

## ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION IN KYRGYZSTAN

### Current status and circumstances of the ALE policy framework

#### The wider environment and institutional arrangements

The Kyrgyz Republic is a mountainous lower middle-income country of 6.6 million people, 2/3 rural, of significant regional diversity. It is one of the former Soviet Republics within the Soviet Union (USSR), and attained sovereignty as a nation state in 1991. The legacy of the Soviet period is strong. Russian language remains to have official status and is still in wide use, primarily in the capital city of Bishkek. Kyrgyzstan is land-locked, bordering three other Central Asian former Soviet bloc neighbours and the rising superpower of China (PRC). It is thus remote and cut off from the modern global world. It confronts significant change however as China's 'belt and road' strategy brings Central Asia back into global contact, located between three of the world's largest superpowers.

Kyrgyzstan has significant economic problems aggravated by the COVID 19 pandemic, and skill shortages in areas such as the new information technology (IT) required for development. The population is relatively young but is now beginning to age. Adult Learning and education (ALE) is not greatly valued; it is underestimated throughout the education management system. Little account is taken of the possible advantages and benefits that the country can derive from developing this sector. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the National Development Strategy of Kyrgyzstan require the further development of ALE, but independent policies and laws regulating this sphere have yet to be developed. ALE is not a well-defined sector with an explicit strategy, and no laws on ALE or lifelong learning (LLL) currently exist.

This makes it difficult for non-formal adult education approaches to education to flourish, and for civil society providers to provide full value. Also, there is insufficient coordination among stakeholders within

ALE as a clear sub-sector, and no mechanisms for partnership between the formal and non-formal education sectors. Public procurement of ALE delivered by non-State providers is rare, as is public-private partnership. Education is understood very much as the formal system of schooling from kindergarten through to completion at the pinnacle in higher education. As for the professionalisation of ALE institutions and personnel, there is no special body responsible for training and re-training of trainers. The Curriculum globALE, a global core curriculum for the training of adult educators, currently piloted by DVV International is the only training course for adult education specialists in Kyrgyzstan.

On the positive side there are many signs of awareness of the need to extend the policy reach of 'education' to encompass many forms of non-formal education and informal learning beyond skills training, using an effective national qualifications system and widening the formative concept of ALE to a fully encompassing grasp of lifelong learning for all. Most of the ministries and departments have a professional development function which also applies to ALE.

Many ALE providers work in the non-State sector, but the number of Adult Training Centres for example is not known, as they do not enter national statistics. 13 of these Centres are member of KAEA, the Kyrgyz Adult Education Association set up in 1997 as a non-formal association and officially registered in 2006. There is however no common platform to unite all State and other ALE organisations.

#### Resourcing and statistical information



Group of participants piloting Curriculum globALE in Kyrgyzstan in 2019



Map of Adult Training Centres – Members of the Kyrgyz Adult Education Association (KAEA). The location shown for Bishkek is KAEA's head office.

A firm legislative base is needed to secure funding of ALE. Creation of adult learning policy must be based on solid evidence highlighting the most effective practices and interventions. Resourcing is at present haphazard, various, often insecure, and in most areas of ALE need, inadequate. Clear policy commitment, legislation, and enforced regulations, including budgetary requirements, are essential to embed ALE within an applied commitment to nationwide lifelong learning as a right, and to secure its accessibility especially to remote communities and those with special needs.

There are some examples of identified funding for specific ALE purposes. For example, the Skills Development Fund (SDF) established in 2016 with assistance of the Asian Development Bank, which organises short-term courses in working professions at 86 State and non-State educational institutions (vocational lyceums, colleges and private educational centres), in all regions of the country. These courses are available on request from employers including for the professional development of employees, and also on request from individuals.

At present, the issues of institutionalisation of the SDF, its subordination, financing, composition of constituent organisations, and possible sources and mechanisms of financing are being addressed. A draft decree On Establishment of the Skills Development Fund is being coordinated with the relevant ministries and agencies, and it is planned to establish the Skills Development Fund under the Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MLSD) as an independent legal entity.

The National Statistical Committee carries out State statistical activities. According to official Kyrgyz classification Types of economic activity, education statistics covers State as well as private education at any level and in any subject. It includes education implemented by various organisations in the regular school system, vocational education, and ALE. Statistical data are available electronically on the NSC website. Every five years a data book of Education and Science is published.

In practice, Kyrgyzstan does not have a separate block of statistics on ALE. There are none on the activities of non-governmental organisations providing educational services, and no real picture of the ALE system as a whole. As part of implementing the SDGs it was proposed to develop a form of data collection, according to which all legal entities that have received licences to conduct educational activities will provide data annually on the coverage of non-formal education, including ICT, to the district and city statistical departments for subsequent transfer to the NSC. This recommendation however awaits implementation.

Lack of statistical data has a negative impact on decision-making processes. It is important to include in the functions of statistical bodies the collection of necessary data on ALE, as well as to improve the tools for providing statistical information. It is also essential that statistical data present important aspects of ALE that are accurately and easily noted and collected. The data should guide and support good work, not fill in forms just in order to comply.

## Benefits of the ALE sector for the further development of Kyrgyzstan

Integrating ALE into the whole education system with clear understanding of lifelong learning will enhance through-life learning where it is relevant and necessary. In addition to the standard understanding of literacy as reading, writing and numeracy, it is now necessary to develop functional literacy among young people and adults in Kyrgyzstan: that is, literacy for professional development and employment; literacy in information and communication technologies; information literacy, which includes skill and judgement to use mass media; legal literacy; and scientific and practical literacy.

