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CHALLENGES AND INNOVATIONS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION: TRANSFORMATIVE RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

IN KYRGYZSTAN, MONGOLIA AND TAJIKISTAN

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HAS THE MOMENT FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION ARRIVED?

*“The experience of distance education has been **rewarding for both teachers and students and their parents**. I’m going to continue using it”*

(School teacher)

*“Distance education should be **maintained for children who are ill and unable to attend school**, as well as for **children who help parents** during seasonal work”*

(Mother of 3 children)

*“I can see the benefits of distance education. My **daughter wanted to learn English**. But here we don't have such strong teachers. I took her to a tutor in a neighboring village, as there is an excellent teacher there. And now she is teaching my daughter online”*

(Father of 2 children)

*“Distance education is not necessary, as it **worsened the knowledge of our children** [and] affected [their] vision... They just copy information from the internet and teachers can't verify it”*

(Father of 2 children)

DISTANCE EDUCATION FOR IMPROVING QUALITY AND ACCESS IN KYRGYZSTAN, MONGOLIA AND TAJIKISTAN



CONSORTIUM led by Taalim-Forum, Kyrgyzstan

OBJECTIVE: to promote innovative distance learning approaches that ensure equitable access and quality education for children from disadvantaged groups

FOCUS: Remote rural communities, gender, ethnicity



AN INNOVATIVE SOUTH-SOUTH RESEARCH PROJECT



BUILDING KNOWLEDGE BY IDENTIFYING BEST PRACTICES AND INNOVATIONS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION

2021

Desk research
Research Design
Presentations
Round Tables

2022

Field research

2022-2023

Analysis
Preliminary results

2023

Recommendations
to policy makers

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: QUALITATIVE & QUANTITATIVE



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

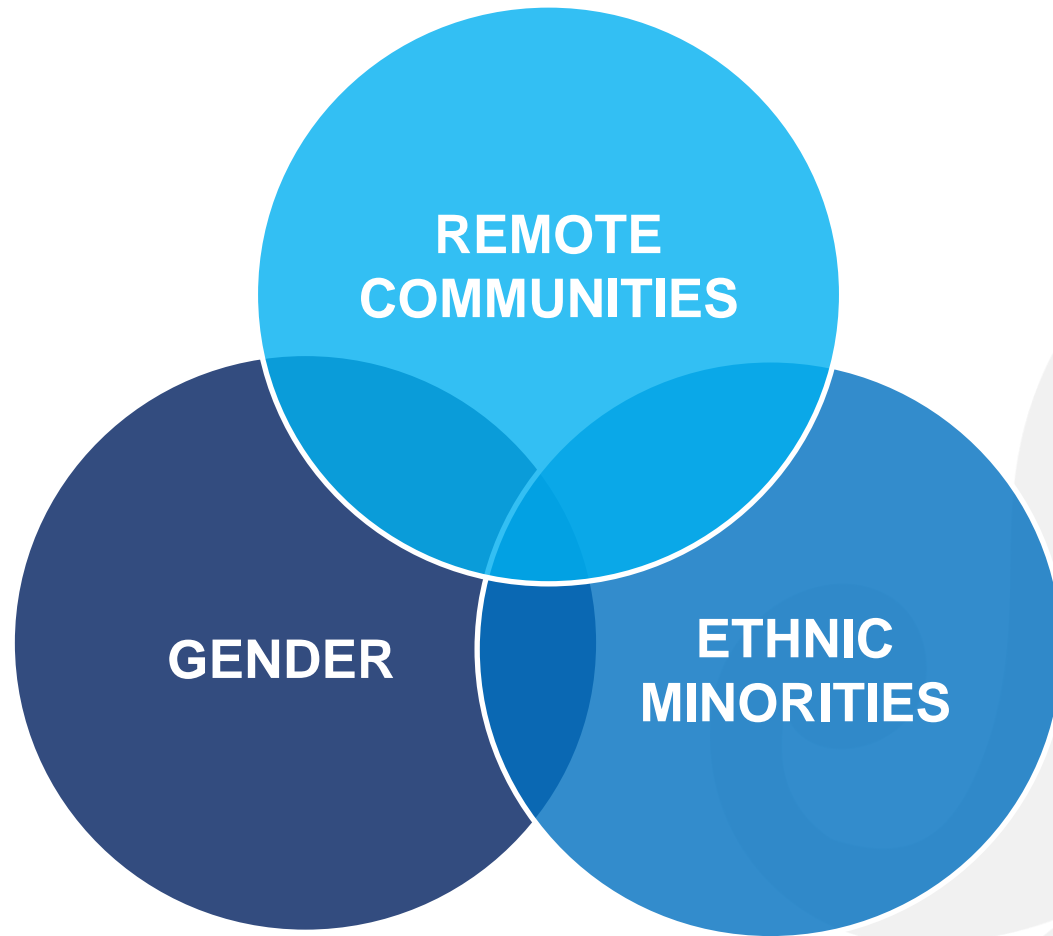
WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC VULNERABILITIES OF DIFFERENT GROUPS OF LEARNERS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION (DE)?

