Overview of the Higher Education System

Tajikistan

February 2017
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Eurydice
The higher education system in Tajikistan

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Years

0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7

University

Master

Specialist degree

Student

Most common length of a Bologna cycle

Other length of a Bologna cycle

Professional programme

Programme outside the typical Bologna model

Professional programme non Bologna

ECTS:
Credits according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

regulated at national level
decided at institutional level

All programmes have admission requirements

SOME

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1 Overview

The Republic of Tajikistan (RT) is located in Central Asia and borders with Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and China. The total population of the country is 8,352,000 with Tajiks as the largest ethnic group (79.9%). Tajikistan's ethnic minorities include Uzbeks (15.3%), Russians (1.1%), Kyrgyz (1.1%) and other nationalities (2.2%). The official language is Tajik, and Russian is the language of multicultural communication (Constitution of the RT). According to the census conducted in 2003 in Tajikistan, in regard to religious affiliation, there are 85% Sunni Muslim and 5% Shia Muslim, while 10% of the population represent other religions.

Tajikistan's GDP per capita is about $2,533 USD in 2015, which is the lowest in Central Asia. And when adjusted by PPP (Purchasing Power Parity) it is equivalent to 14% of the world's average. GDP per capita in PPP in Tajikistan averaged 1,849.28 USD from 1990 until 2014, reaching a pick of 3,635.34 USD in 1990 and a record low of 1,040.23 USD in 1996. The country is struggling to provide employment for its population and almost 1.5 million Tajiks have migrated to other countries as labour migrants, particularly to Russia. In 2013, Tajikistan was one of the top recipients of remittances as a share of GDP (42%).

In 2012, the government of Tajikistan spent 4% of its GDP on education.

1.1 Fundamental Principles and National Policies

In accordance with the Article 41 of the Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan, everyone shall have the right to education.

The main law outlining the higher education is the Law on Higher and Professional Education of the Republic of Tajikistan (last edited in 2003).

The Government of the Republic of Tajikistan adopted the Strategy for Development of Education in Tajikistan by 2020, which determines the purpose, objectives/goals, directions, instruments and mechanisms for the development of education system in the Republic of Tajikistan. The Strategy highlights the importance of higher education in the economic and social development of the country.

1.2 Lifelong Learning Strategy

The development of the lifelong learning strategy has been one of the central activities of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) of the Republic of Tajikistan. As a significant starting step, in 2009, the European Training Foundation initiated a project called “School development for Life Long Learning in Central Asia”, which continued until 2014 and focused mainly on Vocational Educational and Training (VET). The aim of the project was to support capacity building by engaging policy makers and practitioners in development activities related to improving quality management in vocational education, especially in public vocational schools.

1.3 Organisation of Private Education

In Tajikistan, the system of private higher education is not very developed. There is only one private higher education institution – the Pedagogical Institute of Penjikent in the Sughd region of Tajikistan and no information is available on this institution. There are a few private secondary schools across the country, which are mostly financed by students’ parents via tuition fees.

According to the legislation (The Law on Education and The Law of Higher and Professional Education), the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan must approve the establishment and
operation of educational institutions regardless of their status. All higher education institutions have to be licensed and accredited by the State Agency on Supervision in the Sphere of Education of the Ministry of Education and Science.

1.4 National Qualifications Framework

The National Qualifications Framework of Tajikistan is in the process of being developed. The activities for developing the NQF have benefited from the Tempus project “QUADRIGA”, which was launched in 2012 in three Central Asian Republics, including Tajikistan, with the aim to create national qualifications frameworks in each of these countries as well as a Central Asian regional network. The partner countries developed qualifications frameworks according to the Bologna principles and initiated regional cooperation. The developed framework can be used as a basis for the development for discussion and approval of the National Qualifications Framework. The future Tajik NQF should be based on the legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Bologna Process.