A strategic, long-term focus on sustainable adult learning provision, with strong governance and a systemic approach will benefit a broad range of policy areas. It will also provide significant return on investment in the form of decreased social spending and a richer, more dynamic economy. Short-term adult learning programmes are less effective.

Developing effective policy and legislation in the ALE sector can take substantial time and investment. Such investment will pay off in the long run, with significant changes in economic and social development, and improvements for the country in general, and for course participants in particular. Note the following benefits from promoting ALE:

### Economic:

- Provision of the labour market with the labour force having better professional skills;
- Decrease of unemployment;
- Reduction of labor migration;
- Poverty reduction;
- Small business development;
- Increase in the state budget by increasing tax deductions.

### Social:

- More tolerant society;
- Conflict prevention;
- Increase of civic engagement of adults and youth;
- Improved gender equality;
- Improved public health safety, improved quality of life.

## Challenges for the education sector

The most important general problems relate to the socio-economic and political development of the country, absence of legislative regulation, and the

lack of a complete material and technical base and infrastructure for the training, retraining and professional development of adults. To overcome these challenges, a campaigning programme advocating formal legal and financial recognition and support for ALE with practical rule-based arrangements to implement and monitor the results to make ALE a right for all may be necessary.

The absence of a legal framework for example makes the process of obtaining licences for non-formal education providers complicated, and poorly adapted to the specific context of the non-formal approach to adult education of civil society providers. Existing standards make no provision for mobile and outside-the-classroom learning. No legal framework exists to promote the validation of professional skills. A national qualifications framework is needed, with professional standards and a procedure for skills recognition in ALE. There are currently no certification centres that could recognise the professional experience and training of an adult obtained informally.

To achieve coherence across policy fields, policymakers and stakeholders need to know what is going on in other fields, and the rationale for the different initiatives. Collaboration and partnerships between Education, Labour and Social development, Culture, Finance, Justice and Health ministries, social partners and civil society promote the creation of a shared knowledge base and mutual understanding.

## Recommendations to increase the benefits of ALE

### Key priority areas for implementing an ALE strategy

1. Awareness-raising, recognition, information and motivation on ALE.
2. Creating a public system and a national strategy on ALE.
3. Appointing an interdepartmental Commission and an executive authority.
4. Creating a legal ALE framework within an LLL concept.
5. Establishing effective and transparent funding systems.
6. Capacity-building and training of personnel across the sector.
7. Creating alliances between Government, non-state and private actors.
8. Cooperation between Central Asian countries and with international organisations.

## Recommendations

- State recognition and approval of ALE as a priority area that contributes to the development of society and the economy
- Formation of a State and public system of ALE management, and creation of an Interdepartmental Commission on ALE
- Formation of an executive body to implement the ALE strategy
- Creation of a legal framework for ALE: adopting a law on ALE preferably within a law on LLL
  - Development of a framework of qualifications and educational standards in ALE
  - Development of a legal framework for certification centres to validate professional skills
  - Amending the law “On licensing and licensing system in the Kyrgyz Republic”
  - Bringing the regulatory framework into accordance with the law on ALE (or wider law on LLL)
- Development of a national ALE strategy. Creation of regional programmes of ALE development, taking account of diverse socio-economic, demographic, national, cultural and other factors
  - Assessment of public educational needs and existing capacities
  - Development of methodologies for training adult educators (andragogues)
  - Development of a system for evaluating educational institutions and the results of ALE. These may be non-State organisations, but they will have to undergo accreditation with a responsible State body
  - Development of methodologies for monitoring and evaluation of ALE implementation
- Ensuring the financial provision of ALE institutions: finding resources, developing funding mechanisms
- Launching regular information campaigns to raise awareness of educational opportunities and promoting the concept of LLL

The creation of adult learning policy must be conceptually sound but also based on solid evidence highlighting effective practices and interventions. Research is needed, especially to:

- map the activities of key actors in adult education in Kyrgyzstan,
- conduct labour market research to determine

the needs for specialists,

- collect best practices in the ALE sector, and assessment of implementation.

## Resources

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## ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN

### Current status and circumstances in the ALE policy framework

#### The wider environment and institutional arrangements

Of Uzbekistan's 34 million people, 26.5% are aged under 15, 68.8% from 16 to 65, and 4.7% over 65. The working-age population is over twice the size of the non-working-age population, so the social-economic burden for society is low. However, working-age population has risen from 14 million in 2000 to 22 million today. The large 0-7 age group means a large growing youth population to come. With COVID-19, many migrants have returned, and the quest for employment will increase.

The country borders are all within the Central Asian region; neighbours also have no direct access to the sea. This makes Uzbekistan very remote from sea routes. In 2016 it abandoned isolationism in foreign policy and begun to integrate into the global economy.

State and regional platforms, and alternative ways of integration, are made more important for sustainable economic growth by lack of access to the sea. Open borders led to rapid growth of trade and movement of people. Uzbekistan now attaches much importance to the Central Asian region, seeking strategic partnership, friendly ties, and mutually beneficial cooperation with CIS countries. It is restructuring the economic system, 20 years after neighbouring states, in reforming state-controlled companies and enabling them to compete in the global market. While wrestling with rapid fundamental change it now has opportunities to invest in human potential through adult learning and education, ALE.

