potential consumers.

2. Citizens from low-income and socially vulnerable categories account for the main IVET participants. This is evidenced by the fact that the Law on Primary Vocational Education pays special attention to people from this category (this is not observed in other laws on vocational education).

3. State policy to increase accessibility of the VET system is mainly directed at improving the quality of education. These efforts are mainly implemented within the framework of the ADB and EU projects,

accomplished jointly with the MLMEP. In other measures that affect access to the VET system, none significantly change the existing situation.

4. The VET system is the main education stream accessible to vulnerable and marginalised people. Special social security is enshrined in law for people with disabilities, orphans and minors without parental care, and forced migrants.

5. Presently, some mechanisms that could widen accessibility to VET, such as a set of short-term vocational training courses in the AE system and the development and implementation of modular training methods (the Centre for Modular Training is functioning in Dushanbe), are ineffective because of the poor quality of the short-term courses; tight financial, organisational and human resources; and absence of perception of the importance of modular training methods on the part of the VET management team.

6. The first fundamental result was achieved in relation to official recognition (certification) of vocational skills acquired in the process of non-formal and informal training with the introduction of the Procedure for Recognition (Validation) of Adult Competences. The early phases of its implementation are underway. There is still a lot of work to be done, in particular on improving the quality of this procedure.

7. The majority of VET participants have a poor level of basic education and 6% to 7% come from vulnerable backgrounds. It is these students who need educational and material support. In practice, orphans are primarily provided with housing and people with disabilities usually given financial support. There are no other material and educational support measures for vulnerable students.

8. Inclusive education is one of the priorities in the development of the education system at all levels. A significant and positive change in this direction within the AE system is being observed. Within the framework of the EU project Promoting Social Change and Inclusive Education implemented by the Representative Office of DVV International in the Republic of Tajikistan, the needs of young people with disabilities in the field of vocational training were studied; a list of professions that are most in demand in local labour markets and suitable for young people with disabilities depending on the type of disability has been drawn up, and a list of material, technical and personnel training requirements of AECs in pilot districts has been compiled.

9. There is currently no graduate tracer system. Nonetheless, the results of the LFS 2016 show that the employment rate of those with a IVET is highest (63.3%) compared to other education systems (except for people with specialist and master's degrees, at 64.5%). The employment rate of persons with IVET in the labour force is also the highest compared with other types/stages of education.

10. The fact that there was a 36.7% unemployment rate among VET graduates in 2016 is alarming. This is a consequence of the labour surplus in the economy. This is linked to the fact that ELM of IVET graduates is highest (11.8%) in comparison with graduates of other stages of vocational education (HE at 6.7%, SVET at 9.5%). One more factor that generates this large share of IVET graduates being unemployed is the poor quality of education in this system.

11. Two internationally supported projects (by the EU and ADB) are fundamental to supporting employment prospects and the school-to-work transition of VET graduates by improving the quality of education in the IVET subsystem. Another important measure in this area is the development of a regulatory framework and its implementation to validate the professional skills acquired in the process of non-formal and informal education.

12. Although it is important to conduct career guidance for young people and jobseekers in the effective professional development of labour resources and align the education system closer to the labour market demands, the work carried out has to date proven ineffective. The career guidance system needs urgent reform.

Recommendations

1. Enact radical changes to the existing concept of career guidance for students of general education schools and young people in general.

2. Create a set of measures to widen the opportunities and desires of VET institutions to attract young people with disabilities.

3. Upgrade the functioning mechanism for validating competences acquired in the process of non-formal education.

4. Work out and approve a list of vocations most suitable for young people with disabilities, with due consideration for specific disabilities.

5. Upgrade the functioning mechanism of employment for the most vulnerable citizens in relation to VET graduates.

Building Block D: Internal efficiency and performance of the VET system

I. Thematic issues

D.1. Teaching and learning environment

Definition of the problem

D.1.1. Teaching and learning methods, including on-the-job training

Article 18 of the Law on Primary Vocational Education establishes that 'while performing their professional duties, engineering and pedagogical staff have the right to the freedom of choice in the use of teaching methods, upgrading, teaching aids, materials, textbooks and methods for appraisal of students' knowledge.' The same norm is established in Article 19 of the Law on Primary Vocational Education for the subsystem of vocational education.

Analysis demonstrates that methods of teaching and learning in the VET system remain conventional: theoretical lessons are conducted in the form of lectures, and practical lessons in the form of instruction (briefing) and practical exercises are conducted in workshops. Significant advancement in this sector has not been observed, although in recent times some teachers who have received training from international organisations are beginning to use modern teaching methods, such as interactive methods and computer technologies (FGD 1; FGD 2; FGD 3).

Practical training in professional disciplines is generally conducted in workshops located in the educational institutions themselves. On-the-job learning is just beginning to be used by some IVET institutions that have managed to establish beneficial business relationships with employers (FGD 1; FGD 3). At the political level, the issue of transition to on-the-job learning has not yet been considered.

The introduction of modern advanced teaching technologies depends, in particular, on the level of competence of the ETS, and on the provision of methodological support.

D.1.2. Teaching and learning environment

Taking into consideration the dominance of outdated physical infrastructure, which is one of the main factors in the formation of the learning environment, the MLMEP has begun the process of overhauling and reconstructing buildings and structures of VET schools within the framework of the ADB Strengthening Vocational Education and Training project, which was launched in 2017. The second priority area of this project, entitled 'Improving the Physical Conditions in Selected IVET Institutions', has begun the process of modernisation of the physical and training facilities for 28 selected IVET institutions. Moreover, within the framework of this project, the process of supplying modern educational equipment necessary for the implementation and maintenance of the proposed competency-based curriculum has begun.

One of the indicators determining the state of affairs in the teaching environment is the structure of teachers' workloads. The analysis demonstrates that a teacher's working week consists of 41 hours, of which 20 hours (48.8%) are spent in classes (workshops), while the rest of this time is devoted to class preparation, exchange of experience with other teachers, and comprehension of the educational process (In-depth Individual Interview 1).

Another factor that impacts the teaching and learning environment is the student/teacher ratio. Analysis of this indicator for the IVET subsystem demonstrates that it has been declining from year to year: from 2015 to 2018, this indicator dropped from 9.8 to 8.5. The same downward trend is observed in the SVET subsystem; however, this indicator is on average 2.7 times higher than for the IVET subsystem (refer to table AD1 in the Appendices and Figure D1).

Figure D1. Student/teacher ratio in the IVET and SVET systems, 2015–2018
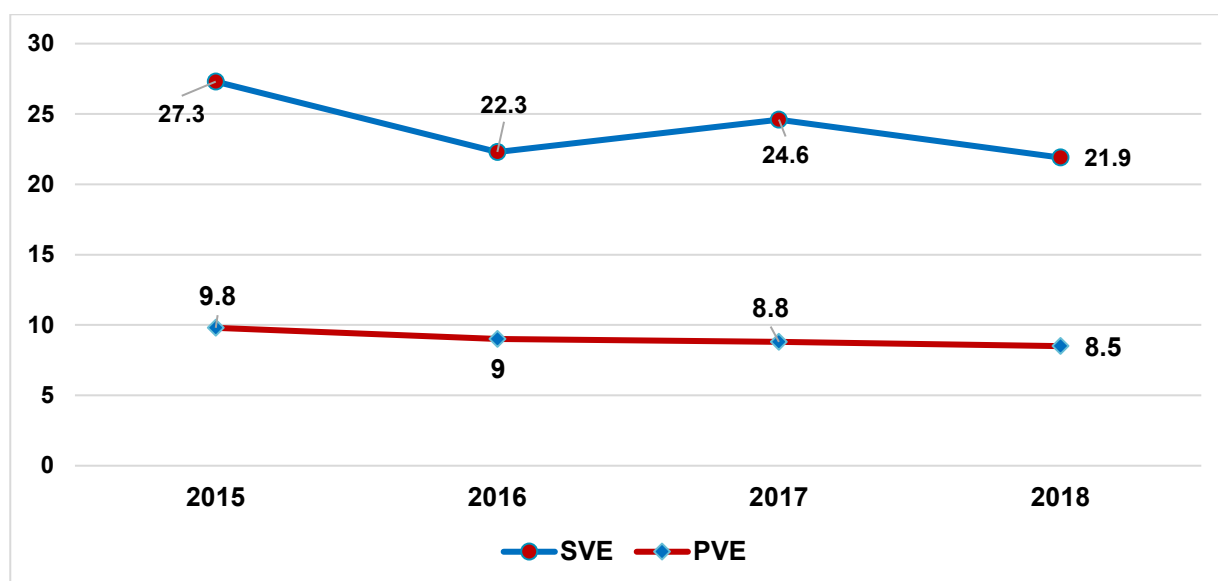
The poor level of qualifications of teachers, insufficient educational and methodological literature, and a lack of training equipment are adding to the decline in the quality of the IVET system's teaching and learning environment.[21]

The average salary in the IVET system also plays a significant role in the state of affairs in the teaching and learning environment: the average salary in the IVET system for 2014 to 2017 is one-third (34%) less than in the overall education system (refer to Table AD2 in the Appendices).

