



SITUATION ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS IN KYRGYZSTAN: SALARY, TEACHING HOURS AND QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION



Ministry
of Education and Science
of the Kyrgyz Republic



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For the past few years the Ministry of Education and Science has been processing system reforms, most of which is related to changes in financing systems and teacher salary payment. In 2011, the salary payment system based on tariff table was changed to hourly based payment, which would differentiate the payment depending on the volume and quality of work.

The current report presents results of the assessment of teacher salary reform and analyses its impact on improvement of the school teaching capacity which influences the quality of education in general. The researchers attempted to document the reform, look at its implementation at the level of schools and identify unfinished agenda issues, which need to be solved within upcoming years.

The report is prepared by a team of researchers: Gita Steiner-Khamsi (Columbia University, New York), Farida Ryskulueva (independent expert, Bishkek) and Raisa Belyavina (Columbia University, New York).

Note: The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies and views of UNICEF.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables, Figures and Appendices	5
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	6
Executive Summary	7
1. Introduction	9
1.1. The Situation of Teachers: Analytical Work of UNICEF Kyrgyzstan	11
1.2. Research Background and Setting	11
1.3. Data Collection Instruments	12
1.4. Sampling of Schools and Informants	14
1.5. Validity and Limitations of Study	15
2. The Teacher Salary Reform 2011: A Policy Analysis	17
2.1. The Salary Structure before 2011	18
2.2. Context of the 2011 Reform	19
2.3. The Salary Reform 2011 and its Amendments	21
2.4. Composition of the Teacher Salary	23
2.5. The Salary in the Education Sector as Compared to Other Sectors	25
2.5.1. The Nominal Value of Salaries by Sector and over Time	25
2.5.2. The Teacher Salary as Compared to Salaries in Other Sectors	26
2.6. Teacher Perceptions of the 2011 Salary Reform	26
3. School-Level Analyses of Actual Salary, Teaching Load, and Quality of Instruction	29
3.1. Overview	31
3.2. The High Correlation between Salary and Teaching Hours and Its Negative Impact on the Quality of Instruction	34
3.2.1. Vulnerability of Teachers	34
3.2.2. Micromanagement of Teachers	35
3.2.3. Overcrowding of Schools	35

3.2.4. Vacancies as Placeholders or “Strategic Vacancies”	35
3.2.5. Excessive Teaching Loads	37
3.2.6. The Redistribution of Teaching Hours to Non-Specialists	38
3.3. Comparison between Budgeted and Actual Salaries at School Level	40
3.4. The Stimulus Fund	41
3.4.1. Calculation of the Stimulus Fund	41
3.4.2. Criteria for Stimulus Payments	41
3.4.3. Distribution of Stimulus Fund Payments	42
3.4.4. How Much is Paid from the Stimulus Fund?	43
4. Summary and Recommendations	45
4.1. Positive Outcomes of the Salary Reform	46
4.2. The Unfinished Agenda of the 2011 Salary Reform	46
4.3. Recommendations	46

List of Tables, Figures, Appendices

Table 1	List of Collected Standardized Forms	13
Table 2	List of Interviewees	13
Table 3	List of Spreadsheets and Checklists	14
Table 4	Summary of Data Sources	14
Table 5	Characterization of the Sample Schools	15
Table 6	Three Scenarios of the Future Teacher Salary System, December 2010	21
Table 7	The Increase of Permissible Teaching Hours, 2011 – 2013	23
Table 8	Average Monthly Salary Growth Rate by Sector	26
Table 9	Relative Monthly Salary by Industry	27
Table 10	Average Net Salary of Teachers based on Tarification, 2013	31
Table 11	Descriptive Statistics of Tariff Tables from Ten School for Select Subjects	32
Table 12	The Relation between Actual Teaching Load and Teacher Salary	34
Table 13	Reported Vacancies by Month and Location of School	37
Table 14	Hours Taught in Own Specialization and in Other Subjects	39
Table 15	Comparison of Tariff Table and Vedomost: Example of a Semi-Urban School in Jalal-Abad	40
Table 16	Comparison of Planned and Actual Teaching Hours: Example of a Semi-Urban School in Jalal-Abad	41
Table 17	Comparison of Tariff Table and Vedomost: Example 2 of a Semi-Urban School in Jalal-Abad	41
Figure 1	The Stavka Teacher Salary System in the Post-Soviet Region	19
Figure 2	Types of Working Hours (since the 2011 salary reform)	24
Figure 3	Average Monthly Salary by Sector, 2001 – 2012	25
Figure 4	Reported Vacancies: September and January, 2010/11 - 2013/14	33
Figure 5	Who Receives Payments from the Stimulus Fund? Responses from Teachers	36
Figure 6	Who Receives Payments from the Stimulus Fund? Responses from Teachers	43
Appendix 1	Policy Documents Collected and Analyzed in this Study	48

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB Asian Development Bank

CEECIS Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States

CEATM Center for Educational Assessment and Teaching Methods

CPI Consumer price index

IMF International Monetary Fund

MoES Ministry of Education and Science

KGS Kyrgyz som

NGO Non-governmental organization

NSC National Statistical Committee

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PFC Per Capita Financing

PISA Programme of International Student Assessment

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

USAID United States Agency for International Development

USD United States dollar

UTS United tariff scale

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Introduction. This report presents a follow-up study on the situation of teachers and examines in particular the impact of the 2011 salary reform on work conditions of teachers as well as on the quality of instruction in Kyrgyzstan. The first study was carried out in 2009. In 2011, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic overhauled the outdated salary structure and ordered a major increase of the base salary. Five years after the first examination of the situation of teachers in Kyrgyzstan, this study pursues the following research questions:

1. Do teachers earn more than before the reform?
2. Do teachers teach fewer hours than three years ago?
3. Have young teachers been attracted to the profession?
4. Is teacher shortage resolved?
5. Do schools use the stimulus fund to reward high-performing teachers?

A large set of nationwide data consisting of policy documents, standardized forms (tariff tables, salary forms, etc.), statistical information was collected and supplemented with quantitative as well as qualitative data from ten select schools in the country. A total of 326 forms, 41 documents and 19 checklists were analyzed that directly related to salary and human resource matters. In addition, 54 experts and administrators as well as 148 teachers were interviewed. Finally, a total of 218 teachers from the sample of ten schools filled out a questionnaire in which they indicated, among other information, what their educational background was, how many hours they were teaching and in which subjects.

Without any doubt, this study constitutes the most ambitious empirical study on the situation of teachers in Kyrgyzstan conducted to date.

Policy Analysis. The 2011 salary reform was progressive in that it attempted to replace the stavka system (teaching load) with the working load system that is also in effect in OECD countries. However, the normative teaching load of 20 hours or the weekly workload of 32 hours (including teaching hours as well as other hours) came under attack shortly after the reform was issued. The nominal value of a working hour was much higher than before but still lower than the wage average in comparable professions. Shortly after it went into effect, the reform was criticized for mainly benefiting young teachers and teachers in rural areas at the expense of the others. This study shows that all teachers benefited from the reform. Nevertheless, under massive public pressure, the initial reform was continuously modified and now resembles, in broad

strokes, what was in place before 2011 with the following exceptions: young teachers and teachers in rural areas earn more than before, there are fewer and better paid supplements, the categories or ranks of teachers are eliminated, and the stimulus fund helps to modestly lift the salary of all teachers, and additionally boost the salary of a few high-performing teachers. The two main quality concerns, however, that the reform intended to resolve, could not be systematically enforced: the permissible weekly teaching load of teachers was continuously increased over a brief period of three years, from 20 hours to 25 hours, from 25 hours to 27 hours, and finally, since school year 2013/14, from 27 to now 31 hours. Three governmental decrees (# 18, # 270, # 373) and one ministerial directive (MoES # 04-7/4451), issued over the period January 2011 and June 2013, softened up the initial reform. As a result, the salary structure in the Kyrgyz Republic de facto reverted to the stavka system (where the number of teaching hours determines to great extent the salary) that the reform of 2011 intended to replace.

Multi-level analysis on actual salary, teaching load and quality of instruction. The empirical investigation at the school-level enabled to compare policy and practice of salary reform. Even though the reform attempted to improve the quality of instruction by preventing excessive teaching loads, warning against teachers taking on hours in subjects for which they have no educational background or specialization, and several other practices that clearly have had a negative impact on the quality of instruction, the deeply rooted, highly problematic practice of redistributing vacant teaching hours and thereby boosting the salary of the existing teaching workforce at a school has, against all expectations, remained resistant to change. In fact, some schools on purpose leave vacancies unfilled ("strategic vacancies") or favor double-shift teaching and overcrowded schools because it allows teachers to take on additional hours and earn more money. As before the reform, the greatest variance of the teacher salary (54% of the variance, Pearson correlation of 0.74, significance level of 0.01) is explained in terms of the number of teaching hours: the greater the teaching load, the higher the salary. This high correlation between teaching hours and salary has a detrimental effect on the quality of instruction. The study highlights six such negative consequences that are explained in great detail in the report: (1) vulnerability of teachers who must rely on the school administration's decision on whether they are allocated additional teaching hours, (2) micromanagement of teachers because every single hour needs to be recorded and documented, (3) overcrowding of schools because it enables to have several classes per grade,

(4) vacancies as placeholders or “strategic vacancies” that later during the school year are split up and distributed among the teaching staff, (5) excessive teaching load of up to 36 hours per week, and (6) redistribution of vacant teaching hours to non-specialists. The study was able to compare the tariff tables that were submitted shortly before or at the beginning of the school year (August or September) with those that reflect a “re-tarification” made in January. There is unambiguous evidence to suggest that vacancies listed at the planning stage (in August/September) are not eliminated a few months later, either because the school had difficulties hiring new teachers or because it purposefully left a few vacancies unfilled so that it could boost the salary of the existing teaching workforce. Finally, the study explored how the stimulus fund (10% of the school’s salary fund) is used in practice. In most schools, there is a combination of paying all teachers a minimal additional amount and additional pay to a select group of teachers. However, a closer analysis of the award criteria, suggested by MoES and used at school level, reveals that too many criteria focus on non-pedagogical and non-performance based criteria.

Recommendations. The report ends with four recommendations:

1. In retrospective, the 2011 salary reform did indeed abandon the outdated stavka system but it failed to replace it with a weekly workload system, common in OECD countries, but rather replaced with an hourly pay system. There is a need to revisit, in the long run, the possibility of a weekly workload system with two employment modalities: full time teachers (working for 36 hours) and part-time teachers (working for 18 hours). However, the nominal value of the salary is key to make such a bold move feasible.
2. There is an urgent need to develop a teacher career ladder that replaces the abandoned “category”, or promotion system. Teachers that remain in the profession, perform well, invest in their own professional development, and take on responsible positions (as mentors, trainers, textbook developers, etc.) need to have the option of being considered for promotion. The promotion needs to be reflected in their title or rank as well as in their base salary.
3. Teacher education has to step up and proactively respond to the challenges in the teaching profession. Pre-service teacher education should offer multi-subject preparation in subjects with low weekly instructional hours. In OECD countries, preparing teachers to teach in a subject area (consisting of several subjects) has become the

rule and is no longer the exception. As the teacher survey of this study shows, one-fifth of all hours that teachers teach, are in subjects for which teachers do not possess a qualification (diploma or degree) or a supplementary training. There is unfounded prejudice in Kyrgyzstan against multi-subject teaching. In fact, there is a strongly held belief that multi-subject teaching leads to a lower instructional quality. Quite the opposite applies when empirically examined at school level: in practice, teachers in Kyrgyzstan teach multiple subjects without having the necessary qualification to do so. An international comparison might be useful for policy analysts in Kyrgyzstan as it will allow them to explore what provisions need to be put in place to tackle the negative stigma attached to multi-subject teacher preparation in Kyrgyzstan. Furthermore, special certificate or degree programs should be developed for substitute teachers. In particular, the acquisition of a second specialization should be made accessible and encouraged for those teachers who for years have been teaching subjects for which they have no educational background.

4. There is a need to examine and understand in greater detail a few problematic phenomena that this study has highlighted:
 - young specialists who leave the profession after a brief period of induction,
 - overcrowded schools and schools with double shift in Bishkek as well as in a few other urban and semi-urban areas
 - excessive teaching loads
 - “strategic vacancies”
 - over-emphasis on administrative tasks and duties rather than on performance and educational criteria in the stimulus fund.

In any education system, whether in the Kyrgyz Republic or elsewhere, the situation of teachers - including their salary and work conditions - determines in great part the quality of instruction. In 2011, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic made a bold fundamental reform of the salary structure that has had a positive impact on teachers. However, the reform has had a few glitches as well as a few systemic challenges that at times eclipsed all the accomplishments that the reform had achieved.

This report attempted to document the reform, examine its implementation at school level, and identify a few unfinished agenda items that should be tackled over the next few years.



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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

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This study deals with the teacher salary reform in Kyrgyzstan, which went into effect in spring 2011, and examines its impact on teachers as well as on students. The reform resulted in a major increase of the salary benefitting particular teachers in remote rural areas as well as young specialists. Without any doubt, it needs to be considered a fundamental reform because it changed the structure and composition of the salary. For the first time, non-teaching hours were recognized as work for which teachers had to be compensated.

In the previous system, known as the *stavka* system, the base salary was based on the teaching load. In addition, numerous supplements were paid to help lift the low base salary. Furthermore, a semi-automatic promotion scheme was in place in which teachers were promoted from one “category” to the next over the course of their careers. The promotion or “category” scheme benefited experienced or more senior teachers.

Prior to the 2011 salary reform, the teaching profession experienced difficulties with attracting a sufficient number of graduates from pre-service teacher education to work at schools. Overall the teaching workforce was over-aged with 5% of employed teachers at the retirement age¹. The ratio of retired teachers was especially high in rural schools. The payment for one teaching load was only approximately 30 USD per month. The weekly teaching load was 16 hours for primary school teachers (grades 1-4) and 18 hours for secondary school teachers. The low *stavka* rate forced teachers to take on additional teaching hours or assume a second job outside of school. Unsurprisingly, teacher shortage was an issue before 2011 and the talk of the “crisis of the pedagogical cadres” had become ubiquitous.

The 2011 reform revamped the structure of the teacher salary. In the initial version of the salary reform², teachers were not allowed to work more than 32 hours. The workload of 32 hours included 20 hours of teaching, preparatory hours (varied depending on the subject), notebook checking, hours for professional development and non-teaching hours for classroom teacher responsibilities, mentoring of young specialist teachers, etc. The salary rate was set hourly based on the average weekly load of 32 hours (20 hours of teaching and up to 12 hours of other hours). In effect, the teaching load system [*stavka* system] was replaced with a weekly workload system. This part of the salary is referred to as the “guaranteed part” of the salary.

Besides the “guaranteed” part, there was also a “compensatory part” of the salary that included a series of supplements. It is important to point out that the structural reform of 2011 merged the great number of small supplements into fewer larger ones, notably: work experience, high-mountainous, rural location,

as well as specific conditions. The third part was the “incentive part.”

The incentive part, introduced as part of the salary reform, relies on the “stimulus fund” that each school received in order to reward or incentivize high-performing staff at the school. In essence, the first version of the teacher salary very much resembled the working load system of OECD countries. It even included an element of performance-based pay in the form of bonuses paid from the stimulus fund. For the first time in the Kyrgyz Republic, teachers were paid for the workload of 32 hours per week rather than merely for their actual teaching load (20 hours). Under pressure from schools in urban areas that had a large student population enabling teachers to take on additional teaching hours, the ceiling for the maximum permissible workload was lifted four months later (decree #279, 31 May 2011) from 32 to 36 hours, and two years later from 36 to 49 hours (decree #373, 24 June 2013).

In effect, the incentive part or the “stimulus fund” constituted a bonus system that replaced the “category” system, in which teachers were, regardless of their performance, semi-automatically promoted from one category to the next over the course of their careers. As a corollary, teachers in the highest category used to be the oldest teachers receiving salary supplements from two sources: from the *pedstaj* supplement (supplement for work experience) and from the “category” system (supplement for rank). This dual compensation of older teachers accounted for a huge salary differential between young and older teachers. The new system got rid of one of the sources, the semi-automatic promotion or “category” system, and only preserved the salary supplement for *pedstaj*, or work experience. In addition, it introduced the “stimulus fund” that was meant to be used to reward and retain well-performing teachers. Needless to state, the older generation of teachers that lost their privileges under the new system were not pleased with the 2011 salary reform.

The fundamental salary reform of 2011 was preceded by a wave of widespread dissatisfaction among teachers, at first because the supplement for professional work experience (*pedstaj*) was withheld and then more generally because of the low base salary. A series of public protests in 2009 and 2010, followed by hearings, policy analyses, and public forums generated an awareness of the poor working conditions of teachers. The 2009 UNICEF Kyrgyzstan Study on Survival Strategies of Schools in the Kyrgyz Republic: A school-level analysis of teacher shortage, in particular, showed the impact of teacher shortage on the quality of education. At the time, schools tended to cope with teacher shortage by redistributing vacant school hours among the teaching staff or by hiring university students, retirees or teachers from other schools. These and other coping strategies had a detrimental impact

¹ That is, over the age of 58 (female teachers) or 64 (male teachers), respectively (see UNICEF CEECIS, 2011, p. 29).