In these conditions of rapid socio-economic reforms over the past three years, increasing demand for professional staff is high on the agenda. This requires introducing the modern standards recognised and applied in other countries; and an education system aimed at integration into the global educational community.

Recent reforms in the education sectors have included creating new ministries, departmental institutes, structures and substructures.

Many in government are poorly informed about ALE. The adoption of the new edition of the Law On Education in 2020

however has led to the very rapid adoption of regulatory legal acts that move the development of the ALE sector and lifelong learning towards further accelerated and systemic development. The government is in the process of elaborating further coordination mechanisms to implement ALE in practice and to promote it nationwide. The legislative framework for the development of a system for the recognition, validation and accreditation of prior learning has been adopted. However, the full realisation of ALE and LLL potential, laid down in the law and adopted acts, will critically depend on the availability of additional financial mechanisms and non-state sources of financing for development.

Civil society is at an early stage of development as an equal and independent institution, but the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in implementing various ALE services has increased. A new institutional form, called non-governmental education institutions, providing various ALE offers has started to operate across the country.

Uzbekistan takes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seriously in its policy agenda. The national SDGs are widely used in development strategies for industries and regions. In particular, the main goal of the Strategy for Innovative Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2019-2021 is the development of human capital as the main factor in determining the country's competitiveness and progress in innovation. This goal reflects the concepts of lifelong learning and ALE, meaning the need for Uzbekistan to form an effective national system of ALE.

Achieving SDG 4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, and promoting LLL, poses challenges for adult education. The demand for ALE programs has increased, and the issue of expanding the opportunities and prospects for the development of the sector has reached the level of decision-makers in the field of public policy. Meanwhile it is important to convey the idea of LLL for all: to officials as well as the whole population, because general public awareness of ALE and LLL remains significantly limited. Functional illiteracy remains common in rural and remote areas. Often, illiterate older people cannot participate fully as citizens and consumers.

#### Resourcing and statistical information

Building a successful LLL system requires being clear about the learning taking place in different environments and ways (formal, non-formal, workplace, family, community, etc.). Forming policies to encourage each person to learn involves many stakeholders; efficient coordination of actions; and the sharing responsibilities. Changes affect the scope, content, and delivery of all educational services.

The education system is strictly regimented and managed.



Map of Uzbekistan. Locations of civil society organisations involved in ALE partnering with DVV International are shown in red.

Statistics on financing education provided by the Educational Sector Plan of Uzbekistan (2019-2023) show that formal educational institutions (including adult education) have stable funding. However, the informal sector has no comprehensive ALE funding or statistical reporting system. The absence weakens decision-making for developing an ALE policy.

Three ministries share educational management and decision-making processes. A review by the Ministry of Finance was unclear on how much funding flows to the informal sector of non-governmental organisations (NGOs)/CSOs. In 2016 0.02% of the state budget was allocated to the social sphere. Formal educational institutions including adult education have stable funding, but not the informal sector.

The financial sustainability of NGOs in Uzbekistan is a serious high priority problem. Parliament established a Public Fund to support NGOs, a State Social Order for training in non-state vocational educational institutions at the expense of the State Employment Promotion Fund under the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations. These are, however, still inadequate to support the further development of NGOs' ALE offers.

There is no unified statistical reporting system which, with data on financing adult education, would illuminate other aspects of adult education in the form of number of providers and ALE programmes, degree of public participation in ALE programmes etc. This weakens decision-making policy for the development of ALE within LLL. Constant reliable statistical assessment and auditing is needed, including level of participation in formal and informal ALE, to guide further development of ALE policies. It is important for auditing to be formative and advisory, with feedback to local levels; that it identifies important things; is transparent and easy to complete, but not just box-ticking; not too time-consuming; and uses qualitative as well as quantitative measures and methods.

## Benefits of the ALE sector for the further development of Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan's ambitions for continuing transformation of the economy and civil society require continuing evolution of all aspects of the education system, pre-school to old age, from a lifelong learning perspective and understanding.

Within this, institutionalised, formally and legally established ALE is necessary. The nation cannot wait for its children to grow up. Demands for rising numbers of young students must also be met, as well as embedding and guaranteeing secure funding of ALE.

Timely and effective investment in ALE will reduce the price that society has to pay in the future for social and demographic changes, and further unite a diverse nation in its transition to a modern economy and society.

Allied to the adoption of an ambitious IT (information technology) investment strategy, investment in ALE will reduce inequality, lack of access, and the partial exclusion especially of remote and rural communities. New IT on a strong national platform will enable more participation of



International Conference on Social partnership: Challenges and perspectives» in Uzbekistan, 2019.

both school-age and adult learners, and fuller participation in shared economic growth.

## Challenges for the education sector

Uzbekistan requires modern standards recognised and applied in other countries, and an improved education system to enable integration into the global education community. This means creating a continuous cycle of improvement anchored in applied LLL from cradle and kindergarten to post-work older age.

Absence of a specific ALE Law exposes the subsector politically and socially, with many problems of management and funding. Coordination is needed, representing all interested parties and giving them authority to promote adult education and influence decision-making at all levels.

A National Council for ALE needs to consider financial support for ALE despite current difficulties, potentially to come from additional credit resources and donor assistance. Given the high economic return on additional investments in education, this can be justified.

Uzbekistan can count on expert support and targeted financing of pilot projects from international donors, and funds attracted by State and internal non-governmental organisations, thus limiting the budgetary burden on investment in education.