Description of policy measures

D.1.3. Policy measures for improvement of learning and teaching methods in VET

The current policy for the improvement of learning and teaching methods in VET is covered in two donor projects (ADB and EU) aimed at improvement of the educational methodology of the system and mechanisms for improvement of the quality of its ETS in the IVET subsystem.

D.1.4. Improvement of learning and training environment

As mentioned in section A.3.5, the process of modernising the physical and educational material base has been launched in 29 selected IVET institutions within the framework of the ADB Strengthening Vocational Education and Training project.

The process of strengthening the potential of the staff members at the Dushanbe Engineering and Pedagogical College and modernisation of its material and technical base has also been launched. Likewise, a number of measures have been implemented to increase the capacity of the Training and Methodological Centre and monitor the quality of education in the establishment of standards of competences, curricula and materials.

In addition, the MLMEP is working towards new mechanisms for determining staff salaries with due consideration for their level of education. In other areas of improvement in the teaching conditions, no significant progress has been observed.

D.2. Teachers and trainers

Definition of the problem

D.2.1. Teaching and trainers in the VET system

In accordance with Article 17 of the Law on Initial Vocational Education, engineering and pedagogical employees of the IVET institutions include administration staff, teachers, senior masters, masters (instructors) of industrial training, educators, methodologists and other staff who carry out educational

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[21] State Programme of Reforming and Development of Primary and Secondary Vocational Education of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2012–2020.

processes. Engineering and pedagogical activities in IVET institutions can be undertaken by those with appropriate secondary or HE, with required technical skills and qualifications in the speciality, as well as those with relevant working experience and suitable soft skills. The state guarantees, at least once every five years, provision of free advanced training for ETS at IVET institutions. The same norms are established for SVET teaching staff in the Law on Secondary Vocational Education. The policy in the field of education of VET teachers and their professional development in the country has not undergone significant changes and remains outdated.

As shown in Table AD3, 11.7% of teachers and 7.6% of masters of vocational training do not have vocational education. Moreover, about a third of teachers and industrial training masters have not been formally categorised as having a particular level of skill; they are assigned predetermined levels of expertise (higher, first, second) as they gain experience.

Research (TRP 2016–2017) and official strategic documents (NSDE-2020) have established that the poor level of professionalism of the IVET system's ETS is one of the key factors impeding the improvement of the system's quality.

Figure D2. Share of full-time teachers in the SVET subsystem, 2015–2018 (%)
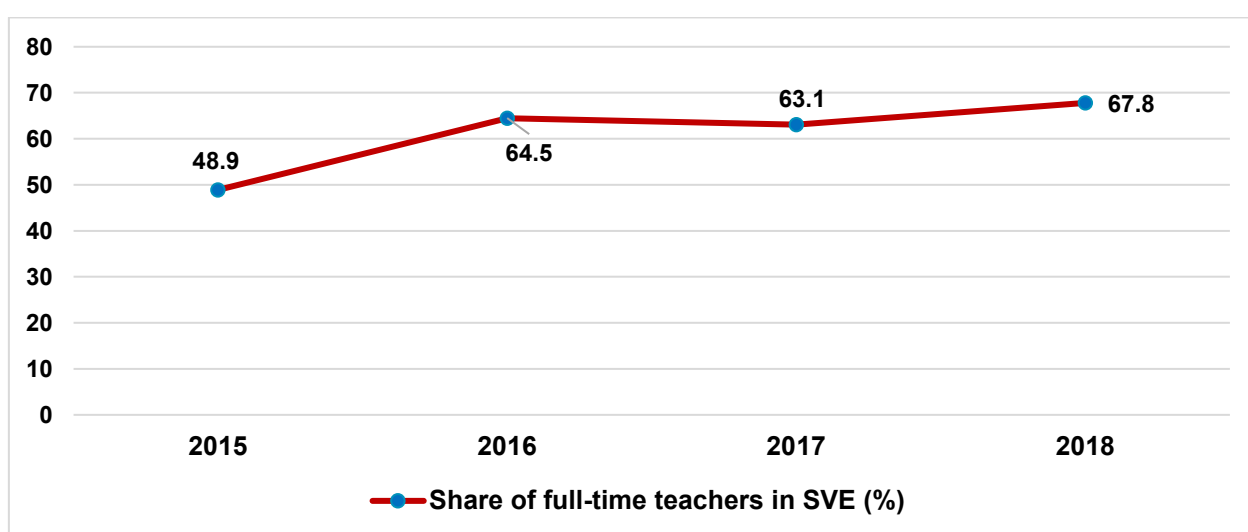
Source: Statistical collection of sphere of education of the Republic of Tajikistan, part 2 / MES of the Republic of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 2020.

This poor level of professional quality of the ETS is a consequence, in particular, of the low wages. The formula 'low level of wages ⇒ low level of potential ⇒ low level of incentive to work' applies well in this case.

The situation in the context of SVET is a bit different. For example, for the 2018/19 academic year, out of 4 260 full-time teachers, 122 (1.9%) had a PhD or Candidate of Science level qualification, 3 332 (78.2%) had completed higher education, and 835 (19.6%) had completed secondary and primary professional education. The share of full-time teachers in the SVET subsystem has been on an upward trajectory (see Figure D2).

Another factor impacting the professional quality of IVET teachers is the inefficiency of the system of professional development.[22]

D.2.2. Entering the teaching profession in the VET system

Presently, the minimum qualification requirements for the position of a teacher or master of industrial training in a IVET institution is not singly established. These categories of employees are conventionally appointed and dismissed based on the director of the educational institution's decision in accordance with the requirements of the Labour Code of the Republic of Tajikistan.

The programme of introductory instruction for young teachers or industrial training masters has not been introduced; however, there is a practice of mentoring young ETS who do not perform efficiently enough.

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[22] Torino Process 2016–2017, Tajikistan.

D.2.3. Employment status of VET teachers

In accordance with the Labour Code, all employees in the VET system are waged. In addition to permanent employees, the teachers and masters of industrial training outside the educational institution, who are called part-timers and are also considered employees, can be involved in the education process. Permanent employees, as a rule, can be recruited on a contract basis. Employees of public educational institutions (including the director) are not government employees, but employees of a government agency.

D.2.4. Qualifications of teachers and trainers in VET

As noted above, no list of minimum qualification requirements for teachers or masters of industrial training in a IVET institution currently exists. At present, there is also no qualification framework or systems of appraisal of the professional quality of the teaching and management team of IVET institutions.

The 2013 Law on Education, 2003 Law on Primary Vocational Education, and 2015 Law on Secondary Vocational Education determine the rights and obligations of employees of the VET system in relation to the improvement of qualifications. At the same time, the state guarantees each employee advanced training courses every five years, and the employees are required to improve their level of knowledge, outlook, vocational mastery and skills. However, as shown in the TRP 2016–2017, under the current mechanism of organisation of training courses, this state guarantee is not fully utilised; in other words, not all VET employees pass through such courses once every five years. Moreover, it was revealed that the quality of such courses is expected to improve. It was also established that no other mechanism of improvement of qualifications exists, which would allow the employees, if necessary, to independently and regularly organise their professional development.