² Decree #18, date: January 19, 2011.

on the quality of instruction because teachers ended up assuming excessive teaching loads including in subjects for which they had no professional background. Teacher shortage was pronounced in remote rural areas as well as in Russian language schools. But also schools in Bishkek and in other attractive locations had difficulties recruiting young specialists because the entry-level salaries were low and because the additional teaching hours were typically assigned to more experienced, older teachers. The stavka system, combined with a low nominal value of the base salary, encouraged teachers to take on additional teaching hours and, as a result, left them with little time to properly prepare classes, provide feedback to students, meet with parents, collaborate with peers or engage in any other activity that is essential for being an effective teacher.

The 2011 teacher salary reform represented an ambitious initiative of the Government of Kyrgyzstan to end the “crisis” in the teaching profession and improve the quality of instruction as follows: remedy teacher shortage, reduce the teaching load of teachers, reward high-performing teachers, and attract young specialists to the profession.

Three years after the reform, UNICEF Kyrgyzstan funded a follow-up study on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Science to analyze the implementation of the 2011 salary reform at school level. This report presents the findings from the study that was carried out in spring 2014. The study finds that, within a period of three years only, the teacher salary structure gradually reverted back to a stavka system with a few notable differences. The 2014 UNICEF Kyrgyzstan Study on the Situation of Teachers provides an overview of the situation of teachers in the Kyrgyz Republic and more specifically investigates the context of the 2011 reform, reconstructs the changes that occurred since the initial reform, and examines in great detail the implementation at school level. The study focuses on the objectives of the 2011 salary reform and therefore presents the situation of teachers with a special focus on the five research questions mentioned below:

1. Do teachers earn more than before the reform?
2. Do teachers teach fewer hours than three years ago?
3. Have young teachers been attracted to the profession?
4. Is teacher shortage resolved?
5. Do schools use the stimulus fund to reward high-performing teachers?

The report ends with a few recommendations on how to improve the situation of teachers and the quality of instruction.

1.1. The Situation of Teachers: Analytical Work of UNICEF Kyrgyzstan

UNICEF Kyrgyzstan has produced to date two studies on the situation of teachers as well as pre-school teachers in the Kyrgyz Republic:

UNICEF Kyrgyzstan. (2009). Survival Strategies of Schools in the Kyrgyz Republic: A school-level analysis of teacher shortage. Bishkek: UNICEF Kyrgyzstan.

UNICEF Kyrgyzstan. (2010). Survival Strategies of Preschools in the Kyrgyz Republic: A school-level analysis of teacher shortage. Bishkek: UNICEF Kyrgyzstan.

This study constitutes the third study on the situation of teachers in the Kyrgyz Republic and therefore allows for comparisons over time.

The first two studies were included in a comparative study that was funded by the regional office of UNICEF and carried out in six countries of the CEECIS region (Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States): Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Uzbekistan. The comparative six-country study was entitled as follows:

UNICEF CEECIS. (2011). Teachers: A regional study on recruitment, development and salaries of teachers in the CEECIS region. Geneva: UNICEF CEECIS.

The six-country study enabled researchers and policy analysis to compare the situation of teachers in Kyrgyzstan with that of teachers in other countries of the region³. All three studies are publicly available over Internet. This report constitutes the fourth study on teachers.

1.2. Research Background and Setting

The Ministry of Education and Science supported the study and issued a letter to schools and Departments of Education at district and municipal level asking them to provide relevant information and to make themselves available for interviews. There was great interest among teachers, school administrators (school directors, deputy school directors, and accountants), government officials at district and municipal level, and other experts to share their positive and negative experiences with the 2011 salary reform. The research team was able to collect all the information that was necessary to carry out a comprehensive study on the teacher salary reform.

The study was carried out over the period of February to May 2014 and included comprehensive quan-

³ The six-country UNICEF CEECIS study is available for download: http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/UNICEF_teachers_web.pdf

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titative analysis of salary-related issues at district and national level as well as an in-depth quality analysis of how the reform has been implemented at the school level. A total of ten schools were visited in the month of March to understand how the salary reform has impacted the situation of teachers and the quality of instruction.

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The research team consisted of two international and two national experts:

- Gita Steiner-Khamsi and Raisa Belyavina, Columbia University, New York
- Chynara Kumenova, UNICEF Kyrgyzstan
- Farida Ryskulueva, independent expert, Bishkek

All four researchers had participated in one or several of the UNICEF studies on teachers, listed in the previous section. During the data collection in schools, the research team split into two groups in order to carry out the interviews with the school administrators and the teachers at the same time and in separate rooms. This setting ensured that teachers could speak freely without administrators being present in the room. The analysis of the data was done with additional help from Columbia University⁴.

1.3. Data Collection Instruments

The study used the following data collection instruments: (1) policy document analysis, (2) analysis of relevant forms used at school, district and central level, (3) individual or group interviews with experts, government officials and school administrators, (4) focus group interviews with teachers, (5) questionnaires of teachers, and (6) checklists at district and central level.

Policy Document Analysis

All relevant central, district, and municipal level policy documents (laws, decrees, orders) that deal with the salary reform, teacher work conditions, or allowances were collected and analyzed. In fact, all central level policy documents were taken into consideration. The district and municipal level documents were included if the informants at local level identified them as relevant for the study. A total of 41 policy documents were collected and analyzed. They are grouped in three categories (decrees of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, letters/instructions issued by MoES, and memorandums written by the State Teacher Union).

⁴ The team would like to acknowledge the support of the following three graduate research assistants based at Teachers College, Columbia University: Ji Liu (economic and statistical analyses), Benjamin Schwab (analysis of tariff tables), Claudia Triana (analysis of teacher shortage data).

Analysis of Relevant Forms

Table 1 lists the forms that were collected at the school and district level that relate to human resources or salary-related issues. A total of 326 forms were collected and analyzed.

From the 298 tariff tables, 279 could be included in the analysis. The remaining 19 tariff tables were in a different format and thus were rendered incomparable and excluded from further analysis. The sample of tariff table is slightly skewed towards urban schools. In school year 2011, there were 2,204 schools in the Kyrgyz Republic; 437 out of them were urban (19.8%) and 1,767 rural schools (80.2%). The sample of 279 tariff tables consists of 22.9% urban/semi-urban schools (64 schools) and 77.1% (215 schools) rural/high mountainous schools.

Individual or Group Interviews

Individual or group interviews were conducted at central, district, municipal as well as school levels. Table 2 lists the institution or affiliation function, level (central, district/municipal, schools), and number of interviewees.

Focus Group Interviews

The focus groups were carried out in Russian or Kyrgyz to enable a lively discussion. The teachers were divided into two groups (younger teachers, older teachers) to allow for an open dialogue among peers minimizing unequal status or age differences among teachers.

A total of 148 individuals participated in focus group interviews carried out in the ten selected schools: 50 younger teachers participated in the focus groups, and 98 older teachers participated in the focus groups.

Questionnaire of Teachers

The questionnaires covered the following areas of inquiry: teachers' gender, age, educational attainment, subject specialization, additional pedagogical training or retraining, subjects taught and additional school functions as well as questions soliciting teachers' perceptions on work conditions and impact of the salary reform. A total of 217 teachers completed the questionnaire.

Spreadsheets and Checklists at District and Central Level (Statistical Information)

The research team created spreadsheets and checklists to standardize some of the information collected at central and district level. Table 3 lists these standardized forms created and collected for the study.

Table 1. List of Collected Standardized Forms

Type of Form	Description	Number
Tarifkazia (tariff table)	A numbered list of all the teachers currently employed, produced by September of each year and updated in January in a re-tarification process to reflect the distribution of teaching hours at the school as well as the allocation of salary supplements. In general, the tarifkazia records the name, highest education level attained, years of teaching experience, subject teaching, teaching load, base salary, salary supplements and additional functions performed such as homeroom assignments, notebook checking and mentoring responsibilities. The last column in the tarifkazia lists the estimated monthly salary of the teacher.	298 forms from schools (including 10 visited schools and districts)
Tabel	Daily record of working hours of teachers for each month, which is recorded every day by a school administrator; used by schools to calculate teacher salaries.	7 from visited schools
Vedomost	Salary receipt form received by each teacher for a given pay period, including a breakdown of accrued salary and tax deductions.	6 from visited schools
Stimulus Fund Criteria	Document created by schools upon which to base incentive pay for teachers.	6 from visited schools
Stimulus Fund Distribution	List of teachers at the school that received an award from the Stimulation Fund. The form also includes the amount paid to each teacher.	7 from visited schools
Teacher Training Schedule	List of teachers that attend professional development workshops and programs.	1 as an example
Medical Certificate	Calculation of payment for sick leave.	1 as an example

Table 2. List of Interviewees

Institution/Affiliation	Function	Level	Number
School administration	School directors	School	9
	Deputy school directors	School	5
	School accountants	School	2
	Other (social worker, etc.)	School	5
District administration	Director or Deputy Director of Department of Education	District/Municipal	7
	Accountant/Economist	District/Municipal	12
	Human Resource Managers	District/Municipal	5
Central administration	Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Finance: specialists, heads of department, former advisor to Minister	Central	5
Other experts: Teacher Union, NGOs, consulting firms	Education or finance experts	Central	4
Total			54

Table 3. List of Spreadsheets and Checklists

Type	Description	Number
Teacher Data in schools (2009-2013)	Number of teachers by age and gender, vacancies by rural and urban, number of graduates are placement and accepted in schools by regions	1
Vacancies on subjects (2009-2014)	Data of subject vacancy to placement of graduates into schools by regions	5
Graduates placement (2009-2014)	Number of budget and contract graduates, budget graduates placement and their attended in schools by universities	5
Composition of Teaching Workforce by Age (2009-2013)	Teachers with less than 3 years of work experience and teachers at retirement age	3 from visited districts
Vacancies on subjects in district level (2009-2014)	Data of vacancy in districts by school subjects directed to MoES	3 from visited districts
Young Teacher Turn-over (2009-2013)	Young teachers reported to job assignment and left schools in Osh city and oblast	2

As listed above, the amount of information gathered was remarkable. The collection of the same kind of data, retrieved from different level, allowed for a triangulation of data. In particular, information on the salary, the disbursement of the stimulus fund, and the allocation of additional teaching hours were col-

lected from different kinds of informants (e.g. administrators versus teachers, young teachers versus old teachers, etc.) thereby allowing a comparison and, if applicable, an interpretation of the varied responses. Table 4 provides a summary of the six different types of information collected.

Table 4. Summary of Data Sources

Data Collection Instruments		Number
1	Policy document analysis	41 documents
2	Analysis of relevant forms	326 forms
3	Individual or group interviews with experts, officials, administrators	54 experts
4	Focus group interviews with teachers	148 teachers
5	Questionnaire for teachers	218 teachers
6	Spreadsheets and checklists (statistical information)	19 checklists

1.4. Sampling of Schools and Informants

The provinces, districts, schools and informants were selected based on purposeful sampling criteria. At each level, the maximum variation selection criterion was used to ensure that the sample reflect a wide array of schools and informants.

Provinces

The study was carried out in Bishkek, Chui province, and Jalal-Abad province (oblast). Jalal-Abad oblast is known for its cultural diversity and Chui province participated in the per-capita financing pilot project of USAID and the World Bank. Finally, a sample of schools from Bishkek was included because school

administrators and teachers in the capital had been very vocal in criticizing the salary reform for being biased towards rural schools.

Districts

Within the three provinces, the seven districts were selected as follows: three were selected in the Jalal-Abad oblast that include the same schools as in the 2009 study; two small cities in two additional districts, two districts in the capital city, with schools varying according to criteria selection of small and large schools, specialized gymnasias and regular schools and Russian and Kyrgyz schools.

Schools

Ten schools were selected to understand in-depth how the reform has been implemented in practice. Furthermore, the research team carried out individual as well as group interviews with school administrators (school director, deputy school director, and, if available, school accountant) and teachers to learn about their opinions and assessments. A particular focus was put on the five research questions presented in the introductory section of this report.

As with the selection of provinces and district, the maximum-variation sampling criteria was used to select the schools. The following criteria were used to ensure that a variety of schools have been included in the sample:

- **School size:** the sample included large as well as small schools
- **Language of instruction:** Kyrgyz, Russian, and Uzbek language schools were included
- **Location of school:** city schools (4 schools in Bishkek), semi-urban (2 of which one in Kant and the other in Jalal-Abad town), rural schools (2), remote rural or mountainous schools (2)
- **Type of school:** gymnasium (4 schools), regular 11-year schools (4), incomplete secondary school grades 1-9 (1), incomplete and multi-age school grades 1-9 (1 school).

The following lists the main characteristics of the ten selected schools. For reasons of confidentiality, they are labeled as School 1 – School 10.

Table 5. Characterization of the Sample Schools

Reference	Region, Location	Language of Instruction	Type of School, (Grades)
School 1	Jalal-Abad, rural	Uzbek	Complete secondary school (Grades 1-11)
School 2	Jalal-Abad, semi-urban	Russian	Gymnasium (Grades 1-11)
School 3	Jalal-Abad, rural	Kyrgyz, Russian, Uzbek	Complete secondary school (Grades 1-11)
School 4	Jalal-Abad, remote-rural	Kyrgyz	Incomplete secondary school (Grades 1-9)
School 5	Bishkek, city	Russian	Gymnasium (Grades 1-11)
School 6	Bishkek, city	Russian	Complete secondary school (Grades 1-11)
School 7	Bishkek, city	Kyrgyz	Gymnasium, federal school (Grades 1-11)
School 8	Bishkek, city	Kyrgyz	Complete secondary (Grades 1-11)
School 9	Chui, semi-urban	Russian	Gymnasium (Grades 1-11)
School 10	Chui, high-mountainous	Kyrgyz	Incomplete and multi-age secondary (Grades 1-9)

1.5. Validity and Limitations of Study

The research team increased the validity of the study by putting the following provisions in place:

- Triangulation of data sources: several questions asked from the various respondents were on purpose identical (e.g., distribution of stimulus fund, allocation of additional hours, etc.) in order to compare answers and identify discrepancies
- Representative nationwide sample of salary information (tariff tables)
- Purposeful sampling method ensuring maximum variation of school settings
- Multi-level data collection and analysis (central, district/municipal, school) to understand the varied perspectives on the topic
- Discussion of preliminary findings during in-depth interviews with teachers, school directors, deputy-directors as well as officers at the district and municipal levels to ensure correct comprehension and interpretation of the findings
- Creation of an interview setting that made infor-

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nants speak freely and without fear of repercussion (assurance of confidentiality and anonymity)

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- Consideration of cultural values and hierarchies (separate focus groups by age of teachers, separation of administrators and teachers for in-depth interviews).

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Naturally, there always exist limitations in a study. The greatest asset of this study was at the same time the greatest limitation: the letter from the Ministry of Education and Science requesting collaboration with the research team opened all doors and gave the research team access to sensitive financial and human resource information that otherwise would have been inaccessible. However, the perception that MoES dispatched the research team to evaluate the implementation of the teacher salary reform also generated fears of control. Clearly, social desirability was an issue in some of the questions and the research team discarded those questions. For example, all questions

regarding additional fees collected from parents (for private tutoring, special events, admission to school, etc.) were not answered freely because such fees are considered unofficial or illegal. Unsurprisingly, only a very small percentage admitted that such fees exist. From 212 teachers who replied to the question on private tutoring, only 17 teachers confirmed that they engage in private tutoring and the remaining 195 (92%) denied such activity. Clearly, such a finding contradicts other studies on private tutoring in Kyrgyzstan. The research team discarded this and other stigmatized questions from the data pool to ensure the reliability and validity of the data.

Overall, the data of this study is robust. An impressive amount of data has been collected and analyzed. The study constitutes the most comprehensive study on teacher salaries in the Kyrgyz Republic that has been carried out to date.



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CHAPTER 2. THE TEACHER SALARY REFORM 2011: A POLICY ANALYSIS

This chapter explains the teacher salary reform that was implemented in 2011. It provides the context for why the reform was initiated and how it was developed. This chapter presents a policy analysis in that it explains the main features of the initial reform as well as the changes made in the form of amendments and additional guidelines over the period 2011-2014.

Given the long-term commitment of UNICEF Kyrgyzstan to analyze the situation of teachers, it is possible to provide a “before-and-after” comparison of the teacher salary in Kyrgyzstan, setting the 2011 salary reform as the turning event. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the first UNICEF Kyrgyzstan study focused on school teachers (2009) and the second on pre-school teachers (2011). In particular, the first study, *Survival Strategies of Schools in the Kyrgyz Republic: A school-level analysis of teacher shortage* (UNICEF Kyrgyzstan 2009), was widely read and used as one of the resource books for developing the 2011 teacher salary reform. The findings from the two national studies were fed into a six-country regional study *Teachers: A Regional Study on Recruitment, Development and Salaries of Teachers in the CEECIS Region* (UNICEF CEECIS, 2011). The regional study, carried out in six countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States made it clear that the teacher salary in Kyrgyzstan was among the lowest in the region; only the teacher salary in Tajikistan was lower.