Specific objectives of the project included:

- Establishment of National Committees on Qualifications Frameworks together with the national Ministries of Education in each of the partner countries and setting up the Regional Central Asian Network of Committees on Qualifications Frameworks;
- Improvement of the national general regulations concerning standards in particular fields, on the basis of qualifications framework ideas, Bologna principles and the EU universities’ experience;
- Introduction of new sectorial standards in the participating Central Asian countries.

As a next step, there is a need for follow up and further development of the NQF in Tajikistan.

1.5 Statistics on Organisation and Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students (in academic year 2013/2014)</th>
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<tr>
<td>157,791</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public</td>
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<table>
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<th>Number of HEIs (in academic year 2013/2014)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Private</td>
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<td>38</td>
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1.6 Distribution of responsibilities

In Tajikistan, the governance of HEIs falls under the Civil Code, the legislation on education, the relevant normative legal acts and the charters of HEIs, this set out their rights and responsibilities. The Ministry of Education and Science bears the overall responsibility for developing and implementing the
education policy. The National Centre for Education Quality Assessment (NCEQA) monitors the conditions for the provision of professional education, participates in the development and modernization of the Strategy for the development of Professional Education in the Republic of Tajikistan, maintains an information database for subsequent analysis and evaluation of education quality, and creates scientific, methodological and methodical databases of educational standards in the country. The National Centre for State Standards of Education and Testing (NCSSET) conducts external assessments of educational achievements of pupils and students at all levels of education (through centralized testing), ensures methodological and technical conformity of students' knowledge with state education standards, develops and revises state programmes and standards in the area of general secondary education, and creates scientific, methodological and methodical databases of state educational standards in the country. The National Accreditation Centre (NAC) undertakes institutional accreditation of higher educational institutions and professional educational programmes, develops mutually agreed accreditation criteria and procedures (in accordance with conditions set forth in the Bologna process), and attends international programmes pertaining to education quality provision. The Centre for Certification, Quality Management and Consulting (CCMQC) implements certification of management quality systems in higher educational institutions on the basis of ISO standards 9000 and 14000 and develops normative and educational-methodical documentation in the area of quality management. The Republican Centre for Designation and Certification of Eligibility (RCDCE) conducts independent evaluation of professional readiness and designated qualification and approves the certification of the eligibility of employees and specialists in technical and service jobs. The Department of Vocational and Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the development, monitoring and improvement of quality of education in higher education. The Academy of Education and the Institute for Educational Development are responsible for improving the quality and development of the educational system, by performing development, advisory, research and other expert activities in the area of preschool, primary and secondary education.

2 Higher Education Funding

2.1 Public Education

State higher education institutions in Tajikistan are primarily financed by the national budget as well as by students' tuition fees and other sources (own income that can come from various sources: research projects, training, international grants, consultancy services, equipment etc.). The Law on Higher and Professional Education guarantees “funding from the state budget or grants” for teacher training, and “budgetary funding or private grants to ensure access to higher and postgraduate education under the state order” (Ch. 1, Article 4.). The financing of higher education institutes is included in the state budget as a separate line.

The share of the GDP going to education increased from 2.3% in 2000 to 4% in 2012. The share of national funding for higher education in terms of the GDP subsequently also been increasing, in 2012 it was 0.45%, in comparison with 0.13% in 2001. According to the National Education Development Strategy, the government intends to further increase educational spending, up to 6% of GDP by 2015 and not less than 7% of GDP by 2020.1

HEIs request a certain number of state-funded places for their institution from the government. The Ministry of Economics and Trade, the Ministry of Education and Science, and other sectorial ministries

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1 Tajikistan: Higher Education Study (World Bank, 2014)
approve the final number of places for students for each institution, primarily according to historical allocations without a systematic formula, accounting for national priorities or prevailing labour market demand.

### 2.1.1 Financial Autonomy and Control

According to the Law on Higher and Professional Education, “the higher education institutions are provided with financial and economic independence with regard to the state budget funding and budget from other sources”. (Ch.6, Article 55). The spending of the state budget and the institution’s own income is governed by the institution’s internal acts in accordance with the laws of the Republic and the charter and strategy of HEIs. The salaries and staff levels are regulated by the Ministry of Education and Science.