Description of policy measures

D.2.5. Attracting and retaining teachers and trainers in the VET system

The main factor in attracting and retaining teachers and trainers is salary increases. The MLMEP has not yet been able to alter the situation tangibly, as seen in the comparatively low wages (even for the education sphere) of VET employees.

According to the MLMEP statistics as of 1 September 2019, there is a 9.8% shortfall of teachers of vocational disciplines, with a 19.5% shortfall for masters of industrial training. Among the major factors hindering the attraction of highly skilled specialists to the VET system is the low wages (refer to Table AD2). Nonetheless, in the respective legislation, this indicator is compensated for by setting up a special social status for teachers. For example, Article 53 of the Law on Education provides for a number of privileged benefits, such as retirement after 25 years of work in the education system and housing in rural areas.

To improve the quality of the mechanism of CPD, purposeful work has begun within the framework of the European Commission's project Technical Assistance to the MLMEP in the Field of Advanced Training of Teachers of the System of Primary Vocational Education and Training.

D.2.6. Management, motivation and support for professional development

In line with the IVET and SVET laws, it is established that 'the state guarantees, at least once every five years, free advanced training of engineering and teaching staff of educational institutions of primary vocational education.' However, this mechanism is not fully or effectively functioning due to the restricted financial and human resources of the VET system.

Article 17 of the Law on IVET establishes that in order to improve engineering and pedagogical activities, staff should be selected, recruited and placed in suitable positions; staff should also show motivation for professional growth and a willingness to improve the quality and efficiency of work. The same regulation is also established in the law on SVET, though in reality, the existing mechanism is carried out mainly pro forma and plays no significant role in motivating the ETS to complete their own professional development. This is likely because of the lack of ETS and their low wages.

Thus, in the sphere of state policy regarding managing the professional development of teachers and motivating and supporting their participation in professional development, no significant changes have been observed.

D.2.7. Ensuring the quality of VET teacher training

As noted above, currently there is no qualifications framework or system for assessing the professional quality of teaching and management personnel of VET institutions. The only mechanism for monitoring and assessing the professionalism is the certification of ETS, which is carried out every five years. However, this mechanism is also ineffective.[23]

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[23] TRP 2016-2017, Tajikistan

D.3. Quality and quality assurance

Definition of the problem

D.3.1. Quality and relevance of VET content

Analysis clearly shows that the legislative and regulatory acts adopted in the field of vocational education in Tajikistan do not present a vivid definition of the notions of quality and quality assurance, or potential systems of quality assurance and tools for improving the quality of education. The regulatory acts related to quality assurance are scattered across various juridical documents, containing multiple overlaps and repetitions of procedures and criteria. They not only miss out on a clear definition of the goal/objective and role of quality assurance in the system, but they also lack a definition of functions assigned to the quality assurance system or the agencies responsible for its implementation at the levels of system, institution and programme. Instead, existing legal documents are used as official control tools, but not as tools for quality upgrade (Ashurov, 2016).

Nonetheless, with the adoption of the NSDE-2020, a more tangible advancement in the political perception of the problem of the quality of vocational education in the country is being observed. In this sectoral strategy paper, the following are assumed:

- The content of vocational education will be reviewed in accordance with the current and planned demands of the economy and the requirements of the labour market, society and families.
- A new generation of professional standards will be introduced at all levels of vocational education. Working them out will take place with the direct participation of employers.
- The concept of a new generation of professional standards envisages the transition to competence-based results and modular organisation of educational programmes at all levels.

In accordance with the Educational Standards (ES) of IVET,[24] the content of education in the context of a specific speciality is reflected in the Main Vocational Education Programme (MVEP) for this speciality, which is worked out on the basis of the professional standard. Currently, the professional standards developed in the 1990s function but are outdated from the standpoint of their compliance with the demands of the labour market and the economy as a whole. A new generation of standards for IVET specialities are just beginning to be worked out (III 1; FGD 1; FGD 2; FGD 3).

Consequently, currently, the content of education in the IVET system is mostly outdated and fails to conform to the demands of the country's economy. This situation is characteristic of other levels of vocational education (Ashurov, 2016).

It needs to be noted that at present, there is no mechanism for the inclusion of IVET students or their representatives in the process of determining the content of education.

Moreover, the current situation in the area of describing, systematising and structuring qualifications fails to correspond to the goals and objectives of national strategic documents. The situation is characterised by a lack of statistics, and a lack of structure and system for the adopted qualifications.

D.3.2. Determining the quality of learning outcomes

It should be noted, however, that the legislation of Tajikistan strives to provide quality vocational education, mainly by means of establishing ES and ensuring the fulfilment of these standards through licensing, official certification and accreditation.

Article 1 of the Law on Education establishes the following:

- quality of education – a set of indicators of official (state) educational standards and official (state) requirements/demands;
- official (state) educational standards – a set of norms reflecting the content of education, the meaning and timing of training, the volume of learning workload, the level of knowledge to be mastered by students, the basic demands for ensuring the learning process, the content of curricula, and appraisal of the level of knowledge in educational institutions.

The VET system's ES entrust the function of determining the content of education in the context of a specific speciality to the professional standards of these specialities themselves.

Consequently, the development of professional standards for each speciality of VET, only takes into account the present and short-term needs of the economy. Also the approval and subsequent introduction, of quality education new content matching economy's demands is too slow.

As for professional standards, an educational institution can work these out based on a concrete speciality. This happens in SVET and HE as most experts are concentrated in these two systems of vocational

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[24] http://mtm-mst.tj/files/--------_rt1xt2iv.pdf

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education. As for the IVET system, this function is entrusted to the Educational and Methodological Centre and Monitoring the Quality of Education under the MLMEP.

The MLMEP approves the professional standards for the IVET specialities. According to the procedure established in the ES, on the basis of these professional standards, each educational institution develops a IVET Programme for each speciality. The same procedure functions within the framework of the SVET subsystem, with the sole difference that the role of the MLMEP is played by the MES.

However, the following problems exist with this approach.

First of all, employers do not show any interest in working out professional standards and do not participate in the process. Although recently there has appeared to be evidence of coordinating the professional standards with representatives of employers, this 'process of agreement' actually passed over pro forma, since the agreement requires considerable effort on the part of the employers' representatives (who inspect the professional standards) but they are not paid by anyone so do not invest much time or energy in the process. In addition, the employer may not have a specialist qualified enough to know all the qualifications required in the relevant industry or profession.

Second, in the educational institutions or in the institutions responsible for working out the professional standards, it is clear that there cannot be enough specialists who perfectly know the economy's demands for a particular vocation. For example, in the list of IVET professions (approved together with the ES of IVET), there are 163 specialities, while in the Training and Methodological Centre and Monitoring the Quality of Training of the MLMEP, only 3 to 5 people are involved in the process of working out the standards. It should be mentioned that during the Soviet Union period, almost all vocational (qualification) standards were worked out centrally and passed down to Tajikistan for implementation. This means there was no experience/expertise or structure for working out professional standards within the country's education system.

Third, at the initial stage of approval of the professional standards, educational institutions need staff who are capable of qualitatively developing the MVEP available. However, not all IVET institutions have such resources.

Fourth, high-quality MVEP, as the main end product of the professional standards, requires appropriate educational, methodological, material, technical and staff bases and these are not currently in place.

D.3.3. Quality control processes in VET

The current system for appraisal of the quality of education, consisting mainly of licensing, attestation and accreditation to ensure compliance and conformity of a number of indicators with minimum standards, overburdens the system but brings about an insignificant increase in quality. The external quality assurance system in Tajikistan is, at present, a chain of three sequential steps: licensing, attestation and accreditation. All links in this chain rely on identical standards and more or less on uniform procedures and performers, burdening educational institutions while not contributing to the improvement and modernisation of the system. These appraisal tools do not attach importance to functions such as quality upgrade, professional certification of graduates and information provision, which are necessary for effective implementation and functioning of a quality assurance system (Ashurov, 2016).

These appraisal tools do not instill confidence in VET consumers, including employers, but also in wider society, insofar as the quality of services provided remains low, with little potential for elaboration and improvement.