2.1. The Salary Structure before 2011

The 2009 and 2010 UNICEF Kyrgyzstan studies on teachers brought to light a vicious cycle that made it difficult for schools to improve the quality of instruction. Prior to 2011, teachers were not able to make a living from one teaching load alone and therefore took on additional teaching hours at their own school and, if possible, at surrounding schools. As mentioned in the first chapter, the allocation of additional hours benefited mainly experienced teachers and teachers working in large schools. In urban areas, overcrowded schools with possibilities to take on additional teaching hours were attractive to teachers but highly unpopular among students and parents. There were no incentives to fill vacancies or build additional school facilities as teachers had to rely on the redistribution of vacant hours which resulted from unfilled positions. In an effort to retain the best and most experienced teachers at the school, some schools purposefully did not fill vacancies so that they could redistribute hours from unfilled positions and thereby boost the salary of well-performing teachers. Unsurprisingly, teacher shortage was high, the actual teaching load excessive, and the proportion of subjects taught by non-specialists a cause of great concern. According to the PISA 2006 study, 62% of all schools in Kyrgyzstan report vacancies in science and almost all of these

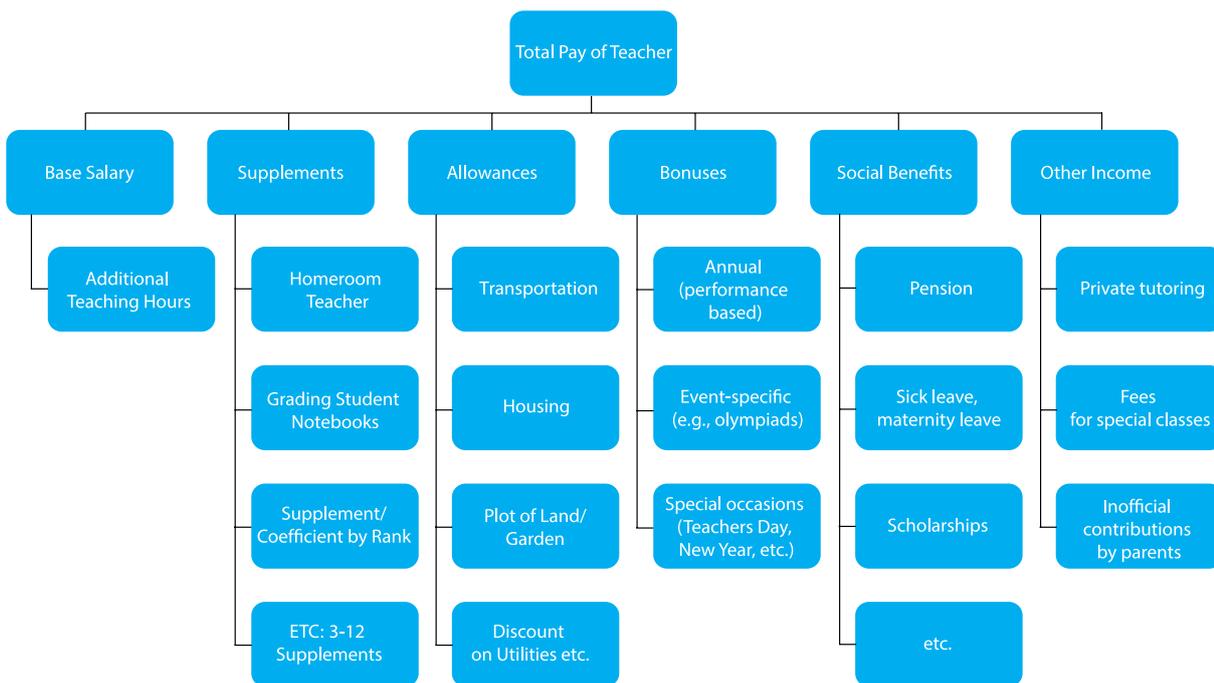
schools (59% countrywide) cope with this shortage by filling their vacancies with teachers that take on additional lessons in science or by assigning unqualified teachers (that is, teachers qualified in other subjects but with no training in science) to teach science.⁵

As demonstrated in the PISA 2006 study, mentioned above, the widespread practice of redistribution, in which vacant teaching hours are assigned to non-specialists, conceals the true extent of teacher shortage. In 2008, the National Statistics Committee (NSC) of the Kyrgyz Republic recorded a teacher shortage of only 4.2%. Nationwide 56.6% of schools reported one or more vacancies. However, by the beginning of the school year, most schools managed to fill the vacancies by using all kinds of coping strategies: allocating additional hours to teachers at the school, hiring retired teachers, university students or teachers from another schools, hiring professionals without any pedagogical degree, etc. In fact, the 2009 UNICEF Kyrgyzstan study identified ten such coping strategies to fill the vacancies. Therefore, the study kept referring to “10 plus 1 indicators of teacher shortage”: Ten indicators were so-called covert indicators of teacher shortage (redistribution of vacant hours, hiring retired teachers, hiring teachers from other schools, etc.) and one indicator was the overt indicator measuring the number of unfilled positions.

It is important to bear in mind that the allocation of additional teaching hours was primarily done for financial reasons (low base salary) but at the same time reflects a system that was in its core structurally flawed: until 2011 the teacher’s income was composed of a low base salary for one statutory teaching load [stavka], additional teaching hours, numerous supplements with a small nominal value, and allowances paid by local government, and fees for special classes and private tutoring as well as unofficial income paid by parents. In 2009, the average base salary for one teaching load was approximately 30 USD but the average income of a teacher (including base salary, additional teaching hours, supplements) was 82 USD per month (UNICEF CEECIS, 2009). The stavka system is a legacy from the Soviet past and the education system in Kyrgyzstan is not alone with having to tackle deep-rooted structural problems. In fact, it shares the same kind of structural issues with other countries in the CEECIS region. As Figure 1 shows, the salary structure up to 2011 was fragmented, non-transparent, and unpredictable. Figure 1 shows the system of Tajikistan (year 2007) which resembled in great parts the Kyrgyz system until 2011.

⁵ OECD (2007). PISA 2006. Science Competencies for Tomorrow’s World. Volume 1 and 2. Paris: OECD; Center for Educational Assessment and Teaching Methods (CEATM). (2008). *We Study for Life. The results of the international comparative study of functional literacy of 15-year old pupils, PISA-2006*. Bishkek: CEATM; UNICEF (2009). *Learning Achievement in the CEECIS Region. A comparative analysis of the results from the 2006 PISA study*. Geneva: UNICEF CEECIS.

Figure 1. The Stavka Teacher Salary System in the Post-Soviet Region



Source: Steiner-Khamsi (2007)⁶

2.2. Context of the 2011 Reform

As mentioned above, the UNICEF Kyrgyzstan 2009 study on teachers made it abundantly clear that schools were struggling with finding qualified teachers that were willing to teach a regular teaching load of 16 hours (primary school) or 18 hours (lower and upper secondary school) per week, respectively.⁷ Smaller schools, which did not have the ability to redistribute hours, reported massive teacher shortage and larger schools were only able to retain teachers by allowing them to take on additional hours. Before 2011, teachers were only allowed to teach up to 1.5 times the statutory teaching load, that is 24 hours (primary school teachers) or 27 hours (secondary school teachers) per week, respectively. However, exceptions were made and the Departments of Education at district level and municipal level were given the authority to lift the ceiling for the maximum amount of permissible teaching hours from 1.5 times to the double of the statutory teaching load (32-36 teaching hours per week). There was a large gap that yawned between the policy and practice of the stavka system.

⁶ Steiner-Khamsi, Gita (2007). The Stavka System in Tajikistan. Unpublished Report, funded by the World Bank. Washington, DC: World Bank.

⁷ Law of the Kyrgyz Republic (2006). About Education. Decree # 225, Article 32: Social protection of staff in the system of education. Bishkek: Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, 28 December 2006. Please note that this particular article was changed as a result of the 2011 salary reform.

The 2009 study on teachers found that teachers were teaching on average 27 hours per week, that is, slightly more than the permissible 1.5 stavka per week.

The dissatisfaction among teachers was considerable. Beginning in 2008, teachers started to organize themselves and demanded retroactive payment of the work experience supplement [pedstaj]. The regulation from 2003 stipulated that the payment of the pedstaj supplement is calculated not only based on the base salary but also on additional teaching hours and other salary supplements [nadbavka]. With the help of the newly founded non-governmental organization Taalimat, approximately 2,000 teachers sued the Ministry of Finance for withholding these supplementary payments. The Ministry of Finance's inability to raise the national education budget to comply with the demands of the protesters led to political action. The Parliament finally approved the retroactive payments from 2003 to 2008 and also included the supplement in the subsequent education budgets. The last retroactive payments to fill the gap between 2003 and 2008 were completed in school year 2011/12. Even though the 2008 teacher unrest was not supported by the State Teacher Union and at the time did not entail any demand for a larger salary reform, the poor working conditions of teachers became a public and political concern.

In July 2009, the Inter-Ministerial Working Group, consisting of government officials of Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Labor was established to review the teacher remuneration system and was given two concrete charges: (a) abolish the Unified Tariff Scale (UTS) that included fixed coefficients and a nine-level salary scale for teacher remuneration⁸, and (b) develop a new salary system that is composed of three parts: guaranteed, compensatory, and incentive. They reviewed teacher salary reform initiatives in comparable systems, notably in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Uzbekistan.

After the Second Kyrgyz Revolution of April 2010, political tensions were high and masses of public servants took to the street. The three most vocal groups were military, medical, and education workers. In the fall of 2010, teachers in Issykul took their protests publicly, soon followed by teachers in other parts of the country. This time, the Ministry of Education and Science, with support of the State Teacher Union, assumed a leadership position in seeking a solution. MoES, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labor, established an expert group to review possible solutions or scenarios. There was agreement that the *stavka* system, which entails a low base salary for the statutory teaching load and a series of additional payments for additional teachings hours and supplements, needs to be overhauled. The semi-automatic promotion scheme (“attestation”) was also criticized as being ineffective because the “teacher categories” correlated more with age and years of service than with actual teacher performance. The discussions centered on how to move away from the teaching load and category system and develop a new way of remuneration that is simpler, less fragmented, and more closely connected with teacher performance. There also was a general agreement that the salary is too low. In particular, there were two features of the teacher salary that contradicted the existing legal framework at the time: (1) the teacher

8 At the time of the deliberations of the Parliamentary Commission, the most recent regulation was Decree #561 of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic (January 1, 2007). The decree established nine *razriads* or levels for the teacher salary. Coefficients were used to multiply the basic point system that the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic periodically adjusted for inflation. The lowest coefficient was 1.72 (for teachers in level 4) and the highest 3.71 (for teachers in level 12). The highest three levels were reserved for ranked teachers, that is, for teachers with “categories”: level 10 was reserved for teachers of the second category, level 11 for teachers of the first category, and the highest level (level 12) was for teachers in the highest category. Young specialists only entered the UTS system only after three years. To compensate for the low salary (coefficient of 1), they were given a salary supplement of 200 KGS per month. In 2007, the nominal value for one statutory teaching load [*stavka*] of 16 or 18 hours per week was 916 KGS. Promotion from one level to the next was semi-automatic and, for levels 4 – 9, exclusively depended on years of service. For the three highest levels, qualification mattered as well. The 2009 UNICEF Kyrgyzstan study explains in greater detail the UTS scale and lists the Decree # 561 in its appendix.

salary was below the price of the average consumer basket in Kyrgyzstan, and (2) the salary structure did not contain any element of an incentive payment.

At the end of December 2010, the Minister of Education and Science invited - with backing of the President’s order - national experts to develop, in collaboration with government officials from the other two relevant ministries, possible scenarios for a future Kyrgyz teacher salary system. In the end, MoES reviewed three scenarios that were developed by national experts. The funding for developing the scenarios was provided by USAID, UNICEF, as well as Socium Consult⁹. Table 6 summarizes the differences between the three scenarios in terms of working hours, supplements, and amount of the stimulus fund.

In the end, the final version of the 2011 teacher salary legislation drew on ideas from all three proposals:

- Differentiation between the guaranteed part (teaching hours, preparation work, extracurricular work), compensatory part (allowances for the location of the school, work experience, work conditions and special status) and incentive part based on performance;
- Cautious move to a workload system that specified the number of teaching hours (20 hours), non-teaching hours (class teacher function, mentoring, etc.) and for the first time also including lesson-planning and professional development;
- Reduction and consolidation of the large number of supplements into a few additional payments that each carry a higher nominal value;
- Differentiation between three different salary systems in schools: teachers, directors (administrators), technical support staff;
- Stronger weight on qualification;
- Preservation of supplements for work experience, academic degree and special honorary rank of teacher, for location of school (high mountainous schools, rural areas) and specific subjects (health-hazardous subjects such as chemistry or computing and for language teachers who teach in the second language of students);
- Special coefficient for teaching at “special schools” (gymnasium, lyceum, federal school).

However, the question of “categories” or the promotion scheme, replacing the outdated “attestation” system, remained unresolved. The new teacher salary

9 The USAID-proposal (Quality Learning Project), co-authored with the Ministry of Finance, was presented by two economists of education: Larisa Kiseleva together with Jyldyz Uzbekova. The UNICEF-funded proposal was developed by Lubov Ten, Nurjan Toktogulova (Ministry of Economics), Jazgul Amanova (Ministry of Finance), and Farida Ryskulueva. The Socium Consult proposal was spearheaded by the executive director Roza Uchkempirova.

Table 6. Three Scenarios of the Future Teacher Salary System, December 2010

	Scenario 1 "Staff Workload Model" Funded by UNICEF	Scenario 2 "Hourly Workload Model" Funded by USAID	Scenario 3 "Category Workload Model" Funded by Socium Consult
Guaranteed Part	36 hours, of which: 25 hours teaching 11 hours non-teaching	26 hours, of which: 20 hours teaching 6 hours non-teaching	30 hours, of which: 18 hours teaching 12 hours non-teaching
Compensatory Part	30% work experience 25% high-mountainous 10% rural location 15-25% for specific conditions	30% work experience 25% high-mountainous 30% rural location 15-25% for specific conditions	30% work experience 25% high-mountainous 10% rural location 15-25% for specific conditions
Incentive Part ("Stimulus Fund")	10-30% of the salary fund (phased rise)	20% of the salary fund	20% of the salary fund

system got rid of the de-facto automatic promotion scheme but, to the detriment of experienced, older and well-performing teachers, did not replace it with an alternative. Thus, apart from the stimulus fund, there is no incentive feature in place that helps to retain well-performing teachers.

It is noticeable that both the old and the new teacher salary systems lack features of a teacher career scheme. With the 2011 teacher salary reform, the earnings of teachers increase based on their qualification (four types of qualification) and years in service [pedstaj], but there is no opportunity given to them to improve their income based on performance or actual functions in school. The three proposals did not go into detail on how to revise the promotion scheme because all attention was given to estimating the financial impact of the proposed scenario. In retrospect, it was a mistake that the proposals were focused almost entirely on financial aspects with limited input from education experts who would have been in a position to replace the ineffective attestation/promotion system with a professionally meaningful teacher career ladder that takes into account performance, function (e.g., mentoring of other teachers, induction of young specialists into the profession, etc.), and professional development.

There was an agreement that the teacher salary should be increased by 30% in fiscal year 2011. The Socium Consult proposal estimated an increase in the national education budget by 3,126 billion KGS, the UNICEF proposal calculated an increase by 3,143 billion KGS, and the USAID proposal finally projected an increase by 2,788 billion KGS.

Indeed, the average salary increased significantly in spring 2011. The salary budget item of the national education budget was 4,263,831,100 KGS before the reform in 2010 and soared, in the year of the teacher salary reform, to 7,534,176,000 KGS in 2011 (in-

crease by 3,270 billion KGS). The salary fund experienced a further increase the year after, and stood at 9,132,365,200 KGS in fiscal year 2012¹⁰.

2.3. The Salary Reform 2011 and its Amendments

To date, there have been several government decrees issued and numerous orders from the Ministry of Education and Science to regulate the implementation of the teacher salary reform. The four most relevant decrees are listed in the following:

- Government decree # 18, 19 January 2011
- Government decree # 270, 31 May 2011
- Government decree # 373, 24 June 2013
- Government decree # 720, 31 December 2013

Clearly, the salary reform was issued in a state of emergency and under great public and political pressure, making it necessary to subsequently modify and specify the details of the reform. There was a great degree of confusion at the beginning of the reform, leading MoES to request technical assistance and funding from donors to train the district-level and school-level administrators in the new remuneration system. A short version of instructions was prepared by MoES and distributed to districts and schools. In fall 2011, UNICEF published a manual on the new remuneration system with examples and templates that national finance experts developed on behalf of MoES. A manual was distributed to every school in the Kyrgyz Republic and is to this date regarded the authoritative manual on how to calculate the salary of teachers.