### 2.1.2 Fees within Public Higher Education

Students of public higher education institutions in Tajikistan are either funded by the state budget or self-funded (in the academic year 2013/14, the overall percentage of self-funded students at HEIs was almost 60%).

Tuition fees for self-paying students vary from 650 EUR to 1,800 EUR per academic year. The highest tuition fees at public HEIs are charged at the Tajik National University (Faculty of Law and Faculty of Economics and Management - approximately 1,800 EUR or 12,750 TJS) and at the Dushanbe Branch of the Moscow State University, Faculty of International Relations – where the tuition fee is approximately 1,940 EUR or 14,100TJS per academic year.

### 2.2 Private Education

There is only one private institute in Tajikistan (the Tajik Pedagogical Institute in Penjikent) and no information is available about this institute.

### 2.3 Financial Support for Learners’ Families

There are no structural measures meant to target learners’ families in Tajikistan. All of the existing structural measures apply to students directly.

### 2.4 Financial Support for Learners

#### Student loans

There are no student loans in Tajikistan

#### Student grants

The government provides annually a presidential grant/stipend for students called “Durakhshandagon”. The “Durakhshandagon” grants support students who successfully passed special exams to study abroad.

#### Other social benefits

There are a number of social benefits to support education in Tajikistan:

- Presidential quotas;
- Presidential scholarships;
- Advanced scholarships/stipends for students with excellent study results;
- General scholarships/stipends for students with good study results;
- Special scholarships/stipends for orphans;
- Own grant system of HEIs.

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3 NTC.tj
Presidential quotas are allocated to students from poor families and those residing in remote mountain areas in order to provide them with the opportunity to access higher education. State-funded students receive monthly scholarships/stipends of TJS 55-182 (USD 12-38) according to their performance.

In addition, funding from the state budget is offered to disabled students and orphans (institutions provide food 3 times a day, accommodation in dormitories, and some funds for clothes). In addition, high performing fee-paying students who received 75% of “excellent” marks and 25% of “good” marks in all disciplines during four semesters are eligible to get transferred to the budget group, i.e. their studies will be covered by the state budget. Altogether, about 40% of students have been funded by the state since 2009. About 48% of students receive stipends/scholarships from the state and other sources of HEIs’ funding (e.g. Presidential stipend, stipend named after the Academician Osimi, stipend from the Academic Council, stipend of the founder and city stipend etc.)

3 The structure of the Higher Education system

Tajikistan is currently focusing on joining the Bologna Process, with the aim to develop its higher education system and integrate it into the European Higher Education Area. The government has started the necessary reforms, among which the adoption of the three-cycle education system in HEIs and the implementation of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) in 2004. The New Law on Education (adopted in 2013) and the National Education Development Strategy 2020 (adopted in 2012) are important documents aiming for the modernization and restructuring of the education system, in order to ensure access to quality education for citizens as a priority goal. For higher education, the aim is to modernize the existing academic curricula towards more professionally-oriented skills, so as to better meet current labour market demand and to build Tajikistan’s human capital. They also aim to reform educational standards following a competency-based approach, with the active participation of employers, thus modernizing curricula through modularization.

In the Republic of Tajikistan access to higher education is open to every person who finishes a general secondary, primary professional or vocational school (VET).

Currently, higher education is divided into three levels: First level (Bachelor Studies), Second level (Master Studies), and Third level (PhD Studies).

First level:

1. Bachelor studies – lasting for 4 years, carrying 240 ECTS

Second level:

1. Master Studies – lasting for 2 years, carrying 120 ECTS
2. Master of Applied Studies – lasting for 1 year and carrying 60 ECTS, designed for students who have received specialist diplomas from their previous Bachelor studies.

Third level of studies includes Doctoral Academic Courses (PhD), including a minimum of 3 years of study or 120 ECTS.

In the field of medical sciences (studies of medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine), integrated courses have a duration of 6 years and carry a minimum of 360 ECTS. Pharmacy studies also offer integrated courses that carry 300 ECTS (5 years of study).