Regarding the results of this appraisal, apart from the recognition by the government by means of the official quality appraisal agencies, there is no professional recognition by employers. The employers are in possession of no information and, accordingly, are not able to trust the existing tools for quality appraisal insofar as the performance of university graduates does not conform to the expected requirements.

Official (State) Standards for Quality Management, passed in 2013 by Decree #497, in essence are quantitative and, accordingly, control-oriented, and are the main guiding documents in the field of quality assurance in education, but they do not encourage educational institutions to improve their results (World Bank, 2014).

Description of policy measures

D.3.4. Working out and renewing of educational content of VET

The key position in the process of working out and updating the content of education is mainly held by educational institutions, which generally do not have the appropriate human capacity and resources to attract external experts. A similar situation is observed in the context of the Educational and Methodological Centre and the MLMEP's monitoring of the quality of training.

It should be mentioned that none of the tools for working out and renewal of the professional standards envisages the full engagement of the main stakeholder – employers – in these procedures.

Nonetheless, certain positive shifts are occurring, as a result of the introduction of project initiatives by international organisations (ADB and EU – see section A.3.5). As already noted in section B.1.5, within the framework of the ADB project, professional standards (referred to as competence standards) have been worked out for 10 IVET specialities. In addition, the MLMEP's Training and Methodological Centre and Monitoring the Quality of Education have worked out professional standards for 16 IVET and AE specialities in the period 2016 to 2019.

D.3.5. Key EU competences

All key EU competences, such as literacy, language skills, mathematics, natural sciences, engineering, digital competences, personal, social and educational competences, civic responsibility, entrepreneurship, and grasping of cultural values, are reflected in the curricula at all levels of education in Tajikistan. The process for students to attain EU competences is provided in the curricula of all levels of education. VET curricula pay special attention to the formation of engineering and entrepreneurship competences.

D.3.6. Policy measures for improvement of quality control

It is stated in the NSD-2030 that the imbalance of the educational services and labour market and the poor quality of education and skills of the labour force, as mentioned in section A.2.4, are among a range of factors obstructing the country's efficient socio-economic development. Related to this, the NSD-2030 envisages improvement of the quality at all levels of education; provision of a tight connection between the education system and the labour market, conducive to balancing the supply of different specialists with the labour market demands; developing the system of engineering and technical education; working out programmes and mechanisms for appraisal of specialists' competences (national system of mapping competences); provision of relationship between professional knowledge and practical skills by means of formation of educational and qualification standards in various specialities with the engagement of enterprises and organisations; realisation of a training system working with large enterprises; and establishment of industrial training sites.

Currently, on the basis of these guidelines and priorities, the National Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Tajikistan is being designed for the period until 2030. Relying on this strategic document, the MLMEP plans to design a National Action Plan to reform the IVET system by 2030.

High-quality practical introduction of the foreseen and envisaged measures, which require massive financial and human resources, would obviously improve the situation with the provision of quality education in the VET system.

II. Open discussion

D.4. Role of VET management team in improving quality

D.4.1. Challenges and opportunities: Poor quality of management team capacity

Analysis demonstrates that along with other factors (refer to section B.1.2) affecting the quality of VET, the quality of managerial skills and abilities of the management team play key roles in the quality of education (FGD 1). This problem was revealed, in particular, in the process of implementing the GIZ project, Support to the Reform of the IVET System in Tajikistan (2009–2015).

D.4.2. Measures in VET policy for development of managerial capacity

None of the official (state) strategic or programme documents discuss the poor quality of the capacity of the managerial teams at IVET institutions. Nonetheless, problems are commented on in the NSD-2030, and although they relate to public administration, indirectly they touch on these problems too. For example, 'The level of capacity, competency and quality of administrative processes at the local level lags significantly behind the national one' (NSD-2030, p. 32).

As already mentioned, the problem of the poor quality of the management team capacity was revealed in recent years during the process of implementing the GIZ project Strengthening the VET System in Tajikistan and, for that matter, the training module 'Managing the VET System' was designed with an eye on strengthening the managerial capacity of the management team of IVET institutions. Training on this module was organised only once in 2015. Within the framework of this project, on 26 November 2015, a conference was convened in Dushanbe: Management in vocational education and training: Challenges and Prospects.

This problem is still awaiting resolution.

ETF Working together Learning for life

III. Summary and analytical conclusions

1. Despite the fact that the law provides for the teachers and teaching employees to freely choose and use teaching methods, teaching aids, materials, textbooks and methods of appraisal of students' knowledge, the teaching and learning methods in the VET system remain conventional: theoretical classes are conducted in the form of lectures, and practical lessons in the form of instruction and practical exercises are conducted in workshops. No significant progress has been observed in this direction. This situation evidences the poor level of staff and methodological support of the VET system's educational process.

2. The teaching and learning environments are affected by such factors as the physical condition of the buildings, structures and the material and technical training base, the workload of teachers, the student/teacher ratio, the security of educational materials and the salaries of the ETS.

3. Taking into consideration the outdated physical infrastructure as one of the major factors in the setting of the learning environment, the MLMEP, within the framework of the ADB Strengthening Vocational Education and Training project, began the process of overhauling and reconstructing IVET buildings and structures, as well as supplying modern training equipment required for introduction and maintenance of the proposed competency-based curriculum. The dynamics of the workload and student/teacher ratio actually contribute to the improvement of the teaching and learning environment. However, the low IVET wages and the limited provision of educational and methodological materials in the VET system prevent the situation from further improving.

4. The desire to refine training, teaching and learning methods in IVET is covered in the policy of two donor projects (ADB and EU) aimed at refinement of the educational methodology of the system and mechanisms for upgrading the quality of ETS. A corresponding development has not been observed in SVET.

5. Teaching activities in VET institutions can be engaged in by those with appropriate secondary or HE, suitable professional skills and qualifications in the speciality, practical vocational training, as well as those with relevant industrial experience and suitable personal qualities. However, up to 11.7% of teachers and 7.6% of industrial training masters in the IVET subsystem lack professional education. On top of that, about a third of teaching staff and industrial training masters have not been formally assessed as having a particular level of skill. A relatively positive trend can be seen in the SVET subsystem, for example with an increase in the share of full-time teachers.

6. Lots of research has established that the poor level of professionalism of professors and teaching staff and ETS of the IVET system is one of the key factors preventing improvements in quality. The low level of professional quality is an outcome of, in particular, the low wages. Another factor is the inefficacy of the system of professional development.

7. All staff members of VET institutions are employees. Permanent employees, as a rule, can be recruited on a contract basis. Employees of public educational institutions are not civil servants, but they are employees of a state institution.

8. The main factor in attracting and retaining teachers and industrial training masters is an increase in wages. The MLMEP has not yet been able to significantly change the situation characterised by the relatively low wages of VET employees.

9. The existing mechanism for professional development and attestation of the teaching staff is carried out mainly pro forma and does not play a significant role in stimulating the ETS in their professional development. In the sphere of public policy related to management, motivation and support for professional development of ETS and professors and teaching staff, no significant changes have been observed.

10. The legislation strives to ensure the quality of vocational education, mainly by means of establishing ES and ensuring the implementation of these standards through licensing, state attestation and accreditation.

11. In accordance with the educational standards for IVET, the content of education in the context of a specific speciality is reflected in the general educational programme, which is worked out on the basis of professional standards. At the present time, professional standards established in the 1990s are being used, but they are outdated in terms of their conformity with the demands of the labour market and the economy as a whole. A new generation of professional standards for VET specialities are just starting to be developed.

12. The present situation in the description, systematisation and structuring of qualifications does not match the goals and objectives of the national strategic documents. It is characterised by the lack of statistics, structure and systematisation of the adopted qualifications.

13. The function of working out the professional standards for the IVET specialities rests with the Methodological Centre for Quality Assurance of IVET, functioning under the MLMEP; in SVET, the responsibility rests with the educational institutions themselves. Professional standards for IVET specialities

are approved by the MLMEP, while for the SVET system they are approved by the MES. Further, according to the procedure established in the ES, on the basis of these professional standards, each educational institution works out an MVEP in a particular speciality and introduces it through the educational process.