¹⁰ Source: Ministry of Finance, datasheet received on March 27, 2014.

The historical account of the various decrees and orders shows that, within a brief period of three years, the bold move towards a new and better system that in many regards resembled a workload system had to be reversed due to financial constraints. The nominal value of the salary remained low and schools were not willing to strictly enforce a workload system with a maximum teaching load of twenty hours: they upheld the practice of redistributing vacant hours to their teaching staff. Even worse, more than before they assigned the vacant hours unequally, favoring experienced teachers who under the 2011 regulation lost the “category” supplement.

In essence, the 2011 teacher salary reform attempted to remedy teacher shortage by attracting young specialists to the profession and qualified teachers to rural schools. At the same time, the reform intended to improve the quality of instruction by imposing a ceiling for teaching hours, compensating teachers for lesson preparation and professional development, and strictly regulating the teaching of subjects by non-specialists. Finally, the reform intended to retain high-performing teachers in the workforce by encouraging schools to make bonus payments from the stimulus fund.

The preliminary findings from the policy analysis paint a bleak picture. The initial reform was continuously modified and now resembles, in broad strokes, what was in place before 2011 with the following exceptions: young teachers and teachers in rural areas earn more than before, there are fewer and better paid supplements, the categories or ranks of teachers are eliminated, and the stimulus fund helps to modestly lift the salary of all teachers, and additionally boost the salary of a few high-performing teachers. The two main quality concerns, however, that the reform intended to resolve, could not be systematically enforced: First, the permissible weekly teaching load of teachers was continuously increased over a brief period of three years, from 20 hours to 25 hours, from 25 hours to 27 hours, and finally, since school year 2013/14, from 27 to now 31 hours.

Curiously, today’s maximum permissible teaching load of 31 hours is higher than what was permitted before 2011. Before the reform, teachers were allowed to teach up to 1.5 stavkas, that is, primary teachers were allowed to teach 24 hours and secondary school teachers 27 hours per week. In fact, the current ceiling for working hours (49 hours per week) is higher than what the Labor Code inscribes as the maximum permissible workload (36 hours per week). The regulation states that teachers are only permitted to work more hours than the normative teaching load and normative workload, respectively, if teacher shortages exist at school level. However, three practices seem to suggest that the regulation is undermined and that the exceptions have been turned into a rule: first, there

is no approval required to assign additional teaching and working hours to teachers beyond the normative teaching load of 20 hours and the normative workload of 32 hours. Second, as will be discussed in the next chapter, schools do indeed on paper (that is in tariff tables) assign on the average a teaching load of 20 hours to teachers. It is only during the school year that the hours are redistributed among the teachers with a few teachers releasing their hours and others taking on additional hours (see chapter 3). Third, even in locations where unemployment is considerable and where there is a surplus of graduates or young specialists (e.g., in Bishkek and other cities), schools prefer to redistribute vacant hours among the existing teachers rather than to hire young specialists (see chapter 4). The steady increase of teaching hours (20-25-27-31) and working hours (32-36-41-49) within a period of two years deserves further interpretation offered in this study.

The same steady increase applies to the ceiling for school directors and deputy-directors. Their maximum permissible teaching hours were doubled over a period of two years, that is, from 6 hours to 12 hours. Table 7 illustrates the gradual increase in permissible teaching hours for teachers as well as school administrators (directors and school administrators) over the period 2011 – 2013.

Setting a ceiling for the maximum permissible teaching load was commendable from a pedagogical perspective but, from the onset, was unpopular among practitioners because it resulted in a low teacher salary. Starting with the salary reform of 2011, the unit of remuneration was no longer a stavka (16 or 18 hours of teaching per week) but rather a teaching hour. As with the stavka system, the hourly rate was linked to the actual work that was performed in terms of teaching hours as well as non-teaching hours. The reliance on actual teaching and non-teaching hours only exacerbates the following negative practices in schools of Kyrgyzstan: the professionally humiliating tendency to micro-manage teachers and the inefficient requirement of over-reporting. Today, deputy-directors spend much more time with recording how many hours teachers actually teach and how many hours they carry out other non-teaching activities. The non-teaching hours are differentiated between (a) preparatory, curricular work (lesson planning, grading of student notebooks, other preparatory work) and (b) extra-curricular work and professional development (class management, mentoring of other teachers, working with circles, other extra-curricular work), and deputy-directors are expected to meticulously record every hour a teacher spends on teaching or other work.

The teacher salary reform of 2011 faced difficulties with implementation for the following three reasons: first, the new hourly remuneration rate was higher

Table 7. The Increase of Permissible Teaching Hours, 2011 – 2013

	TEACHERS		DIRECTORS & SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS	
	Maximum Teaching Load per Week	Total	General Schools with a teacher shortage	Exceptions for schools in rural areas with a teacher shortage
Decree #18, 19 Jan 2011	20 hours	32 hours	6 hours	9 hours for directors and deputy-directors
Decree #270, 31 May 2011	25 hours	36 hours	6 for directors, 12 deputy-directors	9 for directors, 12 deputy-directors
Directive of MoES #04-7/4451, 1 September 2011	27 hours	41 hours	Administrators with an administrative stavka of 0.75 stavka are permitted to teach 15 hours, those with 0.5 stavka 19 hours, and those with 0.25 stavka 23 hours.	
Decree #373, 24 June 2013	31 hours	49 hours	12 hours for both directors & deputy-directors Administrators with an administrative stavka of 0.75 are permitted to teach 17 hours, those with 0.5 stavka 22 hours, and those with 0.25 administrative stavka 26 hours.	

than before 2011 but still too low to allow teachers to make a living from teaching the regular workload. The problematic practice of taking on additional hours and teaching excessively kept creeping back into the new structure of the teacher salary in the summer of 2011, even before the next school year had started. Second, the reform benefited primarily young teachers and teachers in rural as well as in mountainous areas. This made the large group of experienced teachers in large urban and semi-urban schools, which happen to be the most vocal and politically influential group, feel neglected. Finally, there existed several glitches and legal uncertainties in the decrees and orders creating confusion and frustration at school and district level. For example, schools and directors were given conflicting messages as to whether national holidays should be deducted from the actual teaching hours or remunerated in the same way as school holidays.

2.4. Composition of the Teacher Salary

The composition of the teacher salary following reform consists of three parts: basic, compensatory and incentives pay. The basic part of salary is guaranteed and paid based on the actual hours that the teacher worked. The compensatory part of salary is paid in accordance with established rules and regulations and includes supplements for rural and mountainous schools and schools with special status, including gymnasia and lyceum schools, as well as remuneration for honors and awards received by teachers and teachers' years of teaching experience. The incentive part of the salary is supposed to be performance based and is therefore considered "non guaranteed." The newly established stimulus fund accrues 10%

of the total salary fund allotted for school staff and is transferred to schools every three months. Expectations in a rise of the ratio, first from 10% to 20% of the salary fund by September 2012, have remained unfulfilled to this day. The increase was supposed to go into effect if an optimization reform would lead to substantial savings in the national education budget¹¹.

Teachers are paid for four types of basic work hours:

- actual teaching hour
- preparatory work
- extra-curricular work
- professional development

The remuneration for the actual teaching and preparatory work is based on an hourly rate differentiated by qualification:

- Teachers with a secondary pedagogical vocational education earn 40 KGS per hour;
- Teachers with a high pedagogical education - Bachelor or a Specialist Diploma earn 45 KGS per hour;
- Teachers with a high pedagogical education - Master's degree earn 50 KGS per hour.

The total number of hours granted to a school for the preparatory work component may not exceed 30% of the educational load of academic plan for the school. The preparatory work includes the following activities (of which only the first two are compensated¹²):

¹¹ The great disappointment with the stimulus fund was that despite major savings (e.g. cutting the instructional hours in lower secondary school) it was not increased to 15 or 20%. This was a recurring theme voiced by administrators and teachers during interviews in this study.

¹² See the Government Decree # 270, 31 May 2011, article 5.1.

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- Preparation of lessons, including the lab and practical work
- Grading student notebooks (depending on the subject taught)
- Preparation and administration of midterm tests and final exams
- Writing of lesson plans, curriculum plans, and other lesson planning
- Decoration and maintenance of the classroom

Each teacher is paid a minimum of two hours for preparation of lessons (assuming a teaching load of 20 hours). The compensation for preparation of lessons is proportionally adjusted to the number of teaching hours. In addition, teachers may claim additional hours for grading student notebooks depending on the subject that they are teaching and class size. Primary school teachers are granted 2-4 hours for grading student notebooks regardless of their actual teaching hours. Secondary school teachers receive a payment for grading student notebooks depending on the subject and size of the class (assuming a teaching load of 20 hours). Language and literature teachers, depending on the language of instruction at the school, may claim 2-4 hours for grading student notebooks. Math teachers may claim 2-3 hours. Finally, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, history, and computer science teachers are granted 1 hour per week regardless of class size.

The decree also determines the maximum that a school may claim for “extra-curricular work and professional development”: the total number of hours granted to a school may not exceed 30% of the weekly load of the school’s academic plan. Teachers with a low teaching load are expected to be given preference for engaging in extra-curricular activities. Every teacher and every member of the administrative staff who is teaching more than 6 hours per week is entitled to 2 hours of professional development hours per week.

The same decree also defines “extra-curricular work and professional development” as follows:

- Extra-curricular work:
 - Class management: 4 hours per week
 - Mentoring a junior teacher: 2 hours per week
 - Heading a methodological unit: 2 hours per week
 - Work with circles, after-class activities
 - Other types of out-of-class activities
- Professional development:
 - Preparing of didactical and methodological materials

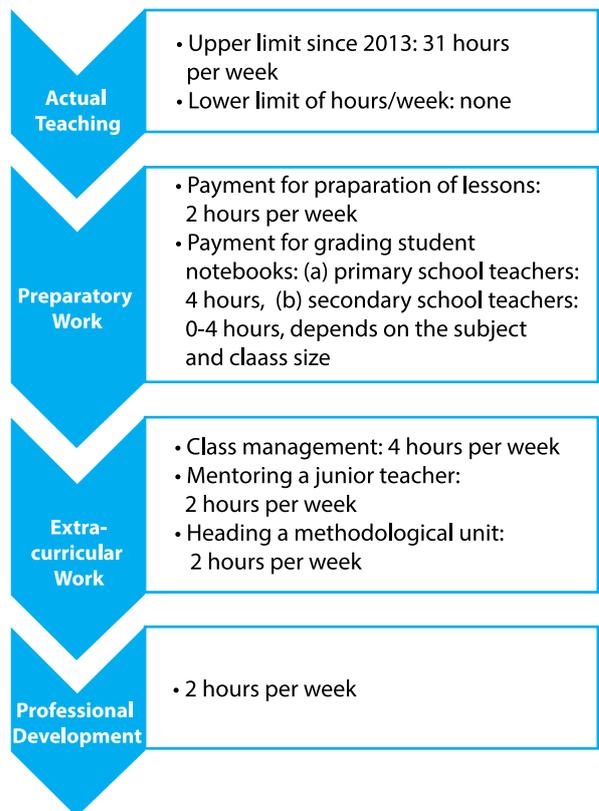
- Preparing and holding ‘open lessons’
- Preparing reports and participating in conferences, seminars and methodological councils

The remuneration for the extra-curricular work and professional development carries a coefficient of 0.5 in terms of the hourly rate, which in practice means that only half of the hourly rate is paid and there is also differentiation by qualification. The following pay scale applies:

- Teachers with a secondary pedagogical vocational education earn 20 KGS per hour;
- Teachers with a high pedagogical education - Bachelor or a Specialist Diploma earn 22.5 KGS per hour;
- Teachers with a high pedagogical education – Master’s degree earn 25 KGS per hour.

Figure 2 presents the various tasks listed under the four types of work.

Figure 2. Types of Working Hours (since the 2011 salary reform)



The form for the tariff table lists all the activities mentioned above.

2.5. The Salary in the Education Sector as Compared to Other Sectors

An analysis of the relative salary over time, that is, the salary of employees in the education sector (teachers as well as other employees) as compared to salaries of other professionals, reveals three interesting findings:

First, the average monthly salary in the education sector was 7,999 KGS in the year 2012. Second, the salaries in the education sector increased considerably from 2010 to 2011. On national average, the 2011 salary reform accounted for a 43.6% salary increase in that year. Third, despite the considerable salary increase in 2011, the salary in the education sector remains below the national wage average. The salary in education is only three-quarter (74.6%) of what other professionals in Kyrgyzstan earn on average. Only the salaries in the agriculture sector are lower than salaries in the education sector. These three findings are explained in more detail in this section of the chapter.

Clearly, it is necessary to take into account inflation or the consumer price index (CPI), respectively, when salary increases are expressed in form of a nominal or monetary value. There are three databases available to carry out CPI adjustments: data bases of the National Statistical Committee (NSC), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This study draws mostly on the data from

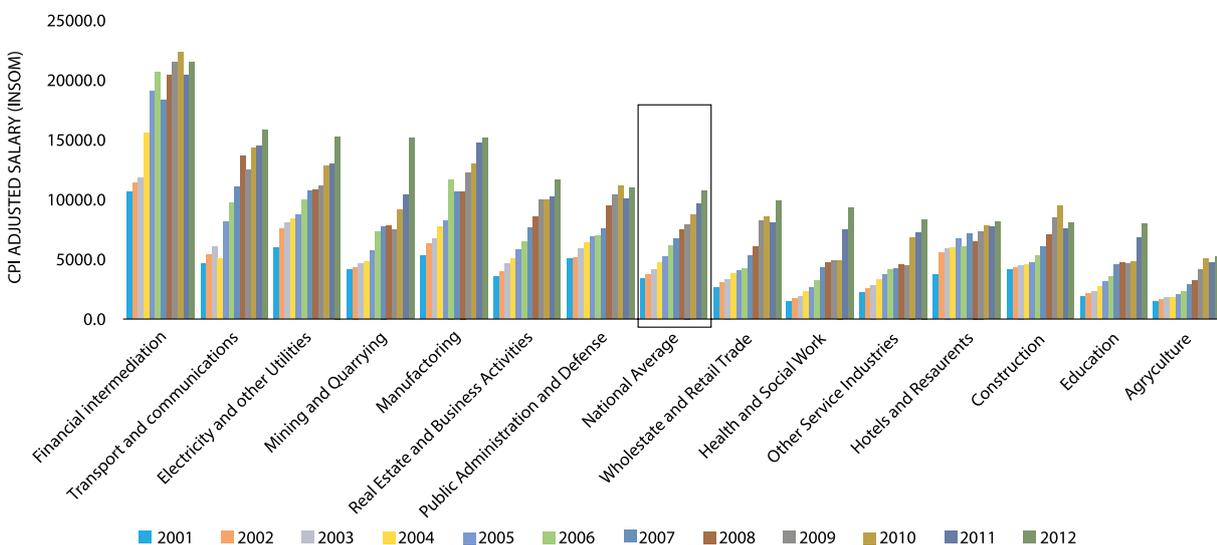
ADB and IMF for reasons of consistency but also includes NSC data. The CPI adjustment enables us to express the average monthly salary in the local currency KGS and are expressed in actual 2012 values.

2.5.1. The Nominal Value of Salaries by Sector and over Time

Situating adjusted salaries in a cross-sector comparison is important because it gives an opportunity to (a) compare the salary of employees in the education sector with that of professionals in other sectors, especially with those in similar professions in the public sector, and (b) to assess whether there was a real increase above and beyond inflation. In 2012, the monthly average salary in education was 7,999 KGS, in health and social work 9,402 KGS, and in public administration and defense 11,187 KGS.

According to Figure 3, average monthly salary grew in all sectors, both public and private, between 2001 and 2012, but at disparate rates. In the education sector, the adjusted average salary increased each year but at modest rates prior to 2007. In the period 2007–2010, the adjusted salary in the education sector remained stagnant, suggesting that the declared increase in actual monthly salary has been compensated by inflation.

Figure 3. Average Monthly Salary (in KGS) by Sector, Adjusted to CPI for the Period, 2001 – 2012



Source: NSC; ADB, IMF

However, the increase in 2011 was real and exceeded inflation. A similar trend is shown in the health and social work sector, which also saw a large increase after the 2011 reform. The national average salary, on the other hand, has seen steady and even increases over the years 2001–2012. Therefore, there is no doubt whatsoever that the salary of teachers significantly increased, above and beyond inflation, as a result of the 2011 reform.

2.5.2. The Growth of the Salary in the Education Sector in the Period 2001 - 2012

Table 8 shows the growth rate in the average monthly salary using the salary in year 2010 as the point of comparison. That is, the salary in each sector is expressed as a percentage of average monthly salary in FY 2010 (=100%). The major increase in 2011 is clearly visible in Table 8. Along with the health and social

work sector, the salaries in the education sector experienced the greatest increase in the year 2011. The average education salary grew by about 43.6% between the 2010 and 2011 and a similar growth trend was also observed for the health and social work sec-

tor (48.7%). Table 8 also demonstrates that salaries are annually adjusted for inflation. Similar to salaries in all other sectors, the salaries in education further increased between 2011 and 2012 to compensate for inflation.