As the working-age population in Uzbekistan increases in coming decades, present and future workers must be well trained, with skills easily applicable for the labour market. However, the training system in vocational colleges fails to meet the real needs of the economy, and Uzbekistan has difficulty finding qualified higher education specialists. According to employers, the main reason is an insufficient number of specialists on the market.

Recent administrative reforms for decentralisation and new approaches should assist ALE, since local learning needs are diverse. Changes of personnel may at times be necessary, but they risk weakening or preventing partnerships through the levels of politics and power.

Another problem is state control over the activities of NGOs,

with excessive interference in determining priority activities, programmes and projects of NGOs. The financing of NGOs by the Public Fund depends on choice of projects and programmes deemed to be feasible and acceptable.

A main challenge for non-State actors is to enhance their visibility and role in the formulation, discussion and implementation of ALE policies; and to participate more in networking and political dialogue.

Active non-governmental educational institutions slightly improve opportunities for participation, but do not meet the ever-increasing need to train NGO leaders. Funding could be improved by going direct to private educational institutions and NGOs. There is no training for professional andragogy at universities. Representation of the business sector in adult education is low.

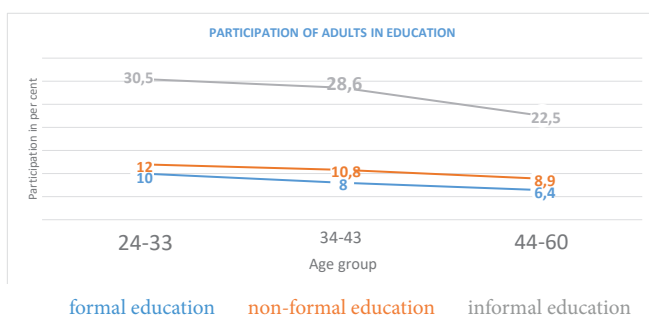
Considering the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on all sectors, it is important to put significant efforts into transforming the education system, rethinking the role of information and communication technologies (ICT), and introducing digital technologies and modern methods into education and learning. Uzbekistan has made insufficient use of IT, either to expand access by using new teaching methods, or in using ICT tools to assist with choice of courses etc, and for self-development. Modern pedagogy needs smart technologies in learning processes, electronic modules, and distance learning programmes.

Functional illiteracy is common especially in rural areas. Many lack the knowledge and skills for a fulfilling life, and for interaction with other members of society. Often older generations without special training cannot become literate consumers who are able to use household appliances, the internet for information and business, etc. Developing an ICT infrastructure is therefore critical to increasing functional literacy. Access is unequal, and motivation for rural residents to attend courses remains low. Training closer to home is important, but new virtual facilities would reduce this need.

## Recommendations to increase the benefits of ALE

### Key priority areas for implementing an ALE strategy

1. Awareness-raising, information and motivation on ALE
2. Capacity-building and training personnel across the sector
3. Creating alliances – Government, non-state and private actors
4. Cooperation between Central Asian countries and international organisations.



Participation of adults in education in Uzbekistan, survey of 2020.

## Recommendations

- It is important to be clear that learning takes place in different environments and different forms: formal, non-formal, workplace, family, community, etc. Many different stakeholders should be involved in policy formation, coordinating actions, and sharing responsibilities. Building an LLL system affects the scope, content and delivery of all educational services. It is important to foster an LLL culture in the country with particular focus on vulnerable groups.
- Government should increase ALE resources, indicating how much will be allocated for ALE, and the criteria for financing. Funding should be multi-channel in secured amounts from government sources, with support at local, national and regional levels, including special funding sources to support ALE, and private sector contributions.
- To improve access to ALE, the competence and powers of local and regional authorities in education sub-sectors must be assured. Local authorities should be able and later obliged to enable access to ALE programmes. They should develop LLL through municipal educational institutions, like the Community Learning Centres (CLCs) that already exist in many Asian and other countries, as well as diversify ALE offers, considering the needs of the population in selected regions, cities, villages.
- As the working-age population in Uzbekistan increases, future workers must be well trained and possess skills easily applicable in the labour market. Under-represented groups should receive separate and special financial support.
- Evidence-based policymaking requires data collection, preferably following international practice for comparability and also to promote science-based research projects on LLL policy and practice. The practical success of policymaking should be monitored through good data collection, preferably using parameters adopted in international practice thus making comparison possible. It can also identify and promote the research needed on LLL.
- Consideration should be given to grants and tax incentives. Funds should be available to private and NGO educational agencies by open tender, allocating targeted grants, and a multi-channel financing model.
- An inter-sectoral coordinating link is important and urgent: a National Council for ALE and Lifelong Learning including all interested parties, to develop policy and legislation based on the draft LLL Concept, and an ALE Action Plan for the next five years. An alternative could be a State Commission for Skills Development; or a State Agency for ALE with the management staffed by different stakeholders. Support could come from the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education, or a secretariat under the Cabinet of Ministers.
- The potential now provided in the legal framework for recognition, validation, and accreditation should be used and RVA should be included in a future LLL or ALE Strategy with procedures developed and staff.

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## Current status and circumstances in the ALE policy framework

### The wider environment and institutional arrangements

Tajikistan is a landlocked and mountainous country. Of its approximately 9.5 million people, 73% live in rural areas while only 7% of the land can be farmed. Different regions face challenges regarding geographical access. The young and fast-growing population is forecast to grow throughout this century. This trend is a burden to the present economy and the labour market, and a risk factor for education and health care provision. 90% of the population is Muslim. The Quran refers to a need to learn “from the cradle to the grave”. The principles of lifelong learning (LLL) and adult learning and education (ALE) are thus laid down there, which if promoted could foster wider understanding and support for LLL as the context for ALE.