14. Employers do not express any interest in working on the professional standards and do not participate in their development. Although the practice of coordinating the already worked out professional standards with representatives of employers has appeared recently, this 'approval process' takes place pro forma only, as it requires considerable effort on the part of the employers' representatives and no one pays for it. Also, in the educational institutions or in the institutions responsible for working out the professional standards, it is clear that there cannot be enough specialists who perfectly know the economy's demands for a particular vocation. There are 163 specialities in the IVET list but there are only 3 to 5 employees working on this. The same situation is observed in the SVET system.

15. At the initial stage of implementation of the professional standards (in the process of working out the MVEP), educational institutions require personnel capable of qualitatively developing MVEP. In addition, the high-quality realisation of MVEP, as the main process of implementation of professional standards, requires the availability of appropriate educational, methodological, material, technical and human resource bases in an educational institution. However, not all of the VET system's educational institutions are in possession of such staff and training opportunities.

16. The current system for appraisal of the quality of education in the VET system, consisting mainly of licensing, attestation and accreditation of educational institutions to ensure a number of indicators meet minimum standards, overloads the system and brings about insignificant improvements in quality. These appraisal tools do not attach importance to functions such as quality upgrade, professional certification of graduates and the provision of information necessary for the effective introduction and operation of a quality assurance system.

17. The VET system does not have the necessary human resources to create quality professional standards. None of the tools to create and renew the professional standards suggest the full engagement of the main stakeholder, the employers, in these procedures.

18. To improve and refine the quality of education at all levels, in particular in the IVET system, the NSD-2030 envisages improving the quality of education; provision of close connection between the education system and the labour market; developing the system of engineering and technical education; developing programmes and mechanisms for appraisal of the competences of specialists; ensuring the relationship of vocational knowledge and practical skills by means of educational and qualification standards for specialities of various profiles, with the aim of attracting support from enterprises and organisations; the realisation of a training system working with large enterprises; and the establishment of industrial training sites.

19. The main factors for the poor quality of VET remain the same: the low quality of the educational, methodological, material and technical, and human resources bases of the system. Moreover, at present, three more factors have been revealed that affect the quality: the levels of regulatory (normative) support of the system, social partnerships in the system, and the management capacity.

Recommendations

1. Change the existing concept of the ETS professional development system, which needs to be transferred in the direction of CPD.

2. Update the physical state of educational buildings and structures, and upgrade the technological condition of technology and equipment.

3. Create a mechanism for staff provision for the top management of the VET system.

4. Expand the scope of modular training technology in the IVET system.

5. Qualitatively upgrade the wage structure for the ETS, with due consideration for the possibilities of the VET institutions raising their own funds.

6. Establish a mechanism for structuring and systematisation of qualifications for the approved professional standards.

Building block E: VET governance and financing

I. Thematic areas

E.1. Institutional mechanisms

Definition of the problem

E.1.1. Efficiency of institutional and management mechanisms

In the period under consideration in this report, the system of institutional and management mechanisms have not undergone significant changes. In the process of formation and implementation of the IVET and SVET policy, the following actors are involved: the MLMEP is the agency of state administration of the system; the MES supervises the activities of the system; the Ministry of Finance finances the activities; and the Ministry of Economy forms the state order for personnel training. Industrial sectoral ministries are engaged in this process only when placing an order for staff training through the Ministry of Economy. At the same time, the MLMEP and the MES have the right to establish inter-sectoral (inter-ministerial) Task Forces to deal with specific issues. Currently, the extent of coordination of the activities of these structures fails to correspond to the strategic objectives of reforming the IVET and SVET systems.

The AE subsystem is included in the structure of the Agency for Labour and Employment of the Population of the MLMEP, while the subsystem of IVET is directly accountable to the Department of VET of the Office of the MLMEP. Similarly, the SVET subsystem is accountable to the SVET Department of the Office of the MES.

In accordance with the country's current legislation, the VET system is administered only by central government authorities. Local government agencies do not participate in this process. This is because the properties of the institutions are on the central state balance sheet and the system is financed from the state budget. Taking into consideration that many local authorities are subsidised by the central authorities, this central management mechanism is optimal for the system.

VET establishments are independent (autonomous) in making staff-related decisions (with the exception of appointing the management team). Educational institutions have the right to design the curricula for certain (possibly new) specialities; however, they need approval from the authorised body of the ministry, which controls compliance with certain norms of the ES and the identity of the curricula. In the distribution and allocation of financial budgetary resources, the extent of autonomy of the VET institutions is rather low. As for the educational institutions' own funds, which are the result of industrial activities and the rendering of charged (paid) services, the institutions are independent to a certain extent.

E.1.2. Responsibility, management and control

Local executive authorities are officially involved only in ratifying the appointment of the heads of VET institutions: for PVE, the MLMEP decides on the candidate and for SVET the MES decides, with the local authority giving its final consent.

Consequently, each educational institution regularly submits reports directly to the central authoritative body: VTLs submit reports to the MLMEP (to the Department of IVET), AECs to the MLMEP, and professional colleges to the MES (to the Department of SVE). VET institutions fulfil the assignments of other interested ministries through the respective ministries (MLMEP for IVET and MES for SVET).

In the academic sphere, VET institutions are accountable to the MES. The authority of this ministry includes, in particular, issuing licences for educational activities in specific specialities and conducting attestations and accreditation of an educational institution on the subject of conformity of their activities with the established norms of the ES for VET.

Notwithstanding the educational institutions having the right to initiate the designing and implementation of new programmes and activities, this generally follows a 'top-down' approach. This is a consequence of the poor calibre of the staff (especially management) base of the system's educational institutions.

Description of policy measures

E.1.3. Reform of the management system

Currently, no significant measures undertaken to reform the management system have been observed.

E.2. Participation of non-state actors

Definition of the problem

E.2.1. Distribution of responsibilities between state and non-state actors in VET

In accordance with the relevant legislation of the country, non-state actors (social partners, employers, civil society, teaching staff and students of VET institutions) have the right to participate in the management of the institutions. On the practical level, this participation is only ever ad hoc. No clear mechanism for the participation of non-state actors in the formation of VET policy is in place. In 2012, at the initiative of the deputies of the country's parliament, the Law on Training Specialists Taking into Account the Needs of the Labour Market was adopted, which calls for the formation of a regulatory and legal basis for cooperation between the spheres of education and the labour market in the process of training staff. However, at the time of writing, this law does not work, because the mechanism for stimulating the employers in this process has not yet been designed. In this regard, there is no clear distribution of functions and responsibilities between state and non-state actors in the formation and implementation of VET.

There is currently no policy to actively support partnerships for vocational skills development at the local level. However, through the efforts of VET institutions, community representatives, *jamoats* (local self-governing bodies) and employers are involved in the management of some of the schools.

As for the other participants in the VET system (students, their parents, ETS), the mechanisms for their participation in the management of the system are clearly described in legislative and regulatory acts.

Description of policy measures

E.2.2. Policy to support the participation of non-state actors

Public–private partnerships are conventionally accomplished within the framework of a tripartite agreement between the government, the Federation of Trade Unions and the Union of Employers. However, this agreement does not regulate partnerships in the field of VET, though in reality, this mechanism can be used in the formation of public–private partnerships in the area of VET as well.

Qualitative improvement of the situation in supporting the participation of non-state actors demands a huge effort. The MLMEP and the Union of Employers of Tajikistan should play a key role in this area. Research demonstrates that both parties have shown an interest in this issue.

E.3. VET budget

Definition of the problem

E.3.1. Cost planning, VET budget forming and budget management

The budget of the VET system within the framework of public expenditure is formed by the Ministry of Finance in conjunction with the relevant ministries (MLMEP for IVET and MES for SVET). In addition to the public (state) source of financing, as already noted, institutions can also have their own funds, raised, for example, through industrial activities such as renting arable land, pasture, machinery and equipment, and the provision of paid-for services. As noted in the national TRP 2016–2017 report, employers' participation in financing the system in recent years has been fragmentary at the educational institution level. Thus, the budgetary load at this stage is mainly distributed between the state budget and the budget of the system itself.

Distribution of the budget is conventionally accomplished by the responsible ministry based on the budget proposals of each educational institution within the allocated funds. The spending of an institution's own funds is approved by relevant ministries at the suggestion of each educational institution within the framework of the earned funds.