Table 8. Average Monthly Salary Growth Rate by Sector

Industry/Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Health and social work	31	35	41	47	55	66	87	95	100	100	149	186
Education	41	46	51	59	68	78	96	99	98	100	144	167
Mining and quarrying	46	49	50	54	62	80	84	84	80	100	111	163
National Average	39	44	48	54	61	72	79	86	93	100	111	124
Other service industries	35	40	43	50	55	61	63	68	66	100	107	123
Electricity and other utilities	47	59	64	67	69	79	85	86	88	100	102	120
Real estate and business activities	39	42	47	52	59	66	78	87	101	100	104	117
Manufacturing	42	48	53	60	64	90	82	82	94	100	113	116
Wholesale and retail trade	32	36	41	46	48	50	63	72	97	100	94	115
Transport and communications	33	38	43	36	57	68	78	95	88	100	102	110
Hotels and restaurants	50	73	76	77	86	77	91	83	94	100	100	104
Agriculture	31	33	37	36	40	46	59	64	83	100	94	102
Public administration and defense	46	48	54	58	63	63	68	85	93	100	91	99
Financial intermediation	48	51	53	70	85	92	83	91	96	100	92	96
Construction	43	46	48	48	50	57	65	76	89	100	80	85

Source: NSC

2.5.2. The Teacher Salary as Compared to Salaries in Other Sectors

However, despite annual adjustments and the substantial increase in 2011, the salary in the education sector remains far below the national salary average. Table 9 shows the average monthly salary paid in the education sector as a percentage of the national monthly salary average for the years 2001-2012, and also lists, for comparison, average monthly salaries in other sectors. Along with agriculture and construction sectors the education sector pays among the lowest salaries. In 2012, the average monthly salary in education was only three quarters that of the national average. It is worth noting that professionals in health and social work were traditionally known for their low salaries. In fact, in 2001 they had much lower salaries than employees in the education sector. However, by 2012 they caught up. Even though they are below the national average in 2012, professionals in health and social work earned more than individuals employed in the education sector.

2.6. Teacher Perceptions of the 2011 Salary Reform

The teacher survey in the 2014 UNICEF Kyrgyzstan study demonstrates a 40/60 percent split between teachers who believe that the reform had a positive impact on the quality of education as opposed to those who find it negative¹³.

There is a general perception among teachers and school administrators that the 2011 reform predominantly benefitted teachers in rural areas as well as young specialists. Furthermore, there is a general belief that older teachers, in contrast, experienced a cut in income for two reasons: First, the rate of the base salary was no longer determined by the "teacher category," which due to the semi-automatic promotion scheme, in effect functioned as a proxy for age. Second, there was, at least in the early stages of the reform, a lower ceiling for how many additional hours teachers could amass. Since additional hours are primarily assigned to experienced teachers, older

¹³ There were 175 valid responses for this question.

Table 9. Relative Monthly Salary by Industry

Industry/Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Financial intermediation	324	306	286	335	366	335	272	276	272	261	216	201
Transport and communications	141	144	148	111	157	157	164	184	158	167	153	148
Electricity and other utilities	182	201	196	184	169	163	159	148	142	148	137	143
Mining and quarrying	130	122	113	108	112	121	116	107	95	109	110	143
Manufacturing	164	168	166	168	162	190	158	145	155	153	155	143
Real estate and business activities	118	112	115	113	114	107	115	118	127	117	109	110
Public administration and defense	156	143	146	140	135	115	113	129	132	131	108	104
National Average	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Wholesale and retail	82	83	84	85	80	70	79	83	105	100	85	93
Health and social work	48	47	49	50	53	54	64	65	63	59	79	88
Other service industries	74	74	73	75	74	69	64	63	58	81	78	80
Hotels and restaurants	118	153	145	130	131	99	106	89	94	92	83	77
Construction	125	118	110	99	91	88	91	98	107	111	80	76
Education	60	58	59	60	62	60	67	64	59	56	72	75
Agriculture	48	46	46	40	40	39	45	45	54	61	51	49

Source: NSC

teachers supposedly suffered the most from lowering the ceiling for the maximum number of permissible teaching hours. As explained in this chapter, however, the ceiling was subsequently lifted from 20 to 32 hours and ultimately surpassed the previous ceiling under the stavka system (24-27 hours per week).

These general perceptions and strongly held beliefs do not necessarily correspond to the actual realities. For example, teachers and administrators in Bishkek had been the most pronounced and vocal critics of the 2011 salary reform. It is noticeable, however, that they falsely attribute the cut in municipal supplements, which coincidentally occurred at the same time, to the 2011 salary reform at the central level.

The haste with which the policies were issued, the great number of modifications to the initial reform, and the confusion on how the new salary is supposed to be calculated - resulting in a huge increase over the spring and summer months of 2011, followed by a precipitous drop in the early fall of 2011 - may have hampered the initial enthusiasm about the reform. In addition, as outlined above, the salary in the education sector, despite the visible surge in 2011, has remained below the national wage average. Even though the majority of teachers completed higher education, they earn much less than professionals with a similar level of educational attainment.

The next chapter of this report presents facts on how the 2011 salary reform was implemented in practice.

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CHAPTER 3. SCHOOL-LEVEL ANALYSES OF ACTUAL SALARY, TEACHING LOAD AND QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION

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According to the data from the National Statistical Committee, the salary of employees in the education sector was 7,999 KGS in the year 2012¹⁴. Naturally, this figure varies if only the salary of teachers, rather than all employees in the education sector, is examined. This chapter focuses on the teacher salary and presents the findings that were retrieved from the analyses of tariff tables (tarifikazia), salary slips or salary disbursement forms (vedomost) as well as from the survey filled out by teachers in ten schools. This section provides therefore school level data with a special emphasis on issues that affect the quality of instruction.

There is no doubt that the salary of teachers improved significantly over the past five years. In comparison, the total income of teachers in Kyrgyzstan was on average 3,908 KGS in school year 2008/2009 (see UNICEF Kyrgyzstan 2009, UNICEF CEECIS, 2011, p. 69). As presented in chapter 2, the surge in salaries in the education sector over the period from 2010 to 2011 is noticeable in the national education budget and also well documented in economic analyses. It is also uncontested that teachers in rural schools experienced a higher raise than teachers in the capital, albeit for two unrelated reasons: first, the supplement for rural schools and schools in high-mountainous areas was raised considerably. At the same time, the City Government of Bishkek cancelled a few supplements that it had traditionally given to teachers¹⁵. As a result of these two factors - one related to the national salary reform and the other to local policy changes in Bishkek - teachers in Bishkek indeed experienced proportionally a smaller raise¹⁶.

This chapter presents a school-level analysis of teacher salaries, teaching load and quality of instruction, and addresses the five key issues, listed in chapter 1, that used to be concerns prior to the 2011 reform:

1. Do teachers earn more than before the reform?
2. Do teachers teach fewer hours than three years ago?

¹⁴ See Chapter 2 for more details. Note that the figures for average salary vary slightly depending on the data sources that are used. Socium Consult (interview of March 27, 2014) uses information from the national education budget and lists the following as the average gross salary of teachers in the year 2012: it was 9,833 KGS nationwide, and on average 10,864 KGS in Bishkek.

¹⁵ Currently, teachers in Bishkek receive a municipal allowance of 1,000 KGS per month. In addition, teachers at gymnasium receive a 15% increase on their hourly rate and teachers at lyceum a 20% increase. The most recent Law on the Status of Bishkek (December 2013) outlines the allowances paid to teachers and public servants who work in Bishkek. Public servants that earn less than 5,000 KGS per month receive a discount on utilities (gas, electricity, water) from the Social Fund. The supplement for working at a school with status of educational complex was removed: the coefficient for adding the supplement was 1.5.

¹⁶ Socium Consult maintains that the salary raise was 215% for teachers nationwide but only 158% for teachers in the city of Bishkek. (interview of March 27, 2014).

3. Have young teachers been attracted to the profession?
4. Is teacher shortage resolved?
5. Do schools use the stimulus fund to reward high-performing teachers?

Five data sources were used to access the information that pertain to the five questions listed above:

- Tariff tables from a representative sample of 279 schools nationwide;
- Tariff tables from the ten schools in the sample that present salary information on 527 teachers based in Bishkek, Chui oblast, and Jalal-Abad oblast;
- Information on the number of teaching hours (by subject) retrieved from the survey of 217 teachers that was administered at the ten schools of the sample;
- Information from the salary slips or vedomost;
- Information gathered from interviews with teachers, school directors, and district education administrators.

Strikingly, there are vast differences in salary and teaching load information depending on the source of information as well as by the time of the year when the information was collected. Compared to the information retrieved from the interviews, the salary slips, and the teacher surveys, the tariff tables tend to considerably under-report, or rather “under-document,” the actual teaching load and the actual salary of teachers. Similarly, the salary calculations (“tarification”) submitted in September show on average a lower teaching load and as a corollary a lower average salary. Due to changes in the workforce over the course of the first few months of the school year (maternity leaves, illness, quitting the job, etc.) and due to vacancies that were not filled, the average teaching load and salary increases significantly increased as reflected in the re-calculations (“re-tarification”) submitted in January of each year. The “under-documentation” of how many hours teachers actually work and how much they actually earn, as reflected in the tariff table for the month of September, is systematic and therefore calls for an interpretation. The attempt to fully understand the causes for the vast discrepancies helps us to understand how teacher utilization and management works at school level.

Therefore, the presentation of findings is differentiated by source of information, followed by an interpretation of the vast differences.

3.1. Overview

The analysis of 279 tariff tables enables us to provide accurate information of how much teachers are budgeted to earn. It is important to keep the differentiation between the salary information retrieved from tariff tables (budgeted/planned salary) and ved-

most (disbursed/actual salary) in mind. As mentioned above, it is also very important to always specify whether one examines the tariff tables from September, the monthly adjustments to the tariff tables, or the major re-tarification calculations submitted in January of each year.

Table 10. Average Net Salary of Teachers based on Tarification (“budgeted monthly salary”), 2013

	Average net salary per month in KGS
Nationwide	7,090
Rural and high-mountainous schools	6,985
Urban and semi-urban schools	7,443

Source: Tariff tables from 279 schools, month of August and September 2013

An analysis of the 279 tariff tables shows an average net salary in the Kyrgyz Republic of 7,090 KGS in school year 2013/14 which corresponds approximately to 135 US dollars per month¹⁷. There is a statistically significant difference between the average net salary of teachers in rural/high-mountainous schools versus teachers in urban/semi-urban schools¹⁸. Strikingly, despite the rural school supplement and the supplement for high-mountainous schools, teachers in rural locations earn less: the mean net salary is 6,985 KGS. In contrast, as shown in Table 10 above, teachers in urban and semi-urban schools earn 7,443 KGS per month.

Given the general perception among teachers and school administrators that the 2011 reform mainly benefited rural schools at the expense of teachers in urban areas, the finding about large salary differentials by location, benefiting teachers at urban schools, is at first sight surprising. Upon further investigation, however, the discrepancy makes sense. First, the salary difference between rural and urban schools existed before and, as a result of the reform but also changes in municipal policies, became smaller. The gap in income by location has indeed narrowed due to changes in the residential supplements: the rural supplement (1,000 KGS per month for 20 hours of teaching¹⁹) and the supplement for high-mountainous areas (coefficient ranging from 1.10 to 1.95, depending on the remoteness and altitude, and additional 10-30% salary supplement for long service in these areas²⁰) increased since 2011. At the same time,

the municipal benefits in the capital city decreased over the same time period. Second, schools in urban/semi-urban settings tend to be larger and geographically in greater proximity to each other and therefore offer opportunities for additional teaching assignments. Many teachers in urban and semi-urban areas are in a position to take on additional hours at their own school and/or assume a second teaching post in a neighboring school to increase their income. The correlation between size of school, teaching load and teacher salary is robust and was a recurrent finding in this study.

Table 11 shows that the tariff tables of the ten schools, submitted in September 2013, projected an average monthly income of 7,662 KGS for school year 2013/14. This amount corresponds roughly to 147 United States dollars. The net salary in the sample of ten schools (7,662 KGS) is higher than the national sample (7,090 KGS or 135USD) because the sample of ten schools included a disproportionately high number of teachers from urban- and semi-urban schools of Bishkek, Jalal-Abad and Chui.

Furthermore, Table 11 summarizes a few key characteristics of teachers. Unsurprisingly, English teachers tend to be the youngest teachers (on average 12.8 years of work experience) and Russian teachers the oldest (21.8 years of work experience) in the education system. It also shows that all teachers get paid for preparation, ranging from 2 to 2.7 hours per week.

Of greater relevance for this chapter is the discrepancy between the various data sources. According to the tariff tables of the ten schools, summarized in Table 11, teachers in the ten schools of the sample were scheduled to teach on average 20.6 hours per week and earn 7,661.95 KGS per month. Even though the tariff tables cover relevant information on 527 teachers, this data does not necessarily mirror the actual teacher salary and teaching load. In fact, one of the most fascinating findings of this study is the vast dis-

17 Net salary means that taxes (income tax, social fund tax and other deductions) as well as fees for the teacher union are already deducted. In colloquial terms, the net salary is the “take-home salary.”

18 Significance level or p-value is 0.009.

19 The amount is prorated, that is, teachers who teach, for example, 22 hours do not earn 2,000 KG but rather 1,200 KGS in allowance. Before the 2011 reform, the supplement was only 15 KGS per month.

20 Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, Decree #377, 25 June 1997 as last amended by Government Decree № 504 of September 9, 2013.

crepancy between the information document in the tariff tables, the information in the salary disbursement forms (vedomost), and the information provided to us by teachers and administrators in interviews or in the teacher survey. This section deals with the

comparison of data from tariff tables and from teacher surveys. The comparison of data from tariff tables ("budgeted salary") and from the salary forms or vedomost ("actual salary") will be presented later in this chapter.

Table 11. Descriptive Statistics of Tariff Tables from Ten School for Select Subjects

Subject	Number of teachers in sample of 10 schools (N = 527)	Average years of work experience	Average weekly hours taught	Average preparation hours per week	Average extra salary for experience (in KGS)	Average net salary (in KGS)
Biology	13	14.6	19	2	1,117	7,025
Chemistry	11	23.4	19	2	1,505	7,437
Elementary School	117	18.6	21.4	2.7	1,283	7,713
English	56	12.8	19	2.2	1,008	6,989
Geography	14	17.2	20.2	2.2	929	7,235
Kyrgyz	76	16.8	22.8	2.5	1,315	8,539
Math	41	17.9	20.7	2.2	1,430	8,107
Physics	17	15.5	19.7	2	942	6,959
Physical Education	24	18	21	2	1,166	8,001
Russian	63	21.8	22.2	2.5	1,412	8,421
Average of select subjects (above)	17.7	20.5	2.23	1,211	7,643	7,643
Average of all subjects in sample of schools	17.1	20.6	2.33	857	7,662	7,662

Source: Tariff tables (N = 10)

As mentioned above, the data retrieved from the tariff tables indicate an average weekly teaching load of 20.6 hours whereas the teachers in the survey reported an average weekly teaching load of 23.9 hours. The distinguishing feature between the two data sources is time. The tariff tables reflect the projections for the coming year school year 2013/14, made in September 2013, whereas the teacher surveys were filled out in March 2014. By March 2014, the vacant hours were redistributed at school level and trade-offs were made among teachers, that is, some teachers were selected for teaching additional hours at the expense of others who decided, or were convinced, to take on fewer teaching hours.