Economic development has been the priority through this century. The reported 83% poverty rate in 2000 has fallen to below 30%. Economic growth however is expected to fall considerably, due to the implications of the pandemic and the slowdown in Russia and China. Current government policy favours liberalising migration abroad. According to official figures, in 2019, 21.5% of the working population were working abroad, the vast majority in Russia. In future there will be a shortage of qualified personnel in Tajikistan and an acute related problem of brain drain; signs are already visible.

A 2017 Law On Adult Education recognised the existence of formal, non-formal and informal education. It introduced the concept of validation, defined State guarantees for adults’ access to education at all stages of life, and introduced norms for the mandatory collection of statistical data. Work has begun to develop a National Qualifications Framework (NQF), as an integral part of the system. In general, a favourable legal environment for ALE development is in place. The Concept of Continuous Education for 2017-2023 has been adopted. Here, ALE was given an important role for developing overall continuing education through adult training centres. The National Adult Education Centre of Tajikistan (NATC) with its currently 37 branches was established in 2008, providing mainly short-term vocational training, with funding allocated from the education

budget. The amount assigned is however insignificant: 0.06 per cent of the education budget. After an initial period of financial instability, the establishment of the NATC system under the Agency of Labour and Employment proved to be financially sustainable only when the Agency itself became the main customer for NATC services, and when the centres were also enabled to include fee-based courses in their education offer.

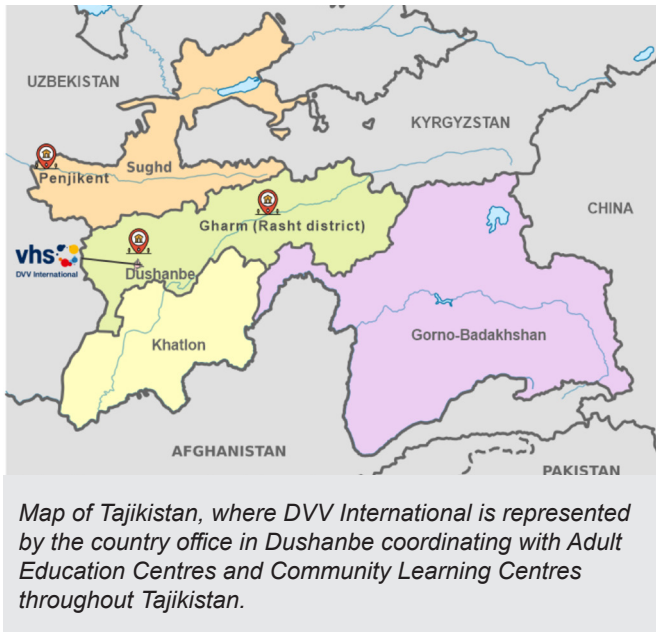
A focus on piloting new practices and then drafting legislation made it possible to further integrate advanced approaches to ALE based on international experience into the education system. Piloting the experience of establishing Community Learning Centres (CLC), and its application in the country, allows opening new directions.

A public association, the Adult Education Association of Tajikistan (AEAT), is the only network organisation active in the field of ALE, including in lobbying for the interests of its member organisations and in political reforms. It currently has 11 members and a quite wide range of partners, and conducts activities which can be assessed as effective. The draft law On Adult Education was developed on the initiative of the AEAT.

The Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment (MoL) is responsible for managing ALE in Tajikistan, but this covers only vocational training for adults as the Ministry is responsible for promoting employment policy. Development of other components of ALE is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoE) but is not included in its formal remit. In practice, the emphasis is on State educational institutions, and the entire education system is youth-oriented, not taking account of the needs of the adult population.

### Resourcing and statistical information

Tajikistan inherited a strong basic education system from the Soviet Union. Since 1993, the compulsory system of basic education has included classes from 1st to 9th year. Pupils complete compulsory education at 16 with a general secondary education, but no professional qualification. Under the Constitution in 1994, the State guarantees citizens general compulsory education free of charge in State educational establishments: everyone may receive general secondary, primary vocational, secondary, and higher vocational education in State educational establishments.



Map of Tajikistan, where DVV International is represented by the country office in Dushanbe coordinating with Adult Education Centres and Community Learning Centres throughout Tajikistan.

Laws and arrangements are in place, but the amount of education budget allocated to ALE is miniscule. The State is unable to develop all segments of education equally, but the need for training is high. There is a lack of andragogic specialists throughout the system – politicians, managers, methodologists, and ALE teachers. The country's education system does not prepare them. The scientific potential for studying ALE is also weak; there are few methodological manuals and other tools and arrangements useful for organising adult learning. At present, a programme for andragogy is being implemented by DVV International with local partners, based on adapting and officially recognising the global core curriculum for the training of adult educators – Curriculum globALE.

The website of the AEAT provides information about ALE, legislation, statistics and trends in ALE, and projects being implemented. But it has not yet been possible to create a national platform for dialogue and exchange of best practices and experience.



Participant of the EU co-funded project "Promotion of Social Change and Inclusive Education" (INCLUSION).