4 Tajikistan: Higher Education Study (World Bank, 2014)
Higher education institutions organize and implement study programmes within an academic year commencing, as a rule, on 1 September. HEIs in Tajikistan provide a wide range of specialisations and research options.

The total number of institutions of higher education in the country has grown from 13 in 1991 to 38 in 2013. The HE sector started growing rapidly after 2000. By the academic year 2013/14, there were 38 institutions enrolling 157,791 students, with 10,073 academic staff members. Of the 157,791 students, almost 73% were enrolled in full-time programmes and 27% in part-time correspondence programmes. New higher education institutions and branches of the central ones were opened in the north of the country (Sughd district), in the Khatlon district and in the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous District. A number of institutions have also been established under the auspices of various authorities (various ministries including military ones).

3.1 Types of Higher Education Institutions

In accordance with the Law on Higher Education and Professional Postgraduate Education in the Republic of Tajikistan, there are three types of higher education institutions (HEIs): university (Donishgoh), academy (Akademiya) and institute (Donishkada).

Universities provide higher education in a wide range of specialties and carry out fundamental and applied research. Academies concentrate on a limited number of fields, in which they offer programmes and conduct research. Institutes deliver education in one or several fields. Universities and academies offer Bachelor (workload of not less than four years), Master (workload of not less than two years), PhD (workload of not less than three years) and Specialist degrees (workload of not less than five years), whereas institutes offer only Bachelor and Master programmes. As of 2013/14, there are 39 HEIs in total, consisting of 14 universities, 14 institutes, 5 branches of universities (of which two are branches of Russian HEIs), one conservatory, four Academies - Sciences, Pedagogical, Agricultural and Law Enforcement (military, police, internal affairs) and one private institution.

3.2 First Cycle Programmes

First cycle studies are offered at all types of higher education institutions in Tajikistan. The condition for entering a first-cycle study programme is the completion of secondary education/VET and passing the Unified University Entrance Examinations at the National Testing Centre (NTC) under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Bachelor studies at universities, academies and institutes last four years (240 ECTS). Upon completion of this level of studies, the student receives a Bachelor degree. A Bachelor study programme can include a final thesis that the student has to defend at the end of his/her studies, yet this depends on the specific curriculum of the study programme.

3.2.1 Branches of Study

The main branches of higher education studies in Tajikistan are:

- natural and technical sciences;
- economy and geography;
- philology, pedagogy and arts;

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• social sciences and law;
• medical science, biology and sport.

3.2.2 Admission Requirements

The successful completion of secondary education/VET and passing the Unified University Entrance Examinations (UEE) at the National Testing Centre (NTC) under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan are the general prerequisites for being admitted to Bachelor programmes at higher education institutions.

Registrations for examinations in Tajikistan usually start in March and continue until April 15. The examination itself is held on 1 July. Applicants can choose 12 specialties within one cluster. A cluster at the NTC is a group of related specialties offered at higher education institutions. Upon registration, each applicant obtains a personal account on NTC’s website, where he/she can find personal information, information on the schedule of exams, the final results of exams and the allocation of study places.

The following factors are taken into account in the allocation of study places by the NTC: the subjects (courses) chosen by the applicant and the selected priority; the admission plan of institutions (approved by the Ministry of Education and Science), the score obtained, the preferential score (if applicable), and the results of the creative examination (if applicable). The allocation is carried out by a special computer programme and the approved lists of applicants are submitted to the HEIs. The admission committees of the HEIs accept the documents of applicants on the basis of the approved list.

3.2.3 Curriculum

Higher education institutions are autonomous in the creation of the contents of educational curricula. However, there are some general rules regarding the educational curricula set by the MoES in Tajikistan. The MoES must also approve any changes to the curriculum prior to their implementation. If HEIs revise any programme, they need to go through licensing, attestation and accreditation procedures.