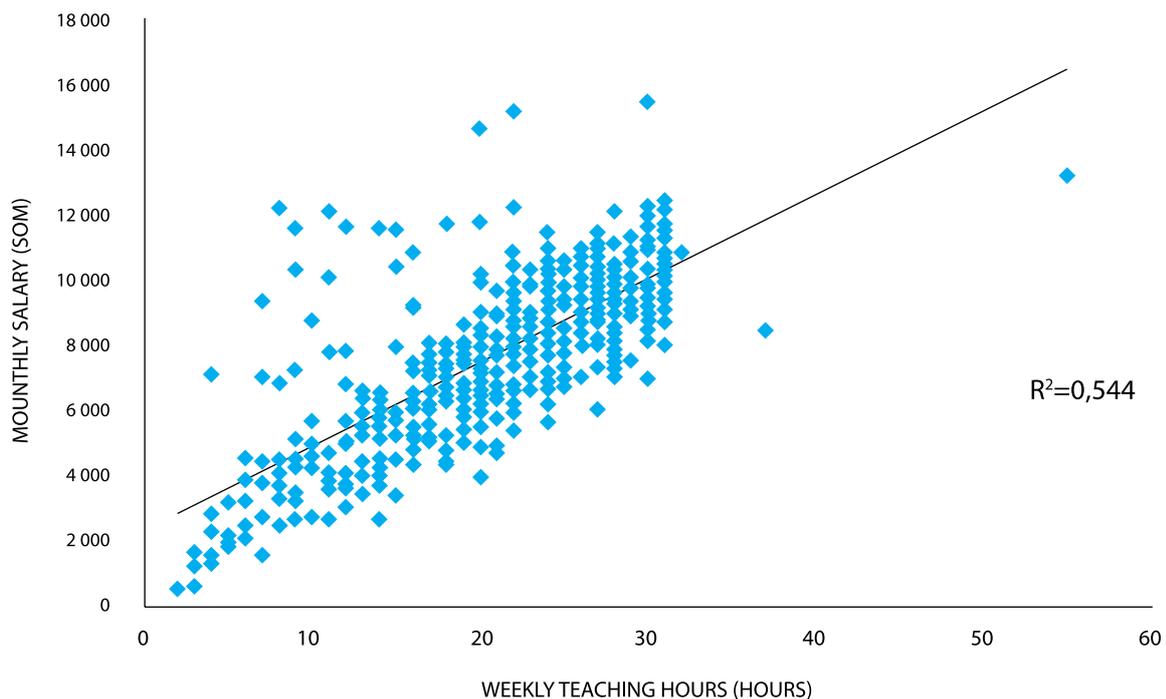
The discrepancy between what is listed on the tariff tables and what teachers are actually paid is worth exploring in greater detail as it is indicative of how the reform had been implemented at school level.

First, the descriptive statistics on the tariff tables presented here list average monthly salaries and average weekly teaching loads and workloads. As will be shown later, there is great variation both in terms of salary and weekly hours. For example, teachers

of subjects that are high in demand (English and Russian) teach up to 46 hours (English) or 39 hours (Russian) per week. The current system also enables teachers to work part-time and take on teaching as a second or third job and only work as little as one hour per week as a teacher.

Second, the practice of "tarification" needs to be regarded as a budget planning tool rather than a salary disbursement measure. Preparing the tariff tables entails calculating the salary of teachers for the coming school year. This kind of budget planning enables schools to project the volume of their salary fund and to predict how many vacancies they have if teachers would not teach beyond the normative teaching load. It is submitted at the beginning of the school year, that is, in September of each year. Already a few weeks later in October, a "re-tarification" is carried out, that is, the teaching hours are redistributed among the teaching staff either because vacancies could or were not filled, maternity leaves came up, teachers requested to teach more or fewer hours, teachers found another employment, or any other unexpected circumstance that requires from schools to adjust the

Figure 4. Scatter Plot of Actual Teaching Load and Teacher Salary



Source: Information on 527 teachers listed in the ten tariff tables of the sample of ten schools.

schedule of teachers. Re-tarification or adjustments of teaching load allocations are carried out continuously but the major re-tarification is done in the month of January. These continuous re-tarification processes account for the large gap between what is written on paper in the initial tariff tables and how much teachers are paid in practice as a result of redistribution of hours, re-assignments or re-tarification. It is the vedomost (salary disbursement form), and not the tariff table, that documents how much teachers actually teach and how much they earn²¹.

The district and municipal official use the tariffication and re-tarification as a basis to calculate the salary fund to which the school is entitled. Thus, schools have a great degree of freedom on how to distribute the salary fund among the teachers. It is in the jurisdiction of the school director to assign additional hours to teachers or, for that matter, revoke teaching hours. In retrospect, the 2011 salary reform must be seen as an unsuccessful attempt of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic to curb the excessive redistribution practices that was rampant under the previous system by (a) limiting the permissible teaching hours to 20 hours per week, (b) requiring that teachers only

teach subjects in their area of specialization,²² (c) insisting that the normative teaching and workload could only be surpassed if there is evidence of teacher shortage, (d) creating a stimulus fund that rewards effective teachers, and (e) lifting the base salary per hour so that teachers did not have to financially rely on additional hours to make a living. However, as explained in the previous chapter, it was not the reform that changed the pedagogically detrimental redistribution practice but, quite to the contrary, it was the schools that changed the reform.

As a result, three years later, teachers are allowed to teach more hours (31 hours) than before and, with a maximum workload of 49 hours, are allowed to work even beyond the maximum permissible hours prescribed by the Labor Law. As before, numerous schools in urban areas, where many unemployed young specialists or university graduates live, prefer to keep the vacancies unfilled and the school overcrowded so that they are in a position to assign additional hours to those teachers whom they deem to be “good teachers.” In effect the school directors use the redistribution of hours as an unofficial “retention strategy” to keep effective teachers in the profession.

Against all good intentions, the reform was not able to improve the salary of teachers to a level that would

21 The method of “tarification” is based on the number of classes at a school as well as the curriculum (number of instructional hours per subject) that each class in a grade has to complete. Perhaps needless to state, the budget planning process is entirely different in the per-capita financing system where the number of students, rather than classes, is used as the unit for budgeting.

22 See decree # 92, article 28 entitled “The right to engage in teaching activities” in the Law on Education as well as decree # 9, article 2 entitled “Persons having the status of teachers” in the Law on Teacher Status.

have justified a rigorous enforcement of the normative teaching load (20 hours) and work load (32 hours) as the ceiling for teaching or working, respectively. The failure to combat the long-held practice of redistributing teaching hours and worse yet accumulating excessive teaching loads - now higher than before - needs to be taken seriously as it defeats one of the main purposes of the reform: the reform was supposed to improve the quality of instruction by having teachers teach only in their own subject specialization, by devoting time to properly preparing lessons and providing feedback to students, and by rewarding high-performing teachers from the stimulus fund.

3.2. The High Correlation between Salary and Teaching Hours and Its Negative Impact on the Quality of Instruction

As with the salary structure before the 2011 reform, the salary of teachers is to a great extent determined

by the number of hours that teachers teach.

The scatter plot, illustrated in Figure 4 presents the correlation between weekly hours taught and earnings that was calculated based on the tariff tables from the ten schools in the sample. The tariff tables listed information on 527 teachers.

As mentioned above, the ability to take on additional teaching hours determines in great part the size of a teacher's income. More than half of the variance (54%) in the monthly salary is explained by the number of teaching hours: the Pearson correlation is 0.738 and is significant at the 0.01 level. This explains why teachers have remained so keen to take on additional teaching hours.

The high correlation between the salary and the number of hours taught is problematic for a variety of reasons. There are at least six negative consequences that are explained in the following:

Table 12. Correlation between Actual Teaching Load and Teacher Salary

		Weekly Hours Taught	Total
Weekly Hours Taught	Pearson Correlation	1	.738**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	525	525
Total	Pearson Correlation	.738**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	525	527

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Information on 527 teachers listed in the ten tariff tables of the sample of ten schools.

3.2.1. Vulnerability of Teachers

It is up to the school administration, in particular the school director and the deputy school director, to assign teaching hours. Primarily, the assignment is done based on subject match, that is, teachers are assigned to primarily teach their subject of specialization. However, in larger schools the school administration is in a position to choose among qualified teachers and the question becomes which teachers are given preference for teaching additional hours. The focus group interviews with teachers but also the individual interviews with school administrators explored the negotiation process and allocation criteria in greater detail. There is indeed a competition among teachers to secure additional hours. More often than not, younger teachers lose in that race and their inability to gain additional income and the sense of inequality leaves them frustrated. The qualitative interviews conveyed a sense of "intergenerational war" over securing addi-

tional teaching hours.

The school administrators defended their preference for experienced teachers as follows:

"Experienced teachers are better teachers and of course they should be given preference when hours from unfilled positions are distributed." Often school director justified their choice by interjecting additional justifications such as such as "this is what parents ask for" or "this is what the collective of teachers decided."

The teachers were very vocal about the need to take on additional teaching hours. A group of older teachers commented in a group interview:

"Young teachers leave the profession anyways as soon as they find a better paid job. It is us, the experienced teachers that keep the school going."

In fact, there is a large turnover of young teachers over the first few months of their employment. The

question is, however, whether young teachers abandon the school, and possibly the profession, because they feel ill prepared to teach in front of a large class, are frustrated once they realize that other more experienced teachers earn much more due to having secured additional teaching hours, or embrace a better paid job opportunity outside the teaching profession. There is no doubt, however, that the anticipation of school administrators and older teachers that “young teachers will leave anyway” functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy which both reinforces the prejudice towards young teachers and justifies the inequitable redistribution of hours.

3.2.2. Micromanagement of Teachers

Even under the previous system, teachers complained that they have to fill out too much formulaic paperwork that takes time away from pedagogical work. Each and every supplement (in particular, lesson preparation, grading student notebooks) had to be documented and the deputy school director or, in larger schools, the head of the departments supervised the work carried out by teachers. Even though there exist now fewer supplements than before, the micromanagement of teachers increased rather than decreased. The move from a teaching load (*stavka*) to a teaching hour implies that the school administrator must record for each hour the work of a teacher. In practice, this entails that the school administrator must circle around the school all day long to ensure that teachers are doing what they are paid for, that is, teaching, grading student notebooks, preparing classes, mentoring other teachers, engaging in extra-curricular work, etc. In also means that teachers have to constantly keep track of their activities, fill out forms and submit numerous reports documenting their work day. There is too much emphasis on the control of teachers and too little on professional standards and work ethics.

3.2.3. Overcrowding of Schools

One striking phenomena is the overcrowding of schools or, put differently, the lack of school facilities in urban and semi-urban areas. As a result, a great number of teachers work in two shifts. In 2012, 22.5% of all schools were teaching in one shift (497 schools), 73.7% schools in two shifts (1,624 schools), and 3.8% in three shifts (83 schools). In other words, three out of four schools in the country operate in two shifts. Overcrowding is often a transitional phenomenon that results from a process of urbanization, that is, internal migration from rural to urban areas. Educational systems throughout the region had to face the challenge of overcrowding in the 1990s and possibly in the first few years of the new millennium when liv-

ing standards and job opportunities between rural and urban areas became unequal. Most educational systems in the CEECIS region, however, systematically built new schools in the capital but also in semi-urban locations to suspend teaching in three shifts altogether but also to dramatically reduce the number of schools who teach two shifts.

There are no signs of such a development in Kyrgyzstan and in fact, quite to the contrary, schools pride themselves of being overcrowded and having enrolled students beyond the capacity of their facilities. Curiously, they regard overcrowding as a quality indicator because the school has evidently succeeded to attract many students. It is very popular among teachers to work in schools that have several parallel classes per grade and offer multiple shifts. It enables them to take on additional hours and thereby boost their salary. Thus, in the end effect, overcrowded schools do indeed attract experienced teachers but these teachers who work in two or three shifts end up having fewer hours for preparing their lessons, providing formative evaluation of students, or engaging with their peers or parents.

The two-shift system is unpopular among parents but, as explained above, very popular among teachers. The Per Capita Financing (PCF) scheme, which was scheduled to be scaled up throughout the country last year but then got delayed, will most likely reinforce the negative trend. In the PCF scheme, student enrollment determines the size of the salary fund and it is in the financial interest of the school and the teachers - but not necessarily in the pedagogical interest of the students - to overenroll students.

3.2.4. Vacancies as Placeholders or “Strategic Vacancies”

Even school administrators are explicitly requested to fill vacancies before the start of the new school year²³, some principals prefer to keep a number of positions vacant so that they can split the vacant hours and redistribute them among the existing teaching workforce of the school. As a result of this redistribution practice, the average teaching load and the average salary of teachers is higher than projected at the beginning of the school year. We propose to label such unfilled positions “strategic vacancies” and consider them to be a cause of great concern. This practice is common in urban and semi-urban areas where schools are large and teachers may easily take on additional hours if the appropriate funds, saved from unfilled positions, are made available. Even though this practice is considered illegal, there is evidence from the comparison of tariff tables (that shows vacancies) and salary disbursement forms (vacancies

²³ See Government decree # 270 entitled “Approval of the procedure for the calculation of wages for employees of educational institutions,” 31 May 2011.

disappear or rather the vacant hours are distributed among teachers) to suggest that such a practice does exist. The mere fact that so many schools in Bishkek and in other urban areas claim to be unable to fill vacant positions should be cause for suspicion and further exploration. These are locations where the supply of young specialists is high and where most and many of them remain unemployed. Upon further questioning during interviews, one of the school principals explained that

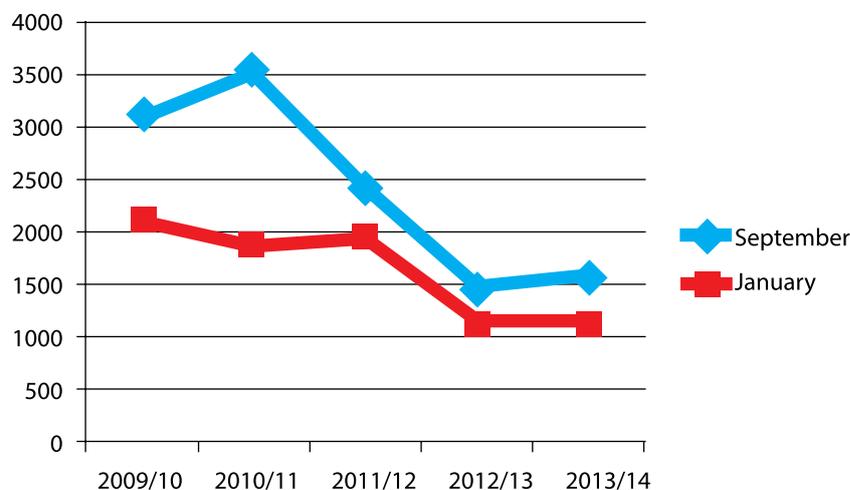
“After the reform we did hire young teachers, but they left after a few months. Now we would rather leave the vacancies vacant and distribute the hours among the older teachers that stay. It is also a way for us to keep good teachers in the profession.”

In seven of the ten schools of the study, there were vacancies reported that could be considered “strategic vacancies,” that is, positions that were on purpose left unfilled. In effect, these schools are purposefully understaffed. To be fair, some of these strategic vacancies are in subjects where the instructional hours/week are very low (e.g., music, physical education, labor classes) and where it would be difficult to employ a full-time teacher.

However, also the opposite existed: overstaffing. The other three schools were in rural locations where the size of the student population was small and allocation of additional hours not possible. In fact, one of the schools in the sample experienced a sizeable student loss over the past few years and used the inverse approach to teacher employment: almost all of the teachers had less than a regular teaching load (twenty hours) and many of them were only part-time teachers, that is, were teaching ten hours or less. This was a strategy of the school administration to keep teachers on the payroll despite dwindling student numbers. In this particular instance, schools function as a safety net and helps produce wage earners, and later on pension recipients, in a village that otherwise has a subsistence economy.

There is additional data that possibly substantiates the phenomenon of “strategic vacancies.” The fluctuation of vacancies over the course of the school year may be observed nationwide. The Human Resource Department of MoES records monthly the number of vacant positions. It is therefore possible to compare the reported vacancies in September (beginning of school year) and in January (in mid-school year) of every year. Figure 5 presents a comparison over the past five years.

Figure 5. Reported Vacancies: September and January, 2010/11 – 2013/14



Source: MoES, Department of Human Resources (2014)

Figure 5 illustrates two developments. First, for the past five school years, the number of vacancies is consistently higher in the month of September as compared to the month of January. Second, overall vacancies dropped considerably since the introduction of the salary reform in 2011. As Table 13 shows, there were 3,556 vacancies reported before the introduction of the salary reform (September 2010). The number decreased significantly with the introduction of the reform. One year after the reform (September 2012), the number was with 1,478 reported vacancies almost 60% less. For

the past two years, the number of vacancies reached a historical low of approximately 1,500 vacancies at the beginning of the school year. Less than one-third of the vacancies are filled by mid-school year (January) and the rest of the vacancies are broken up in vacant teaching hours and redistributed among teachers in the school. For example, in school year 2013/14, 1,553 vacancies were reported nationwide in September 2013. By January 2014, 412 of them were filled (27%) and the remaining 1,141 (73%) were redistributed among other teachers at the school.

Table 13. Reported Vacancies by Month and Location of School

Year	Total		Urban/semi-urban schools		Rural schools	
	September	January	September	January	September	January
2009/10	3130	2138	676	354	2,454	1,784
2010/11	3556	1893	922	473	2,634	1,420
2011/12	2428	1958	840	370	1,588	1,269
2012/13	1478	1146	502	314	976	832
2013/14	1553	1141	461	309	1,092	832

Source: MoES, Department of Human Resources (2014)

Table 13, presented above, demonstrates another noteworthy trend: the considerable decrease of vacancies was especially pronounced in rural schools. They managed to hire new teachers as a result of the reform thereby reducing their vacancies by two-thirds over the period September 2010 – September 2012. The number of vacancies dropped during that period from 2,634 to 976 vacancies. Urban and semi-urban schools also experienced a drop in vacancies but the decrease was not as large.