The same funding mechanism operates for AECs, with the only difference that the ministry function in this case is performed by the MLMEP.

Analysis demonstrates that the majority of the budgetary funds is directed towards maintenance of the current system. Strategic tasks receive only a tiny part of the funds, making it difficult to achieve significant change.

Description of policy measures

E.3.2. Measures to improve cost planning and budgeting processes in the VET system

In the period under review, no measures to improve cost planning and budgeting processes in the VET system have been observed.

E.4. Mobilising resources for VET

Definition of the problem

E.4.1. Funding sources and mechanisms for VET

The VET system, its upkeep and development are financed from three sources: the state budget; the system's own funds, which are formed through the industrial activities of educational institutions and the provision of paid-for services; and donor and other funds from international organisations. Funds from the state budget are mainly directed to the maintenance of the system, including wages, utilities and the purchase of small goods; the system's own funds are used to maintain and develop the material and technical base of educational institutions; and funds from international organisations are mainly used to implement reform measures.

The funding formation mechanism works as follows. The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy prepare and present the MLMEP with quantitative budget indicators (amount of funds) for the upcoming year for the ministry as a whole and broken down for sectors. The supervising ministry can introduce adjustments and present them to the Ministry of Finance for approval. The final version of the budget of the respective ministries (the MLMEP for IVET and the MES for SVE), upon approval by the government, is approved by parliament.

The process of budget expenditure is controlled by the responsible state agencies.

Description of policy measures

E.4.2. Diversifying and mobilising funding for VET

In the period under review, no measures to diversify and mobilise funding for the VET system have been observed.

E.5. Distribution/allocation and use of resources in VET

Definition of the problem

E.5.1. Resource allocation models

The model for distribution of resources is as per E.4.1. Further distribution of state budget funds among the educational institutions and the system's other structural organisations is carried out by the supervising ministries, and it is submitted to the Ministry of Finance for approval. Furthermore, the Ministry of Finance directly processes the financing of educational institutions.

Distribution of educational institutions' own funds is carried out by the supervising ministries on the basis of the propositions of the educational institutions themselves, and after approval by these ministries presented for review to the Ministry of Finance.

For the period under review, no significant changes have been observed in the resource distribution model.

Description of policy measures

E.5.2. Policy measures to provide adequate resources for VET and their equitable distribution

A shortage of funds for the full functioning of the VET system is ascertained in many official strategic documents. For instance, in the NSDE-2020, 'lack of financial resources' is identified as one of the main threats to implementation of the strategy. The main portion of budgetary funds is allocated to the current maintenance of the system. This leaves only a small amount for strategic tasks, which results in the impact of these tasks being insignificant.

In general, for the period under review, no significant changes have been observed in the state policy to ensure an adequate volume of resources for VET and their equitable distribution.

II. Open discussion

E.6. Formation of fully fledged social partnerships in VET

E.6.1. Specific challenges: Low level of social partnerships

It is well known that descriptions of qualifications in the form of professional standards and their conformity with the labour market demands play a key role in ensuring the quality of vocational education.

It should be noted that none of the tools for designing, updating or introducing the professional standards and the appraisal of their results involves the full involvement of the main stakeholder – employers – in these procedures. Employers demonstrate mistrust for these assessment tools. They do not have information and, accordingly, cannot trust the existing tools, since the qualifications of university graduates do not meet the expected requirements (World Bank, 2014).

Accusations are often made against employers that they do not show due interest in cooperation with vocational education institutions. However, as the results of the World Bank study (2014) reveal, up to 34.2% of surveyed employers state that their business suffers from a lack of qualified staff. This is a promising area for collaboration between the VET system and employers.

We end up with a vicious circle here: employers do not want to collaborate with the VET system because of its poor quality of education, and in the VET system the quality of education is low because of the unwillingness of employers to collaborate with it.

In this context, in order to break free from this vicious circle, in 2012, the Law on Training Specialists Taking into Account the Demands of the Labour Market was adopted, which was designed to set up the legal, financial and organisational bases of partnership between the state and the private sector in the process of training specialists with due consideration for the labour market demands. However, so far this law does not work and mechanisms for implementation of the provisions of this law have not been set in motion.

E.6.2. Policy measures: Recommendations for refining the level of social partnerships

There have been certain positive shifts in the process of engaging stakeholders, especially employers, in the process and appraisal of qualifications, which have happened as a result of the implementation of project initiatives of international organisations. However, it must be noted that the participation of employers in these processes (description and appraisal of qualifications) requires certain financial and human resources but the question remains about who should cover the cost.

The situation at hand calls for early state intervention. In this context, a two-way approach is required.

First, it is necessary to set up an inter-sectoral Task Force (with the participation of interested and responsible state executive authorities, the Union of Employers of Tajikistan, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Tajikistan, and interested international donor organisations) to work out legislative and regulatory frameworks for the formation and development of a fully fledged social partnership between employers' representatives and the VET system. This complex approach functions at the macro level, and the MLMEP can initiate it.

Second, it is crucial to come up with a platform for initiating social partnerships at the micro level: between a specific educational institution and a specific enterprise or several enterprises in a specific administrative unit (district, city or region). For this, the relevant ministries (MLMEP and MES) should identify a point of contact – a speciality (one or several) of a vocational profession – that the labour market demands most in the target area. Then the relevant education base (methodological, material, technical and staff) should be strengthened using state funds. Next, the respective ministries (MLMEP and MES) comprehensively support the process initiated by the educational institution's social partnership with representatives of local enterprises. Such 'experiments' can be conducted, whenever possible, in several localities. The respective educational institutions can be given the status of 'experiment-supporting stations' for the development of social partnerships. The establishment of such stations is envisaged in the framework of the National Action Plan for reforming the IVET system for the period 2006 to 2020 (Decree #227 from 3 June 2006).

III. Summary and analytical conclusions

1. In accordance with the functioning legislation of the country, the VET system is currently governed only by the central government authorities. Local government bodies do not participate in this process. Therefore, the system is funded from the state budget. Considering that many local authorities are subsidised, such a central mechanism is optimal for the system.

2. VET establishments are independent (autonomous) in making staff-related decisions (with the exception of decisions about the management team). Educational institutions have the right to design the curricula for certain specialities; however, they need approval from the authorised body of the ministry, which controls compliance with certain norms of the official (state) standard and the identity of the curricula. In the distribution and allocation of financial resources, the extent of autonomy of the VET institutions is rather limited. As for spending the educational institutions' own funds, which are formed as a result of industrial activities and the rendering of charged (paid-for) services, educational institutions are independent to a certain extent.

3. VET institutions are subordinate in the educational sphere to the MES. The powers of this ministry include, in particular, issuing licences for educational activities in specific specialities and carrying out

attestation and accreditation of an educational institution on the subject of conformity of their activities with the established norms of the ES of IVET.

4. Notwithstanding the educational institutions having the right to initiate the designing and implementation of new programmes and activities, this usually follows a top-down approach. This is a consequence of the poor calibre of the staff (especially management).

5. In accordance with the relevant legislation of the country, non-state actors (social partners, employers, civil society, teaching staff and students) have the right to participate in the management of educational institutions. In practice, this participation takes place ad hoc. No clear mechanism for the participation of non-state actors in the formation of VET policy is in place.

6. The Law on Training Specialists Taking into Account the Needs of the Labour Market, which calls for formation of a regulatory and legal basis for cooperation between the spheres of education and the labour market in the process of training staff, still does not work because the mechanism to involve employers in this process has not yet been designed. In addition, there is no clear distribution of functions and responsibilities between state and non-state actors in the formation and implementation of VET.

7. Public–private partnerships are conventionally accomplished within the framework of a tripartite agreement between the government, the Federation of Trade Unions and the Union of Employers. However, this agreement does not regulate partnerships in the field of VET, although this mechanism could be used in the formation of public–private partnerships in VET as well.

8. The VET system budget within the framework of public expenditure is formed by the Ministry of Finance in conjunction with the relevant ministries (MLMEP for IVET and MES for SVE). In addition to the public (state) financing of the system, institutions can also raise their own funds through industrial activities and the provision of paid-for services. The employers' participation in financing the system in recent years has been fragmentary at the educational institution level.