To develop effective policies, reliable data must be available. The legislation on education in Tajikistan requires collecting statistics on ALE. The current system however collects statistics only on the vocational training of adults; it is therefore very incomplete. So far it ignores non-state educational institutions that make a significant contribution to youth and adult education, and no statistics are gathered on non-formal education and other forms of training provided in the Law On Adult Education. The country has about 260 different non-state training centres licensed by MoE, but statistics on their activities are not available. Data on ALE statistics are not published, although statistical reporting was introduced in 2018. There are no data on short-term courses in governmental and non-governmental educational institutions; training coverage may be several times higher than the available data show.

Also, the SDGs require new indicators in evaluating the education system. There is for instance no criterion for measuring adult literacy yet. In 2018-2019, AEAT conducted a comprehensive national analysis of ALE statistics. It proposed a concrete solution to the problem through key ministries and the Agency for Statistics, expanding the scope of ALE statistical collection and adapting EU experience.

### Benefits of the ALE sector for the further development of Tajikistan

Tajikistan needs a more enabling business environment for private investment and job creation. It needs to improve the efficiency and social inclusion of basic social services; and to improve the country's integration with regional and global markets and knowledge.

ALE has an essential part to play in achieving this. Developing information technologies (IT) and training in these technologies would stimulate growth in many sectors of the economy. A very substantial ALE effort is needed to upskill the large and growing workforce, equipping them to use their skills rather than work in other countries in a remittance economy. Without this, ambitions for economic development in a modern IT-based high-skills economy will be restricted and even thwarted.

Investment in the current working-age population needs to be accompanied within a wider lifelong learning strategy, such that the school-age and youth cohorts who are a focus of policy acquire the capacity to go on learning and adapting to a fast-changing environment.

The National Development Strategy to 2030 reflects promotion of a policy of convergence between the education system and the tasks of economic modernisation. The State recognises that the quality of the labour force in the country is low, and that human potential is being used ineffectively. Increasing coverage of the population by general secondary



*Participant of small grand programme within the frame of the EU co-funded project “Promotion of Social Change and Inclusive Education” (INCLUSION).*

education suffers from an abiding lack of qualified specialists in technical specialties. The low level of knowledge of foreign languages holds Tajikistan back in the global arena.

There is at present excessive employment in agriculture, the public sector, and some other sectors, which is why a significant proportion of qualified workers look for work outside the country. The State recognises that the quality of formal education is a problem, with education services leaving much to be desired. Access is uneven, whereas different methods and tools especially of non-formal ALE offer diverse means of reaching remote populations.

## Challenges for the education sector

There is weak staff capacity, high staff turnover, as teachers' salaries are low. Today, education as a whole is the lowest paid employment sector. The average wage (\$102.6 in 2018) is 31% lower than the average economic wage (\$134.83 in 2018). The average salary in education is the lowest among countries in Central Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Vocational education opportunities at all formal levels are limited. Only about 60% of young people entering the labour market (155-160,000 persons annually) have access to the main types of vocational training - primary, secondary, or higher vocational - where the annual intake does not exceed 93,700 persons.

The link between education and the labour market is weak: training of specialists is not taking into account labour market needs (about 18.3% of the unemployed have higher education); legal mechanisms for taking into account labour market needs have not been established; and indicators for the employment of graduates are not monitored.

The gender imbalance in enrolment is significant, with many girls not continuing their education beyond grade

9. Women's participation in education is lower at all levels of vocational training, especially at vocational lyceums (22-24%). The participation rate of women in the ALE system is however high, at 60%.

There are various forms of learning in the country recognised by legislation. But the central office of the MoE does not have a department or division dealing with short-term training, adult education, and other types of training which are recognised by the law.

The system for assessing the quality of learning, including ALE, is weak. Data are not collected, there are no indicators, no statistics, no international experience in this area, the indicators of achievement of Goal 4 of the SDGs have yet to be adapted and implemented, especially for assessment of ALE. There are only one-off assessments of the level of learning achievement of students.

Level of participation of adults in education is low (2.77% in 2018) and measures to encourage participation of adults in education and training are lacking. About 80% of the working population have no professional education.

There are age limits for persons over 30 years of age, regardless of gender, for free education in primary, secondary and higher vocational education. These restrictions are established by departmental decisions: there are no such restrictions in Tajik legislation.

Flexibility is lacking in the transition between levels and forms of education, with attachment of learning outcomes to hours of learning attended rather than to actual knowledge and skills. The principles of LLL have been declared at the legislative level, but their practical implementation is very weak.

Coordination is poor, with no involvement of the general public, an expert community, or employers, in the discussion of problems and prospects for the development of education, especially legislation and strategies; there is one-sided emphasis on the development of the State segment of education, including in ALE.



*Training of trainers on basic literacy course for local CSO networks.*

## Recommendations to increase the benefits of ALE

### Key priority areas for implementing an ALE strategy

1. Awareness-raising, information and motivation on ALE
2. Capacity-building and training personnel across the sector
3. Creating alliances – government, non-state and private actors
4. Taking full advantage of the new ICT
5. Cooperation between Central Asian countries and with international organisations.