Having said this, it is difficult to make causal inferences based on descriptive statistics as presented in this section of the report. Arguably, it is impossible to draw a conclusion on whether two-third of vacancies remain unfilled by January of each year because (a) no qualified teachers were found who were willing to assume the openings, (b) positions were purposefully kept vacant in order to redistribute vacant hours and thereby boost the salary of the teachers at a school (“strategic vacancies”), or (c) whether new teachers were hired in October, November, or December but then left after the winter break. Judging from the interview data, all three scenarios seem to apply. These three causes for vacancies are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the teacher salary is low compared to salaries of specialists in other professions. Therefore, it is possible that young specialists either do not apply or, if they apply and accept the position, leave as soon as they find a better paid job. In the same vein, experienced teachers are frustrated about their low income, especially in Bishkek. Therefore, they exert pressure on the school administration and demand additional teaching hours to improve their income. The elimination of “categories” and the greater weight placed on qualification, as reflected in the higher hourly rate for those specialists who have a Master’s degree, has exacerbated the frustration of experienced teachers. More than before, they nowadays feel entitled to teach additional hours. This situation, in turn, accounts for an “intergenerational war” at school level that leaves young specialists vulnerable, powerless and defeated contributing possibly to their decision to leave the school and exit from the teaching profession.

In a different vein, it is interesting to note that the assignment of teaching hours is one of the few areas where school administrators are given complete autonomy and uncontested decision-making authority. The last chapter will provide a few suggestions on how to remedy the intergenerational tensions that have arisen as a result of the 2011 teacher salary reform and how to curb favoritism and nepotism in the redistribution of vacant teaching hours.

3.2.5. Excessive Teaching Loads

Compared with educational systems in the region and in other parts of the world, the ceiling for the maximum amount of permissible hours (31 hours) is very high. School administrators may assign an even higher teaching load if they are in a position to demonstrate that there exists teacher shortage. As explained before, it is common to list vacancies in the tariff tables, which then disappear over the course of the school year because they are either filled (on country average approximately one-third) or because the vacant hours are redistributed among the teachers of the school (approximately two-third of vacancies). Given the symbolic nature of the specific line item on the tariff table listed as “vacancy” (referred to in this study as “strategic vacancies”), the requirement of providing sufficient evidence of teacher shortage is not enforced. That is, there is in practice no upper limit for teaching.

In other words, the option of taking on excessive teaching loads has not been resolved. As before, school administrators are at liberty to make the case for the need of a few teachers at their school to take on teaching loads that exceed by far the maximum permissible weekly workload (if teaching hours and other hours are combined) that the Labor Law allows²⁴. Overall, it is a small number of teachers that teach excessively and most of them are in urban and semi-urban areas. The interviewed school administrators and teachers justify their need to take on excessive teaching load. For example, a group of teachers

²⁴ See Labor Law of the Kyrgyz Republic, article 379, entitled “The working time of teachers” (decree # 106, 4 August 2004).

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unanimously exclaimed during a group interview: “We don’t want more free time, we want more money.” Similarly, a group of teachers in the capital city referred to the high living cost in Bishkek to explain why they work in two schools, why they depend on working in two shifts, and why they do not mind to take on an excessive teaching load:

“For a city teacher, 10,000 som is kopeks²⁵. For a rural teacher, 10,000 som is capital.”

A before-after-2011 comparison may be in order here. In general, teachers nowadays earn more for fewer hours of teaching as compared to the period prior to the 2011 reform. The average teaching load in the pre-2011 period was 1.6 stavkas, that is 24-27 hours per week. Now it is on average 20.6 hours per week, if the information is retrieved from the tariff tables and it is 24-26 hours if the information is retrieved from teacher surveys and the salary forms (vedomost). The teacher survey solicited responses directly from teachers and they were asked how many hours they teach. The actual teaching load in our sample was 23.9 hours/week, that is, still lower than the average teaching load under the previous system of 24-27 hours per week.

This is a positive finding that should be kept in mind when discussing the impact of the salary reform on earning, teaching load and quality of instruction.

3.2.6. The Redistribution of Teaching Hours to Non-Specialists

A redistribution of hours is to some extent unavoidable and flexibility in the teaching schedule is key for any well-functioning school. However, it is problematic if (a) positions are purposefully kept vacant and, as explained above, young specialists are shut off from employment and (b) if hours are distributed to teachers regardless of their area of specialization only to help boost their salaries.

In the survey (N = 217), teachers were asked to indicate their subject specialization or qualification, list their weekly teaching hours and to include a breakdown by hours of the subjects they teach. This allowed us to specify (i) the actual teaching load (as compared to what is reported in tariff tables) and to determine (ii) how many teaching hours are taught in one’s own subject specialization as opposed to how many are taught in other subjects for which the teacher does not possess a training, specialist diploma or degree.

A number of responses included teachers specifying the grade levels of the subject(s) they teach. We disregarded grade level in our analysis to make the definition of “own subject specialization” as compre-

²⁵ Refers to the Russian rubles currency used previously in Kyrgyzstan. Kopeks are associated with small denominations, that is, very little money.

hensive as possible. For example, a teacher of Russian language and literature is considered teaching in her own subject even though she may have indicated that she is teaching these subjects in elementary grades. Only the teachers who indicated that they teach elementary grades as their main subject were enumerated as elementary school teachers. The same applies to Kyrgyz and English language and literature teachers as well. The number of teachers in the sample with a subject specialization in computer science, drawing, ethics, information technology, physical education, history, geography, informatics, music, military preparation, was small (N=38). We therefore grouped them in Table 14 under the category “other subjects.” Finally, nine teachers out of 217 teachers either did not indicate the subject that they teach or did not specify the number of hours that they teach. They are listed in Table 14 in the rubric “no main subject or no hours reported.”

The last column in Table 14 illustrates the wide range of actual teaching loads as reported in the teacher survey. In some schools, Russian teachers and English teachers take on excessive loads teaching up to 39 hours or 46 hours per week, respectively. The current system also allows for part-time teachers in music, arts, physical education, computer science (subjects with low weekly instructional hours) or for teachers who choose teaching as a secondary profession, teaching only half a day or only a few hours per week, and devote most of their time to other economic activities outside the school. The lowest teaching load in the survey was for teachers of Geography (2 hours per week) and Kyrgyz (3 hours per week).

The actual teaching load for elementary and secondary school teachers is on average 22.42 hours per week. Table 14 represents weighted averages and thus reflects the large number of elementary school teachers (N = 50) in the sample. Secondary school teachers tend to take on more teaching hours than elementary school teachers.

From the 22.42 hours per week, 17.96 hours are taught in one’s subject specialization and 4.46 in a second or third subject for which the teacher neither has a qualification nor a training. This means that on average, four and a half hours per week or close to 20 percent of all teaching hours are taught in substitute subject(s). This is an extremely high proportion of hours taught by non-specialist.

Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that those that teach in substitute subject(s) constitute close to half of the teaching workforce (47.47% of the sample in the teacher survey). As shown in Table 14, 103 out of 217 teachers surveyed in the sample, have assumed additional teaching hours in subjects for which they do not have a qualification or training. The group that teaches in subjects other than their own specialization,

Table 14. Hours Taught in Own Specialization and in Other Subjects

Subject specialization	Teachers in sample	Average of total teaching hours/ week: all subjects	Average of teaching hours in own subject	Number of teachers teaching in other subject(s)	Percentage of teachers teaching other subject(s)	Average additional teaching hours of teachers who reported teaching other subjects	Highest / lowest teaching hours in own subject
Elementary School	50	20.90	19.76	7	14.00%	8.14	31/11
English	18	26.50	25.11	4	22.22%	6.25	46/8
Kyrgyz	32	23.28	20.50	17	53.13%	5.24	33/3
Math	26	26.88	18.38	19	73.08%	11.63	34/4
Science	15	25.13	20.27	9	60.00%	8.11	36/8
Russian	29	24.34	16.79	23	79.31%	9.52	39/3
Other subjects	38	20.29	12.82	23	60.53%	12.35	40/2
No main subject or no hours reported	9	22.50	5.00	1	11.11%		
All Subjects	217	22.42	17.96	103	47.47%	9.40	42/2

does so excessively. On average, these teachers teach 9.4 hours per week in second or third subjects.

There is a high ratio of teachers who teach subjects for which they may not have qualifications, which has a negative impact on the quality of instruction. Math and Russian teachers, in particular, tend to be used ubiquitously, that is, they are assigned the greatest number of additional hours in subjects for which they have no qualification. The English language teachers are the ones that are able to accumulate additional hours within their own subject specialization, that is, they tend to take on only a few non-specialized teaching hours. Their additional hours are confined to 6.25 hours. There is a commonly misconception that “only” teachers of subjects with low instructional hours (computer science, art, history, geography, physical education) teach, out of necessity, subjects for which they do not have a qualification. It is accurate that these teachers (listed in the row “other subjects”) take on additional hours in second and third subjects. In fact, 60.53% of them do take on additional hours in non-specialized subjects. But it may come as a surprise that this group is surpassed by Russian and math teachers: close to 32% of the hours that a math teacher takes on are in subject for which the math teacher may not qualification. The same applies to Russian language teachers. Over 30% of the hours that a teacher of Russian takes on are in a subject for which she or he does not have any diploma or degree.

All in all, Table 14 shows that taking on additional hours in subjects that do not necessarily correspond

to one’s specialization/qualification has become the rule and is no longer an exception. Teachers in this sample teach an average of 22.42 hours weekly of which close to twenty percent (4.46 hours) are in subjects for which they are not qualified to teach.

The PISA 2006 study identified the practice of substitute teaching or “subject cross-over” as the main source for the low quality of instruction (see UNICEF CEECIS, 2011).

The sensitivity over the importance of subject specialization visibly increased over the past few years. In the 2009 UNICEF Kyrgyzstan study, school administrators and teachers did not problematize it as an issue that teachers take on hours in subjects that do not correspond to their area of specialization. However, five years later, it is addressed as an issue. In fact, administrators and teachers tried to avoid answering the question of how many hours they teach in subjects for which had not received any training. MoES issues two letters or guidelines in 2011 (# 04-7/3603 from 7 July 2011) and 2014 (# 04-7/471 from 27 January 2014) specifically addressing this issue. In these letters, MoES instructed school director to only endorse the practice if the school’s Teachers Advisory Board recommend the practice and if the teachers consents to undergoing a re-training prior to teaching subjects for which she or he had no training. However, in practice, substitute teaching or teaching in subject for which the teacher has had no training is very common. From the 217 teachers that filled out the questionnaire, only 19 of them (9%) completed a second specialization in addition to their first specialization in teacher education.

3.3. Comparison between Budgeted and Actual Salaries at School Level

As mentioned before, the tariff table is prepared by each school before the start of the school year and includes detailed information about each teacher's workload for the school year, including subject(s) taught, non-teaching responsibilities and compensation. Chapter 1 provides more detailed information on what the tariff tables include. Tarification is a budget planning instrument to project the teaching loads and the additional non-teaching work for the pedagogical cadre for the coming school year based on the number of classes and the instructional hours as prescribed in the curriculum for each grade and subject. At times, district-level accountants assist schools to prepare these (salary) budget projections. Larger schools that employ an accountant prepare these documents on their own and submit them to the district- or municipal level for approval.

It is important to bear in mind that the tariff table, while used for planning and reporting purposes, does not reflect the reality of teacher workloads and compensation. The document that lists the actual payment and workload of teachers is the vedomost. For example, while school tariff tables record teacher

vacancies, the vedomost document reveals that the vacant hours are redistributed among teachers either because no teachers were found to fill the vacancies or because the school purposefully kept the positions vacant in order to increase workloads and salaries of current teachers.

Below are comparisons of the tariff table and vedomost documents from two schools in Kyrgyzstan, both located in the Jalal-Abad region. The first comparison (Table 15) shows the tariff document from September 2013 and the vedomost document from February 2014. The comparison illustrates an example of a school's coping mechanism to address teacher shortage. In this instance the school goes through a readjustment of workloads between teachers in the school rather than hiring new teachers. This is evident in the number of vacancies in September and in the fact that only two new teachers appeared in the vedomost document of February. Table 15 also suggests redistribution of teaching hours to teachers in the school based on the average gross salary that teachers receive, which suggests that the school allocates more work to teachers in practice than stated in the planning phase, that is, as stated in the tariff table in the beginning of the school year.

Table 15. Comparison of Tariff Table and Vedomost: Example of a Semi-Urban School in Jalal-Abad

	Tariff Table (September 2013)	Vedomost (February 2014)
Teachers with allocated teaching hours	64	66
Teacher vacancies	8	0
Average gross salary ²⁶	7,584 KGS	8,184 KGS

Table 15, presented above, shows that the school had budgeted 72 teaching positions, of which 64 were filled and 8 vacant. By February 2014, we see that only two positions appear to have been filled with new hires amounting to 66 teachers receiving compensation for the month of February and the other 6 positions remained vacant. Further analysis reveals that 6 vacant positions were split up among the teachers at the school. What the comparison of the tariff table and vedomost document demonstrates is that this school underwent a reallocation of teaching hours among the teachers as a result of which all vacant hours were filled.

Table 16 illustrates the difference between teaching hours designated in the tarifkatiza and reported in the vedomost entails for individual teachers at the school. It shows that the distribution of hours occurs for nearly all teachers, with 53 out of 62 teachers, that is, four out of five teachers (85.6%) seeing an increase in their teaching hours. Of those that were

assigned additional teaching hours over the course of the school year, 22 teachers experienced a substantial increase of six or more hours. Only seven teachers out of 62 teachers (10.9%) reduced their teaching load over the course of the school year. Finally, a meager 3.2% of teachers (2 out of 64 teachers) were, according to the vedomost, teaching exactly the same amount as they were designated to teach at the beginning of the school year and as reflected in the tariff table of September.

The second comparison is also for a semi-urban school in the Jalal-Abad region of Kyrgyzstan. This analysis offers us a snapshot in time of a matching timeframe between the re-tarification process (in January) and the salary slip information immediately following the re-tarification. What table 17 shows is that there are 5 vacancies according to the tariff table and no new teachers hired. However, we do not see a salary increase in the average net salary for the teaching hours allocated to teachers. This suggests that the redistribution of vacant teaching hours may have taken place much earlier in the academic year and the school

²⁶ Gross salary includes the total income, that is, before taxes are deducted.

administration is merely now shifting the documentation of this to reflect the current standing of teachers

and salaries in the school, without filling the reported vacancies.

Table 16. Comparison of Planned and Actual Teaching Hours: Example of a Semi-Urban School in Jalal-Abad

	Hours	Teachers	Percentage
Teaching fewer hours than specified in tarifkazia	1-5 hours less	3	11.2%
	> 5 hours less	4	
Teaching same amount of hours as specified in tarifkazia	same	2	3.2%
Teaching more hours than specified in tarifkazia	1-5 hours more	31	85.6%
	>5 hours more	22	
Total		62	

Table 17. Comparison of Tariff Table and Vedomost: Example 2 of a Semi-Urban School in Jalal-Abad

	Tariff Table (January 2014)	Vedomost (February 2014)
Teachers with allocated teaching hours	60	59
Teacher vacancies	5	0
Average net salary for teaching hours	3,964 KGS	3,998 KGS

3.4. The Stimulus Fund

Stimulus fund or the so-called “incentives payment part of the salary” is supposed to be paid based on the results and quality of performance. Teachers are not by default entitled to receive payments from the stimulus fund or - to apply the term used in the Kyrgyz Republic - it constitutes a “non-guaranteed” part of the salary. The stimulus fund was introduced in May 2011 as integral part of the new salary scheme. It only applies to secondary school teachers, that is, teachers from grade 1-11. Established as 10% of the school’s salary fund with the promise to increase to 20% (by September 1, 2012) if structural adjustments and savings have been made, the Stimulus Fund explicitly targeted the retention of effective teachers. A matter of great frustration for the interviewed school administrators and teachers was the fact that the stimulus funds stagnated at 10% of the school’s salary fund for the past three years despite the sizeable savings that were made from reducing the number of instructional hours in lower secondary school.

3.4.1. Calculation of the Stimulus Fund

The stimulus fund for school is divided into two separate funds: one reserved for the teaching workforce (75%) and the other for school administration (25%). It is noticeable that the calculation and the award criteria are outlined in great detail with the purpose of ensuring an objective evaluation of teachers and administrators as well as an appropriate size of the actual stimulus payment. The formula, for example,

works with coefficients in order to take into account the actual salary (focus on “guaranteed salary payment”) and the additional amount of work voluntarily provided (“labor input ratio”) so that individuals with a higher salary and a greater time investment also receive a higher stimulus payment.

Each and every school that the research team visited indeed had Expert Committees in place that evaluated the performance and the “labor input ratio” of each teacher and administrator at the school. For teachers, the methodological departments (grouped by subjects or subject areas) are in charge of evaluating the teachers and preparing nominations that are then submitted to the Committee. The Expert Committee is composed of the deputy principal on academic issues (chairs the committee), leaders of the methodological departments, representative of the teacher union, and an economist or an accountant.