9. The VET system, its upkeep and development are financed from three sources: the state budget; the system's own funds; and donor and other funds from international organisations. Funds from the state budget and from institutions' own funds are used in the maintenance and development of the material and technical base of educational institutions, while the funds from international organisations are mainly used to implement reform measures.

10. Lack of funds for the full functioning of the VET system is indicated in many official strategic documents. The majority of the budget is directed to the current maintenance of the system. A tiny portion of finance remains for strategic tasks, which affects the process only marginally.

11. At present, there is a vicious circle in the space of social partnerships: employers do not want to collaborate with the VET system because of its poor quality of education, and the quality of VET is low because of the unwillingness of employers to collaborate with it. To improve the situation, it becomes crucial to establish a fully fledged social partnership between representatives of employers and the VET system at the macro level. At the same time, at the micro level, it is necessary to establish 'experiment-supporting stations' of best practice.

Recommendations

1. Create a mechanism to implement the Law on Training Specialists Taking into Account the Needs of the Labour Market.

2. The MLMEP should initiate support for the functioning of the Inter-sectoral Coordination Council for VET under the Deputy Prime Minister (established within the framework of the GIZ project).

3. Increase the level of autonomy for educational institutions using their own funds.

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IN-DEPTH INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGD)

Interview 1: A.N. Mirzozoda, Dushanbe, 17 September 2019.

Interview 2: R. Gulshani.

Interview 3: N.V. Yurmatova, Project Manager UNHCR / NGO 'RCVC'.

Focus Group Discussion 1, Dushanbe, 3 August 2019.

Focus Group Discussion 2, Bokhtar city, 10 August 2019.

Focus Group Discussion 3, Khujand city, 17 August 2019.

Focus Group Discussion 4, Khorog city, 24 August 2019.

APPENDIX

Appendix to Section A.

Table AA1. Growth of real GDP in Tajikistan, 2014–2018

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Growth of real GDP	6.7	6.0	6.9	7.1	7.3

Source: National Bank of Tajikistan, Banking Statistical Bulletin No. 08 (289), 2019: http://nbt.tj/tj/statistics/statistical_bulletin.php.

Table AA2. Sectoral structure of GDP in Tajikistan, 2014–2018 (million TJS)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
GDP	45 605	48 401	54 471	61 093	68 844
GDP per capita	5 498.8	5 662.7	6 230.8	6 883.8	7 597.4
Agricultural sector	10 717	10 600	11 275	12 890	12 873
Industry, including Energy	5 472	6 195	8 225	10 385	11 910
Construction	4 560	5 711	6 100	5 681	6 677
Services	12 585	14 712	16 449	18 752	22 646
Taxes	6 247	5 953	6 155	6 598	7 297

Source: National Bank of Tajikistan, Banking Statistical Bulletin No. 08 (289), 2019: http://nbt.tj/tj/statistics/statistical_bulletin.php

Table AA3. Sectoral structure of employment in Tajikistan, 2014–2018 (on average per year, thousand people)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total number of working people	2 325.4	2 379.7	2 385.3	2 407	2 426
Total number of employees	1 083.5	1 097.6	1 102	1 147.7	-
In the real sector	1 682.6	1 704	1 694.8	1 685.3	1 698.6
In the agricultural sector	1 524.4	1 545.6	1 538.9	1 466.4	1 478.0
In industry and energetics	96.3	91.9	88.7	117.3	118.2
Mining industry and quarrying	*10.6*	*12.5*	*11.4*	*12.6*	*12.7*
Manufacturing industry	*65.6*	*60.1*	*59.5*	*86.7*	*87.4*
Electricity, gas and water supply	*20.1*	*19.3*	*17.8*	*18.0*	*18.1*
In construction sector	61.9	66.5	67.1	101.6	102.4
In service sector	642.8	675.7	690.5	721.7	727.4

Source: Agency on Statistics, Labour Market in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 2018: http://stat.ww.tj/publications/June2019/labour-market-2018.pdf]

Table AA4. Indicators regarding students in Tajikistan's VET system, 2014–2018

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of education institutions	62	61	62	62	61
Number of students	21 743	23 550	23 143	23 936	22 903
Including girls	4 895	5 042	4 419	4 908	5 075
Number of self-funded students	1 652	2 024	2 829	2 610	3 122
Number of accepted applicants	14 368	14 980	16 237	15 399	15 266
Including girls	3 454	3 170	4 116	3 831	3 604
Total number of graduates	8 893	9 577	14 334	16 436	13 000
Including girls	2 303	2 631	3 424	3 159	3 191
In the workplace	4 639	3 908	8 063	7 373	3 942
in the agricultural sector	1 156	1 187	2 820	2 579	1 445
in industry	1 985	1 214	1 925	1 760	577
in construction	180	293	580	530	301
in the service sector	1 318	1 214	2 738	2 504	1 619
Not in the workplace	4 254	5 669	6 271	5 736	9 058
in connection with admission to vocational training education institution	759	1 521	1 329	1 215	3 447
in connection with conscription	325	318	574	525	531
free employment	3 170	3 830	4 368	3 996	2 104

Source: Agency on Statistics, Labour Market in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 2019.

Table AA5. Indicators regarding teaching staff in Tajikistan's VET system, 2015–2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of teachers	1 365	1 476	1 623	1 643
Including women	521	592	688	681
Number of masters of industrial training	1 043	1 096	1 108	1 054
Including women	247	283	300	276
Number of students per member of staff (teachers and trainers)	9.8	9.0	8.8	8.5

Source: MLMEP statistics.

Table AA6. SVET indicators in Tajikistan, 2014–2018

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of education institutions	60	65	66	66	72
Number of students	59 356	68 325	73 333	80 432	85 579
Including girls	35 129	40 361	43 372	49 696	54 621
Number of students in general basic education (9 grades)	11 864	12 733	14 607	18 329	17 813
Number of students in general secondary education (11 grades)	47 492	55 592	58 726	62 103	67 766
Budget	32 354	34 393	32 946	31 194	30 501
Contractual	27 002	33 932	40 387	49 238	55 078
Day learning	44 521	52 817	56 937	61 048	67 695

Distance learning	13 100	13 971	14 768	17 591	15 195
Evening learning	1 735	1 537	1 628	1 793	2 689
Total number of graduates	11 792	11 740	12 093	12 660	17 179
Including girls	6 882	6 892	7 437	8 677	10 960
Graduated by speciality:					
socio-economic sphere	10 806	10 750	10 407	11 966	15 512
including health care	*6 999*	*6 745*	*6 374*	*6 661*	*9 980*
education	*2 916*	*2 845*	*2 346*	*2 280*	*3 670*
industrial sector	696	645	694	348	478
construction sector	80	85	107	184	229
agricultural sphere	144	85	73	62	72
service sphere	0	82	72	69	168

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, Statistical Collection of the Education Sector of the Republic of Tajikistan, part 2, Dushanbe, 2020.

Table AA7. Total population and labour resources for Tajikistan, 2014–2018 (on average per year, thousand people)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total population	8 352	8 551.2	8 742.8	8 931.2	9 126.6
Labour resources	4 983	5 111	5 224	5 326	5 432.5

Source: Agency on Statistics, Labour Market in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 2019.

Table AA8. Number of VET teachers in Tajikistan, 2014–2018

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of teachers	4 500	5 119	5 091	5 188	5 775
Including women	2 019	2 289	2 153	2 182	2 494
Number of students per teacher	24.0	27.3	22.3	24.6	21.9

Source: MES statistics.

Appendix to Section B.

Table AB1. Distribution of employed people by education level in 2016

Level of education	Number of people	%
Postgraduate	1 718	0.06
Higher professional/vocational education	392 594	14.81
Secondary professional/vocational education	216 853	8.18
Primary professional/vocational education	96 759	3.65
General secondary education (11 grades)	1 529 210	57.70
General basic education (9 grades)	365 100	13.78
No education	48 102	1.81
Total	2 650 336	100.00

Source: LFS 2016

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Table AB2. Average monthly wages in the entire economy and the agricultural sector of Tajikistan, 2014 to 2017

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Average monthly wage (TJS)	816.3	878.9	962.2	1 144.2
Average monthly wage in the agricultural sector (TJS)	251.33	278.18	303.04	451.46
Average monthly wage in the agricultural sector (in USD)	50.9	45.1	38.7	52.8

Source: Agency on Statistics, Labour Market in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 2019.