### Recommendations

- Conduct national advocacy campaigns to promote LLL, with practical means to build an effective ALE service. The Labour and Employment Agency should increase awareness of adult learning opportunities.
- Ministry of Education methodological and professional development centres should include courses on professional development to train in andragogy, based on Curriculum globALE.
- Create a comprehensive, serviceable, integrated, easy to administer system of educational statistics with close cooperation between all ministries, partners, and participants in the ALE process.
- Develop partnership between different participants of ALE, involving private investments and public organisations in professional educational development; create favourable conditions for them.
- Ministries to support, share with AEAT, or take over, improving coordination for the development of ALE.
- Develop a strong and widely accessible IT platform and training in IT to stimulate growth in many sectors of the economy.
- Move the nation further to a digital economy, building on the huge advances in ICT in recent years. This transformation means transforming to LLL societies, cultures and ALE systems. The LLL concept must permeate and infuse all forms of life, including education and training.
- Create mechanisms for interconnecting education and the labour market through a system of post-training employment tracking.
- Create the NQF with the participation of employers, with quality of training as a main assessment criterion for vocational education at all levels.
- Establish cooperation between the countries of Central Asia on ALE development in the region. Each country has its own experience, strengths and lessons in ALE. Tajikistan's experience is unique in starting the development of ALE by a network of training centres, involving large amounts of development partner funds to equip them.

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## Policies on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan

There are significant differences between the three countries Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, most obviously in size. Uzbekistan's 34 million people are more than double the approximately 6.5 million in Kyrgyzstan and 9.5 million in Tajikistan combined. However, they also have much in common in geographical and other senses. They are all landlocked, Uzbekistan even being two international borders removed from any ocean coastline. They share serious problems of difficult access and significant economic and broader socio-cultural disadvantage by virtue of topography, with many resources and opportunities being located in the capital city. There are linguistic challenges. The main common and business language over recent decades is Russian. Other than traditional and rural knowledge, skill and job opportunities, much is out of their rural reach.

This synthesis makes no attempt to reproduce or summarise the wealth of detail contained in each country review, recently published by DVV International: about the framework conditions enabling and hampering development in that country; or the institutional and technical arrangements, regulations, resources and progress in carrying out plans and policies, in each case. The three reviews are available on the regional and the main websites of DVV International to consult for all these aspects. They include information on qualification frameworks, management and coordination within government departments and across non-government private and civic institutions, and through levels from national to local; assessment of prior learning across non-formal and informal learning; data collection; evaluation monitoring and quality enhancement and support, e.g. for staffing the sector as well as for its finances and resource allocation.

Within each country, campaigning and awareness-raising are needed. Traditional ways and wisdom in diverse communities and traditions need combining with what new technology can provide. Suitable tactics as well as strategies are needed to make the nominal adoption of terms and concepts like ALE (adult learning

and education) and LLL (lifelong learning) work in reality. It is recognised that people must be motivated to see wider learning beyond school walls as essential, making more full use of what is there in multipurpose ways. There is openness to learning from others at all levels, to exchange experience and to make use of advice and experience from other countries. The spirit of hope for a better future, and belief that this is possible, will help build the next phase of development, and attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to which each Central Asian nation has committed itself, through the 2020s.

In a formal sense, therefore, there is now a sound basis in policy thought and writing, and a good legislative base, for ALE. There are two main weaknesses. Most obviously, ALE resources are miniscule within State education sector budgets. And they are administered by several departmental or section units of Education, Labour or Employment portfolios. No less serious, the formal institution and practical adoption of such laws and regulations is slow. In summary, each country has made crucial policy decisions followed by laws and rules, with in-principle allocations of executive responsibility. It is important that the terms ALE and LLL are now embedded, with their policy in terms of policy flowing into tangible and visible practice way.

There is growing recognition that cross-sectoral partnership is essential, with important roles for employers, communities, and regular education facilities adapted to serve adult returners outside their regular age strata. The notion of multi-purpose facilities – Community Learning Centres (CLCs) under this or some other name – is also growing, but needs further support. A helpful instrument in the process of building strong ALE institutions is the Curriculum institutionALE. The

**Curriculum globALE (CG)** is a modularised and competency-based framework curriculum for the training of adult educators worldwide. The learning outcomes defined in the curriculum represent exactly those competences that all adult educators should possess, no matter in what geographical, institutional or domain-specific context they work. The complete set of modules thus provides a solid foundation for designing a suitable training programme through which adult educators can develop the necessary competencies.

workforce to guide, provide and teach ALE is small and underqualified; efforts in all three countries to implement Curriculum globALE, the global core curriculum for the training of adult educators, are being made. It needs to lead to recognition of the andragogue as a profession. Professionalisation extends beyond the classroom to other places of learning. The country reports make reference to ALE institutions, which must be registered and approved, and even to national associations of institutions and centres. There are suggestions that the rising awareness and use of CLCs should be supported and extended, building a bridge between community and education, and housing a full spectrum of informal as well as more formal and non-formal

**Curriculum institutionALE (CI)** is an orientation framework for strengthening Institutions of Adult Learning and Education (IALEs). It provides basic guidelines for managing capacity and organizational development, and suggests indicators and means of verification for organisational change and capacity development. Addressing leaders of IALEs and external advisors, it can be adjusted to fit various contexts and institutions across the world.

Curriculum institutionALE and Curriculum globALE are two of several tools and instruments which DVV International has developed in adult learning and education. For more information, please visit our website: <https://www.dvv-international.de/ale-toolbox>.

ways of learning or being taught. It is recognised that this development, which is strong in some other countries, has great potential, but also requires a kind of andragogic leadership and facilitation different from instructional teaching.

To strengthen ALE in coming years, each of the country studies has developed a set of recommendations for Governments, stakeholders and partners in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. On the macro level there are opportunities for partners from the three countries to work together. The Regional Offices of UNESCO and DVV International will look out for priority areas favouring regional perspectives on implementation.