- How different are the vulnerabilities among school children, boys and girls, including those from ethnic minorities, and living in remote communities?
- Are there other inequalities and specific vulnerable groups formed in the countries besides those identified in the project?

WHERE AND WHAT KIND OF INNOVATIVE DE PRACTICES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED?

- By whom are they created, by whom are they identified?
- Who defines what is innovation/innovative?
- How can such practices be scaled up, and in what formats for different vulnerable groups?

THREE INTERSECTING AREAS OF INEQUALITY



DISTANCE EDUCATION BEFORE THE PANDEMIC



- Lack of legal regulations on distance education;
- Insufficient technical providing at schools;
- Lack of digital literacy & ICT skills among teachers and managers in education;
- Uneven Internet access;
- Electricity cuts and lack of Internet coverage in remote areas

IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON EDUCATION



- **Kyrgyzstan:** full school closures impacting about 1,350,000 school children.
 - **Mongolia:** full school closures impacting 900 000 children including those who studied in the boarding schools and homeschooled.
- Major problems for remote regions.
- **Tajikistan:** prolonged holidays impacting over 2,000,000 children
 - Rural children involved in household, field and livestock works.

INNOVATIONS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

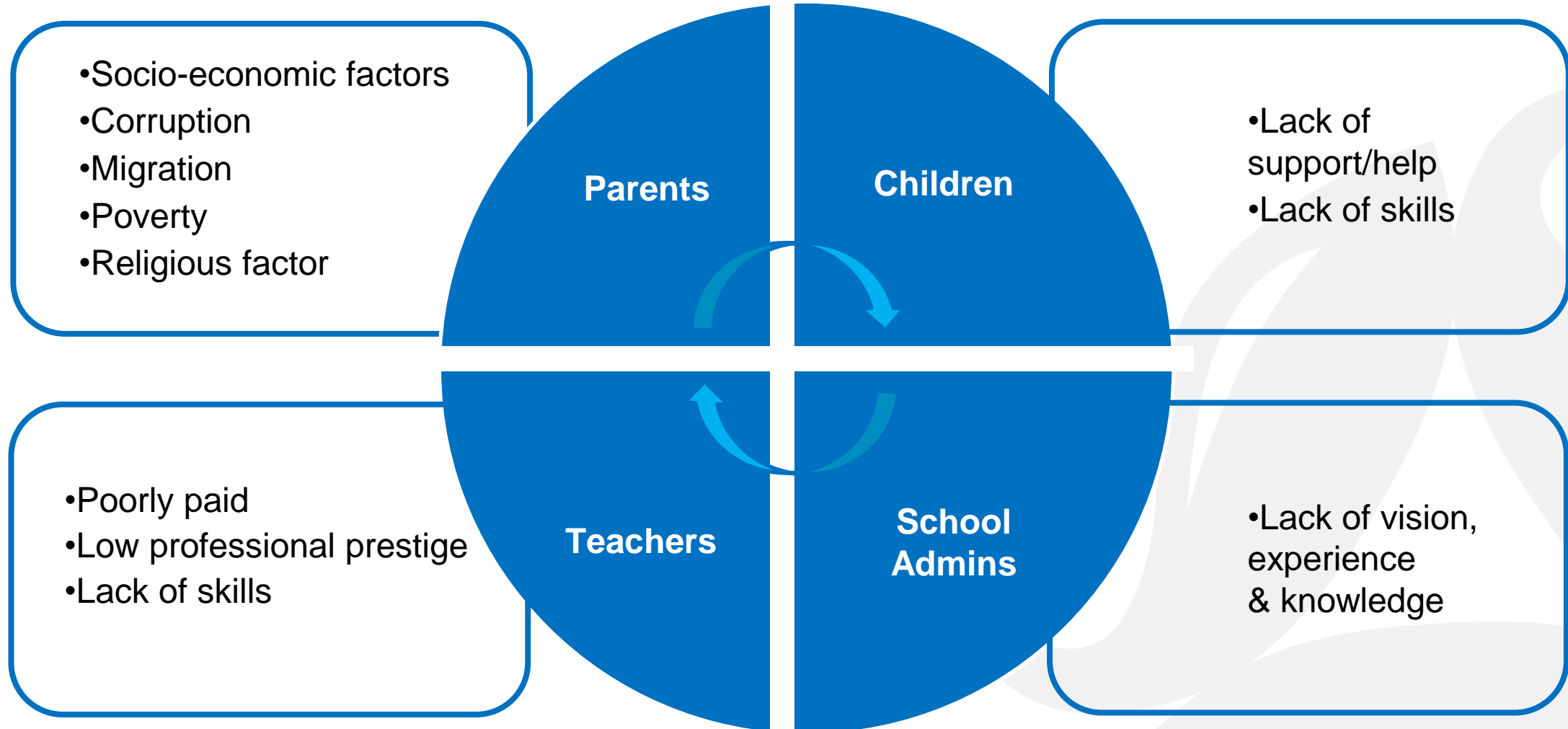
Governments

- Development of open education resources (TV lessons, multimedia education portals) & teacher professional development in ICT skills
- Supported by international donors

Private/Civil society

- Experts in education
- IT companies, telecommunication providers
- Teachers-innovators

CHALLENGES TO DISTANCE EDUCATION



KYRGYZSTAN: MEASURES & APPROACHES

- Regulation of DE process
- TV lessons (over 8,000)
- Multimedia platforms
- Teacher training

STATE/MOE



- Online webinars, courses (teacher-to-teacher, experts-to-schools)
- Translation of educational resources into Kyrgyz language

VOLUNTEERISM



- Online education platforms
- Train teachers online schools

PRIVATE INITIATIVES



PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

1. National strategies in all three countries prioritize digitalization and highlight the issues of equal access and quality of education, improving teachers' skills in ICT. However, most of the statements are declarative.
2. The terms "Distance learning technologies" and "Distance education" are used in official documents, but there is still no clear or common definition among managers in education and schools.