The schools receive the stimulus fund quarterly. It comprises 10% of the salary fund of the past three months. Some schools make the incentive payments every month, whereas others pay every quarter.

3.4.2. Criteria for Stimulus Payments

The manual on the new teacher salary recommends the following set of evaluation criteria:

- Complexity and intensiveness of teaching
- Quality of extracurricular activities
- Preparation and organization of conferences,

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workshops, pedagogical meetings

- Preparation of students for Olympiads
- Development and introduction of authors program
- Methodological work
- Condition of classroom
- Absence of administrative penalties
- Quality maintenance of documentary records
- Work discipline (not coming late to class, dress code, not missing classes, etc.)

Schools are at liberty to modify the proposed criteria. In principle, the criteria are supposed to cover five aspects of a teacher's work: level of intensiveness of teaching, commitment in contributing to special events and extracurricular activities, teaching effectiveness, quality of student achievement, and work discipline. A closer examination of the criteria used in the ten observed schools of the sample reveals that teacher performance and student outcomes (with the exception of outcomes at Olympiads) receive little weight in the evaluation of teachers. In fact, from the ten recommended criteria

- four criteria deal with work discipline and administrative tasks (condition of classroom, absence of administrative penalties, quality maintenance of documentary records, work discipline)
- two criteria address professional activities (preparation and organization of conferences, workshops, pedagogical meetings as well as development and introduction of authors program)
- two criteria measure the time spent on preparing for teaching (complexity and intensiveness of teaching, methodological work)
- one criterion assesses the teacher's contribution to special events or extracurricular activities
- only one criterion evaluates the teacher's impact on students' learning outcome, in this case narrowly defined for the select group of students that the teacher coached to participate in Olympiads.

It is noticeable that the greatest weight (four out of ten criteria) is placed on completing administrative tasks and carrying out administrative orders. The proposed criteria prioritize the completion of administrative tasks at the expense of educational activities. In fact, student learning outcomes and wellbeing are absent from the list of recommended evaluation criteria.

3.4.3. Distribution of Stimulus Fund Payments

The stimulus payment should reward teachers that satisfied the evaluation criteria and deserve such a payment, that is, not every teacher is supposed to benefit from stimulus payments. From the 203 teachers that filled out the questionnaires in the ten schools of the sample, 6.4% reported that the stimulus fund is distributed equally among teachers. The remaining teachers (87.6%) indicated differentiated payments. However, differentiated payments does not necessarily imply that only a select few, high performing teachers receive payments. In fact, in the ten observed schools of the sample, three distinct patterns were discernible:

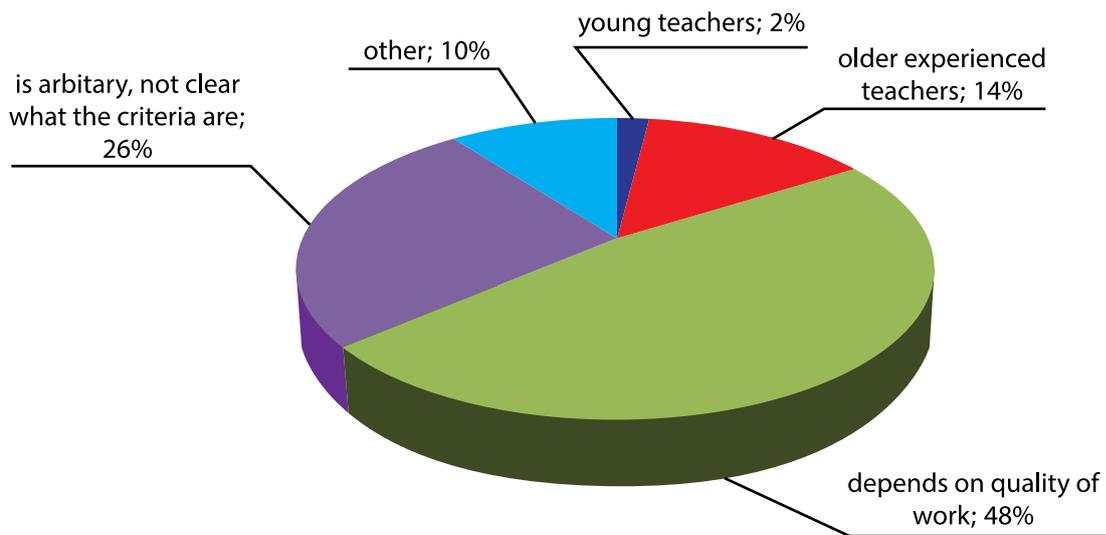
- In one of the schools (a rural school) the stimulus fund was equally split and distributed among the teaching staff,
- In seven of the ten schools, all or almost all teachers received a minimum amount and a few deserving teachers, deemed "deserving," received a higher amount,
- In two of the ten schools, there were differentiated payments: some teachers received large payments, some medium-size payments, and some very little or none

The stimulus fund is a delicate issue at school level because it can easily turn into a punitive measure (for those few teachers who receive nothing or a little amount) or be seen as favoritism where a select few teachers benefit from the goodwill and support of the administration at the expenses of all the other teachers that are left empty-handed. It can be divisive. It is noticeable that the school administration goes a long way to put all kinds of precautions in place to avoid being criticized as nepotistic and corrupt. In practice, this means more evaluation, more reporting, and more documentation on teachers' work contributing to the already existing heavy administrative workload of teachers in schools of the Kyrgyz Republic.

There needs to be an atmosphere of trust and respect towards the school administration in order to sustain unequal payments from the stimulus fund.

The teacher survey also included a section on the stimulus fund. Teachers were asked to mark the criteria that are used at their school in practice to allocate the fund. As Figure 6 shows, almost half of the teachers (48%) stated that stimulus payments were made based on the quality of the teacher's work. One in four teachers (26%) complained about the arbitrariness of the selection criteria. According to the teachers in the visited schools, that young teachers are the ones that least benefit from the stimulus fund payments.

Figure 6. Who Receives Payments from the Stimulus Fund? Responses from Teachers



Source: Teacher Surveys (N=203)

3.4.4. How Much is Paid from the Stimulus Fund?

The study collected documents that relate to the stimulus fund: criteria used at the school as well as lowest, highest, and average payments from the stimulus fund. The average payment per teacher ranges from

1,540 KGS to 1,915 KGS. The highest amount ranges from 3,555 KGS to 5,929 KGS. Finally, the lowest average amount paid at the ten schools of the sample is 160 KGS to 256 KGS.

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CHAPTER 4. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Clearly a few issues in teachers' work conditions and in the quality of instruction have been improved over the past three years as a result of the teacher salary reform. At the same time, there is an unfinished agenda of the reform that this concluding chapter attempts to summarize.

4.1. Positive Outcomes of the Salary Reform

The following positive developments were observed and measured in the 2014 UNICEF Kyrgyzstan Study:

1. The salary of all teachers was lifted significantly above and beyond inflation. Relatively, the gain was highest for teachers at rural schools and in high-mountainous areas as well as for young specialists.
2. Teacher shortage was reduced by attracting a greater number of young specialists to the profession.
3. The numerous small supplements were consolidated into a few large supplements and new, pedagogically relevant supplements, such as supplement for preparing lessons, professional development, and mentoring of other teachers were added.
4. As a result of the decrees, guidelines, and orders issued in the wake of the reform, there exists nowadays a general awareness among teachers and school administrators that, in principle,
 - teachers should not teach subjects that are not in their area of specialization
 - school administrators should refrain from taking on too many teaching hours
 - effective, or rather hard-working, teachers should be rewarded.

4.2. The Unfinished Agenda of the 2011 Salary Reform

However, there also exist a few challenges that persist despite the 2011 teacher salary reform:

1. Even though the dysfunctional semi-automatic promotion system ("category system") was suspended, it has not been replaced with a new system that targets the retention of experienced and effective teachers in the profession.
2. As before, the greatest determining factor for the salary is the number of teaching hours. And, as before, there is a constant negotiation, redistribution, and reallocation process taking place at school level that rewards some teachers at the

expense of other, younger, less experienced, and possible less networked and less resourceful teachers. The accumulation of additional teaching hours mainly benefits:

- Teachers that teach subjects with a shortage
- Experienced teachers who are in good standing with the school administration

Approximately, half of all teachers in the survey (47.47%) take on additional hours for which they do not possess a qualification or training. On average, 20 percent of all teaching hours are taught by non-specialists.

3. The common practice of splitting vacancies and redistributing the vacant hours among the teaching staff is detrimental for the quality of instruction: it increases the likelihood that teachers end up teaching subjects for which they have no training and it encourages them to accumulate as many hours as possible at the expense of properly preparing lessons, providing feedback to students, or meeting with parents. The hour (teaching or work hour) has become nowadays the unit of measurement and payment, leading to an excessive control and documentation of teachers' activities. In its extreme form, the redistribution practice lowers the quality of instruction, in particular:
 - In large schools where teachers are in a position to teach in two shifts and take on additional hours
 - In subjects with small weekly instructional load such as, for example, arts, music, physical education, chemistry, biology, geography, etc.
4. There is cause for concern that in some locations schools are on purpose kept overcrowded, positions are kept on purpose vacant, and dual shifts are maintained to boost the salary of teachers at the expense of instructional quality benefiting students.

4.3. Recommendations

The reform of a salary system is a major undertaking that deserves careful analysis, piloting, ongoing modification, and a broad stakeholder review process. Based on the findings of this study, four broad proposals are made that deserve discussion and consideration over the next few years:

1. The 2011 salary reform must be acknowledged as a bold positive move to replace the fragmented and outdated stavka system with a forward-looking weekly workload system. However, within the first few months, major changes had to be made

- and within a period of three years only the ceiling for the maximum teaching and work load was raised. In retrospective, the 2011 salary reform did indeed abandon the outdated stavka system but it failed to replace it with a weekly workload system, common in OECD countries, but rather replaced with an hourly pay system. There is a need to revisit, in the long run, the possibility of a weekly workload system with two employment modalities: full time teachers (working for 36 hours) and part-time teachers (working for 18 hours). However, the nominal value of the salary is key to make such a bold move feasible. Despite the reform, the teacher salary is still relatively low as compared with other professions.
2. There is an urgent need to develop a teacher career ladder that replaces the abandoned “category” or promotion system. Teachers that remain in the profession, perform well, invest in their own professional development, and take on responsible positions (as mentors, trainers, textbook developers, etc.) need to have the option of being considered for promotion. The promotion needs to be reflected in their title or rank as well as in their base salary.
 3. Teacher education has to respond to the challenges in the teaching profession. Pre-service teacher education should offer multi-subject preparation in those subjects that are characterized by their low amount of weekly instructional hours. Furthermore, special certificate or degree programs should be developed for substitute teachers. In particular, the acquisition of a second specialization should be made accessible and encouraged for those teachers who for years have been teaching subjects for which they have no educational background.
 4. It is recommended to review the criteria of the stimulus fund and consider giving greater weight to criteria that measure teacher effectiveness and pedagogical work.
 5. There is a need to examine and understand in greater detail a few problematic phenomena that this study has highlighted:
 - young specialists who leave the profession after a brief period of induction,
 - overcrowded schools and schools with double shift in Bishkek as well as in a few other urban and semi-urban areas
 - excessive teaching loads
 - “strategic vacancies”
 - over-emphasis on administrative tasks and duties rather than on performance and educational criteria in the stimulus fund.
- As presented throughout this report, the improvement of the teacher salary system does not only benefit the individual teacher but also has a positive impact on the quality of instruction and students’ learning outcomes.

Appendix 1.

Statutes and Regulations and Official Documents Collected and Reviewed under the Study

Legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic

1. Labor Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, No 106 as of 4 August 2004
2. The Law of the Kyrgyz Republic «On Education» No 92 as of 30 April 2003
3. The Law of the Kyrgyz Republic «On making amendments to some legislative statutes of the Kyrgyz Republic» No 150 as of 8 avrysta 2011
4. The Law of the Kyrgyz Republic «On the teacher's status» No 9 as of 14 January 2001
5. The Law of the Kyrgyz Republic «On making amendments to the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic " On the teacher's status" No 3 as of 15 January 2013

Resolutions of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic

6. Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic «On introduction of new terms and conditions of remuneration of the staff of educational institutions» No 18 as of 19 January 2011
7. Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic «On approval of the Instruction on accrual of pays of staff of educational institutions» No270 as of 31 May 2011
8. Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic «On making amendments and supplements to some Resolutions of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic concerning the terms and conditions of remuneration of staff of educational institutions» No 373 as 24 June 2013
9. Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic «On making amendments and supplements to some Resolutions of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic concerning the terms and conditions of remuneration of staff of educational institutions» No 720 as of 31 December 2013
10. Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic «On providing state support to individuals residing and employed at high mountainous and remote areas of the Kyrgyz Republic» No 377 as of 25 June 1997
11. Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic «On approving the Regulation on remuneration of staff of health facilities of the Kyrgyz Republic» No 246 as of 26 May 2011
12. Decree of Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic «On increments of payroll of staff of government institutions» No 85-V as of 29 December 2010

Documents of the Central Committee of Trade Union of Education and Science Professionals of the Kyrgyz Republic

13. The list of payroll bonuses and increments of employees of education system of the Kyrgyz Republic as of 1.01.2013 (L.P. Olimpiyeva – Head of the Department on socio-economic protection and payroll and the TU CC, K.N. Niyazbekov – chief inspector on social protection of TU CC)
14. Memorandum on monitoring the progress on the ground «Instruction on accrual of pays of staff of educational institutions» approved by the Decree of KR No 270 as of 31.05.2011.

The documents of the national education sector management levels

15. Plan of Actions of the Intersectoral Working Commission on Reforming the System of Remuneration of Employees of Social Sector (approved by the Minutes No1 as of 15 June 2009)
16. The Letter of the Ministry of Labor and Social Development of the Kyrgyz Republic, No 3/3465 as of 22.07.2009 (Minutes №3 of the Meeting of the Intersectoral Working Commission on reforming the system of remuneration of social sector employees)
17. The Letter of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic No 04-7/3355 as of 16.07.2009 (information on components of improving remuneration system under the projects in the education sector)

18. The Letter of the National Independent Trade Union «Taalimat» as of 17.01.2010 to the Committee on Education of Jogorku Kenesh of KR (proposal on teachers' salary increments)
19. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/1852 as of 07.04.2011 (on methodology of calculating additional allocations to introduce new remuneration terms and conditions)
20. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/2345 as of 03.05.2011 (on deadlines of introducing new terms and conditions of remuneration of pedagogical staff)
21. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/3343 as of 23.06.2011 (on aligning the titles in the staff lists of schools)
22. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/3402 as of 27.06.2011 (explanations on new terms and conditions of remuneration of pedagogical staff)
23. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/3461 as of 29.06.2011 (on introducing maximum weekly workload of a teacher – 36 hours of working and 25 hours of classes workload)
24. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/3603 of 07.07.2011 (on authorizing the teachers of ungraded schools to teach supplementary subjects of different specialty)
25. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/3671 as of 27.07.2011 (on accruing average salary of pedagogical staff to pay for annual leaves)
26. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/3679 as of 27.07.2011 (on scaling up the rural area bonuses for pedagogical staff of schools in urban type settlements and cities except for the city of Bishkek)
27. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/4397 as of 26.08.2011 (on determining the number of schools principals and their fixed official salaries)
28. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/4451 of 1.09.2011 (on determining the maximum permissible workload of school staff and teachers)
29. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/434 as of 31.01.2012 (requesting the information on schools for their transfer from local to national budget)
30. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/1257 as of 15.03.2012 (on addressing the issues related to schools financing at the expense of the national budget)
31. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/3233 of 2.07.2012 (on monitoring the proper implementation of Resolutions of the Government on new terms and conditions of remuneration of pedagogical staff)
32. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/4556 as of 13.09.2012 (on tariffs for additional education)
33. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/5302 of 22.10.2012 (on preparation to schools of children not attending the pre-school facilities at the expense of saved funds due to reduced curriculum)
34. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/6178 as of 10.12.2012 (on list of schools not entitled for capita based financing)
35. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/4371 as of 30.08.2013 (on regulating model school staff)
36. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/471 as of 27.01.2014 (on overseeing the practice of academic workload distribution among teachers and authorizing the teachers of ungraded schools to teach complementary subjects)
37. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/1843 as of 28.03.2014 (on prohibiting the employment of individuals with non-pedagogical background in educational institutions)
38. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/2085 as of 09.04.2014 (request on payments for classes falling on holidays)
39. The Letter of MoES KR, No 04-7/2180 as of 14.04.2014 (explanations on procedure of conducting classes and payments for the hours of classes falling on holidays).

Documents of Rayon and City level of Education Management Departments

40. The template of recording the pedagogical workload and calculating the size of the salary of teachers based on hourly system of remuneration (presentation of the rayon department of schools management)
41. The copy of the sick leave for accrual of the salary of teacher and information on wages for the last three months.

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