The three countries are each committed to UN-led development planning to implement the SDGs, which run from 2015 to 2030. Each country was invited to prepare a country report on ALE for UNESCO in the context of CONFINTEA VII, and to join the Sub-regional consultation. They will be participating in the Regional Conference in 2021 and then to the global Conference in Marrakesh in 2022.



*Participants of the international conference on Adult Learning and Education in Uzbekistan, 2014.*

### Recommendations

This comparative analysis and synthesis report concludes with nine recommendations for consideration and perhaps action at sub-regional level:

- Macro level ALE with its important requirements for policy, legislation and financing is at different stages of development in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. There is however growing acceptance that ALE as a sub-sector of the education system needs structural support embedded in a LLL perspective. It is therefore suggested that in line with special requirements, a mechanism is created for peer consultation and review, by representatives of all three countries from Government, parliament, professional institutes, and civil society, to further strengthen macro level ALE in acts, laws, regulations, and budgets.
- The CONFINTEA process will provide opportunities for cooperation and support to ALE development through the status of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan as UNESCO Member States. This opportunity should be taken. National Commissions of UNESCO will play a key role. They should be contacted and lobbied early. The UNESCO Regional Office in Almaty and the DVV International Regional Office in Bishkek, together with UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning (UIL) are creating opportunities for actively engaging civil society throughout. A regional Central Asian initiative is recommended that actively supports this process.
- The SDG agenda provides opportunities to support the development of LLL in its full understanding, with a strong ALE component. The importance of Education Goal 4 for achieving all the other sixteen SDG Goals should be part of awareness-raising materials and campaigns. Central Asian

Governments have included the SDG requirements in a number of regulations and processes across ministerial portfolios which are coming under review through monitoring and evaluation regularly. Such inter-sectoral approaches can help bringing ALE and LLL to wider attention. Here the three countries can learn from one another. Another regional Central Asian initiative should therefore be considered, combining and integrating this with the CONFINTEA process.

- The absence of data on ALE and the lack of statistical records is a thread running through the country reports. Some information may be available for formal adult and continuing professional education; much less is on record for non-formal ALE. The informal learning opportunities may not even be recognised. This is a reality much beyond Central Asian states; even stocktaking in respect of such data is often mere guestimates, keeping the ALE sub-sector in a state of uncertainty and vagueness. The DVV International Regional Office and the Country Offices could try to build and follow-up on current AES (Adult Education Survey) research efforts and the EMIS (Education Management Information System) introduced by UNESCO to monitor the Education Goal of the SDG. ALE statistics should become as normal and regular as those for schools or universities.
- The three country studies all point to the importance of recognition, validation, and accreditation (RVA) of prior learning variety of formal, non-formal and informal: inside the education system as well as in community, cultural, economic, health and social and other spheres of life and development. These RVA processes are important for ALE at macro, meso and micro levels. They reach into the classification of the professions, and national qualification frameworks. Here again, a regional exchange, maybe through the on-line learning platform, and regional training, may be welcome initiatives.
- The country reports float ideas and make suggestions about whether some sort of Governing Council or Consultation Committee related to ALE and / or LLL would be a mechanism to further strengthen the sub-sector. If it were a LLL Council, participation would need to reach into all areas of the education system; and to inform and raise awareness, through a biographical lens - from cradle to grave - and an institutional lens - from kindergarten via schools and colleges and on through adult education centres. An ALE Committee might be smaller, but would still need an inter-sectoral approach including representatives of all training programme

providers. Information and communication media could play an important support role.

- Digitalisation will create major challenges and opportunities for enlarging and deepening regional cooperation in ALE and LLL. It could move towards a sub-regional learning platform, with exchange of experiences in policy, legislation and financing; the teaching materials of the Curriculum globALE; and diverse examples of professionalisation and institutionalisation of CLC documented and uploaded for partners in the Central Asian countries. This would also strengthen the capacity of all levels to support one another.
- There may be growing opportunities to share examples and experiences of good practices within Central Asian countries and beyond, contributing to an emerging learning region. One possibility is the development of Samarkand towards a Learning City, with all the requirements to become a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, or of the PASCAL Learning City Network. This could further deepen the understanding of ALE and LLL, with perspectives from personal level through community engagement and globally.
- ALE is related at macro level to national, regional, and global developments. It is recommended that ways and means be sought to further strengthen cooperation between Intergovernmental Organisations and International Non-Governmental Organisations. These are well represented regionally level through the UNESCO Almaty Office and the Asia South Pacific Adult and Basic Education Association (ASPBAE) with its Central Asian Executive Council Member. Together they have an important facilitating role by using the CONFINTEA and SDG processes, at the same time expanding networking and partnership with other important players and stakeholders, including development cooperation and funding agencies.

**DVV International** is the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband – DVV). DVV International provides worldwide support for the establishment and development of sustainable structures for adult learning and education. As a specialized civil society organization, DVV International aims to provide more needs-oriented and high-quality education opportunities for youth and adults, especially for disadvantaged population groups. We are guided in our work by the Agenda 2030 and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals as well as the global movement towards Education for All.

DVV International has been active in Central Asia since 2002, currently with offices in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Regional cooperation plays an important role in Central Asia and the exchange between adult education providers and various stakeholders from different countries is an important part of the work of DVV International in the region.

**More information:** [www.dvv-international.de](http://www.dvv-international.de) // [www.dvv-international-central-asia.org](http://www.dvv-international-central-asia.org)

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