3. The government itself is not capable of being a leader in promoting innovations - neither in teacher professional development (in the Kyrgyz Republic since the Soviet times it is still called "advanced training"), nor in technological development.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

4. The status of DE in three countries is different.
 - Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia: Online education resources were posted on the websites of the Ministries of Education
 - Tajikistan: No roll out of distance education COVID-19
5. The reality in education in the three countries includes more complex and deeper issues beyond technology, including governance, capacity building of educators, digital literacy among teachers and students, development of online resources in local languages and others.

EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES AND INNOVATIONS IN THE ERA OF DIGITALIZATION

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Build professional networks
and share knowledge on
innovative strategies in the
digitalization of education

CONFERENCE DATES

OCTOBER 5-6, 2022

SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACTS

MAY 6, 2022

Languages: **English, Russian & Kyrgyz**

NEXT STEPS

- Complete research
- Present & share research results
- Hold a major international conference

Thank you!

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REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Kyrgyzstan

- **Rural population – 63%. 25,3% of the population lived below the poverty line, 73.7% of whom lived in rural Kyrgyzstan (National Statistics Committee)**
- **About 40 % of the country's workforce were in labour migration (World Bank, 2020)**

Tajikistan

- **Rural population – over 72%.**
- **About 8,500,000 citizens are in labour migration**

GENDER

Kyrgyzstan:

- About 85% of teachers in Kyrgyzstan are women. The average age of teachers – 54.
- 2021 – 560 facts reported on bride kidnapping in Kyrgyzstan. Out of them only 82 cases were brought to court.

Tajikistan:

- early marriages

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Distance education will be seen as discursive spaces that are produced by different actors / stakeholders, including:
- Leadership of the education system
- Teachers, parents and students
- Providers of IT services and educational online platforms
- Representatives of professional pedagogical education and the professional development system, developers of educational standards
- Volunteers and innovators in education