Table AB3. Distribution of the labour force by status in the labour market of Tajikistan in 2016

	Migrants	Employed	Unemployed
Dushanbe	3 807	178 294	23 114
Sughd	205 959	760 936	45 590
Khatlon	197 286	750 100	30 322
Districts under central government jurisdiction	141 162	350 729	36 121
Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast	5 654	56 411	20 611
Total	553 868	2 096 470	155 758

Source: LFS 2016

Table AB4. Numbers attending short-term vocational training courses or retraining in the IVET system, 2014–2018 (number of people)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Vocational lyceums	5 694	5 771	9 715	12 562	9 846
including women	*1 178*	*1 262*	*2 236*	*5 319*	*2 938*
Centres for adult education	43 373	35 631	35 785	33 992	32 341
including women	*10 593*	*9 620*	*9 304*	*9 858*	*10 026*

Source: MLMEP

Table AB5. Quantity and sectoral structure of vacancies announced by enterprises and organisations, 2014–2018

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total number of enterprises and organisations	42 206	42 358	42 347	42 031	43 252
Number of enterprises and organisations that announced vacancies in the employment services	808	714	690	795	852
public (state)	551	560	516	608	648
non-state	257	154	174	187	204
industry	98	66	70	75	77
agriculture (rural economy)	35	36	33	44	32
transport and communication	32	20	19	23	24
construction	85	20	23	25	20
service sphere	643	592	568	653	699

Source: Agency on Statistics, Labour Market in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 2019.

Table AB6. Number and sectoral structure of enterprises' requirements for workers, 2014–2018

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Requirement of enterprises for workers announced in the employment services	10 335	7 275	9 224	7 998	8 982
by working specialities	5 187	3 184	2 870	3 496	3 873
by employees' positions (by job titles)	5 151	4 091	6 364	4 502	5 109
in industrial sector	2 197	1 713	1 094	1 362	1 622

Source: Agency on Statistics, Labour Market in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 2019.

Table AB7. Number of job fairs organised by the Agency for Labour and Employment, 2016–2018

	2016	2017	2018
Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast	51	51	52
Sughd Oblast	259	260	266
Khatlon Oblast	276	284	280
Dushanbe city	24	24	24
Districts under central government jurisdiction	92	101	100
Total	702	720	722

Source: Agency for MLMEP

Table AB8. Number of unemployed people registered with the employment services by education level, 2014–2018 (thousand people)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of unemployed people	55.5	51.1	53.1	49.7	47.5
By education level:					
higher professional/vocational	4.2	4.1	3.7	3.5	3.4
primary and secondary professional/vocational	8.0	7.4	8.1	7.5	6.3
general secondary	8.8	8.7	8.1	7.9	6.8
general basic	34.5	30.9	33.2	30.8	31.0

Source: Agency on Statistics, Labour Market in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 2019.

Table AB9. Distribution of labour emigrants by education level in 2016

Level of education	Number of people	%
Postgraduate	315	0.06
Higher professional	37 213	6.72
Secondary professional education	30 788	5.56
Primary professional education	15 237	2.75
General secondary education (11 grades)	397 989	71.86
General basic education (9 grades)	68 932	12.45
No education	3 393	0.61
Total	553 867	100.00

Source: LFS 2016

Table AB10. Number of people who applied to employment services for employment, 2014–2018

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of people who applied to employment services	72 409	72 521	77 349	79 619	92 631

Source: Agency on Statistics, Labour Market in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 2019.

Appendix to Section C.

Table AC1. Number of vulnerable students in IVET institutions, 2015–2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Orphans and minors without parental care	1 124	1 273	1 584	1 159
People with disabilities	165	245	243	233
	1 289	1 518	1 827	1 392

Source: MLMEP

Table AC2. Number of people who successfully validated their professional skills in the adult education system, 2017 and 2018

	2017	2018
Number of those who successfully passed the skills validation procedure	12 001	12 846

Source: MLMEP

Table AC3. Number of graduates drop from studies in the IVET system, 2015–2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of students	23 550	23 143	23 936	22 903
Number expelled from studies	1 256	1 256	2 009	2 018
Share of expelled from studies (%)	5.3	5.4	8.4	8.8

Table AC4. Number of graduates who completed their IVET studies with honours, 2017 and 2018

	2017	2018
Number of graduates	16 436	13 000
Number of graduates who completed the studies with honours	356	274
Share of excellent students among graduates (%)	2.17	2.11

Source: MLMEP

Table AC5. Some indicators on the employment sphere by education levels in 2016

	HE*	HE**	SVET	IVET	GSE	GBE	IVET***
Size of population (15–75 years old)	441 639	113 114	324 931	128 748	2 912 934	1 136 651	252 037
Size of labour force (15–75 years old)	306 984	76 958	195 947	85 145	1 223 356	316 483	45 877
Level of participation in the labour force (%)	69.51	68.04	60.30	66.13	42.00	27.84	18.20
Number of employed people	284 942	70 438	186 065	81 523	1 131 220	296 168	44 710
Level of employment of the population (15–75 years old) (%)	64.52	62.27	57.26	63.32	38.83	26.06	17.74
Level of employment of the population in labour force (%)	92.8	91.5	95.0	95.7	92.5	93.6	97.5
External labour migrants	30 206	7 007	30 788	15 237	397 989	68 932	3393
Level of migration of the population (15–75 years old)	6.84	6.19	9.48	11.83	13.66	6.06	1.35

Source: LFS 2016

Notes: * Persons with higher professional education at the level of specialist and master

** Persons with higher professional education at the level of bachelor

*** Persons with no general basic education (9 grades)

Table AC6. Some indicators of vocational guidance of professional development for unemployed people, 2014–2017

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Received professional/vocational information	13 960	14 500	14 320	15 773
Received professional/vocational consultation	9 431	9 898	10 145	11 194
Have passed professional selection	1 623	1 622	1 733	1 517
Have completed professional training	2 956	2 962	4 635	3 798

Source: Agency on Statistics, Labour Market in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 2019.

Appendix to Section D.

Table AD1. Student/teacher ratio in the VET system, 2015–2018

		2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of students	IVET	23 550	23 143	23 936	22 903
	SVET	68 325	73 333	80 432	85 579
Number of engineering and teaching staff	IVET	2 408	2 572	2 731	2 697
Number of teachers	SVET	5 119	5 091	5 188	5 775
Student/teacher ratio	IVET	9.8	9.0	8.8	8.5
	SVET	27.3	22.3	24.6	21.9

Source: MLMEP, MES[25]

Table AD2. Average monthly salary in the IVET sector, 2014–2017

Average monthly salary	2014	2015	2016	2017
Overall education system	698.95	710.69	773.85	892.02
in US dollars	*141.6*	*115.3*	*98.8*	*104.3*
In IVET subsystem	393.28	468.00	510.12	581.54
in US dollars	*79.67*	*75.93*	*65.13*	*68.00*

Source: MLMEP

Table AD3. Structure of the IVET engineering and teaching staff, 2017/18 academic year

	Teachers	Including women	Level of education				Level of qualification			
			HE	Incomplete HE	SVET or IVET	GSE	Higher (tertiary)	First	Second	No education
Teachers	1 269	338	539	203	378	149	289	297	301	382
%	100	26.6	42.5	16	29.8	11.7	22.8	23.4	23.7	30.1
Masters of industrial training	511	149	230	86	156	39	144	104	122	141
%	100	29.2	45	16.8	30.5	7.63	28.2	20.4	23.9	27.6
Total	1 780	487	769	289	534	188	433	401	423	523
%	100	27.4	43.2	16.2	30	10.6	24.3	22.5	23.8	29.4

Source: MLMEP

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[25] Статистический сборник сферы образования Республики Таджикистан, ч.2/ Министерство образования и науки Республики Таджикистан, Душанбе, 2020. – 237 с.