3.2.4 Teaching Methods

Nowadays, a variety of teaching methods is used within the HE system of Tajikistan including lectures, guest lectures, seminars, workshops, practical courses, laboratory work and studies, field work (internship), independent work, presentations, case studies, debates, discussions, brainstorming, working in small groups, teaching via electronic platforms, experiments as well as other interactive methods.

Teachers have the right to choose their own teaching methods, focusing on the achievement of learning outcomes and taking into account the specificities of the subjects taught. At Master and doctoral level, the teaching methods are more problem-based, research and practice-oriented.

3.2.5 Progression of Students

Students can move on to the next year of studies once they have completed their obligations in terms of obtaining the sufficient number of ECTS. Students have to obtain at least 60 ECTS in order to be admitted to the next year of studies. The list of compulsory and elective subjects is prescribed in the study programme.

The students have to pass two ratings during the semester and pass a final exam at the end of the semester. If the student fails to pass an obligatory exam twice she/he has to enrol in the same subject again and pay for it.
3.2.6 Employability

The labour market in Tajikistan is not able to provide workplaces for the majority of HEI graduates in accordance with their specialty and the level of their qualifications. There are no official statistics on the employment of graduates.

HEIs have taken various steps to strengthen the cooperation with actors of the labour market by inviting future employers to give lectures, organize master classes, offer supervision of projects and graduation theses, serve as supervisors for internship programmes etc.

Some HEIs have created career centres and techno parks which assist them in developing agreements with the labour market actors. HEIs also organise internships and help students to improve their qualifications in order to increase their chances of employability.

3.2.7 Student Assessment

The success of students at the HEIs in Tajikistan is continually evaluated during their studies. Students can earn a maximum of 100 points by passing ratings (middle-term exams) and final exams. The minimum number of points in ratings and exams is 50. Ratings and exams are conducted in the form of tests. Students can obtain a maximum of 75 points in the rating, the other 25 points being motivational points, which the student can receive during class activity (through various projects and other forms of student participation).

3.2.8 Certification

The authority responsible for certification is the higher education institution. Upon completion of the first level of higher education, the student receives a diploma with his/her relevant professional title, degree and the number of ECTS earned. The student also receives a diploma supplement, which contains information regarding the level, type and content of the completed studies.

3.3 Short-Cycle Higher Education

No short cycle programmes have been accredited yet neither in academic nor professional studies in the education system of Tajikistan.

3.4 Second Cycle Programmes

In Tajikistan, Master studies are organized by higher education institutions such as universities, academies and institutes. The length of studies at this level is two years (120 ECTS). In order to enrol in a Master programme, students must have completed a Bachelor programme with 240 ECTS or must have a specialist diploma (to enrol in a one-year Master programme). A Master programme consists of two components: the course component and independent research.

Master studies are completed by the state final attestation that includes the defence of the Master thesis and passing of the state final examinations. The Master thesis is a piece of independent research, prepared under the guidance of a supervisor.

3.4.1 Branches of Study

See 3.2.1

3.4.2 Admission Requirements

The admission requirements and procedures for this level of study are defined by the Regulations on Master Degrees, adopted by the Government of Tajikistan in 2007.
The admission procedure starts with the advertisement of the higher education institution announcing its study programmes, eligibility details, candidate rating criteria and regulations governing the competition procedure.

A general condition for those entering the second cycle of studies includes the completion of the first cycle of studies and obtaining a Bachelor diploma. Institutions do not organize entrance exams for graduates but make the selection according to other established criteria (recommendations of the dean of the faculty on the basis of graduates' average grades, previous work experience or academic activities in the relevant field, etc.).

If the candidate wants to enrol in a particular programme and he/she has graduated from another higher education institution and in a different field of study, he/she might be required to pass an exam.

The duration of studies in *medical sciences* is as follows:

- Five years in dentistry and pharmacy;
- Six years in medicine and public health;

Medical sciences are the only area in which higher education diplomas do not entitle their holders to exercise their profession. In order to be admitted to the medical professions, it is obligatory for the holders of higher education diplomas to undertake further in-depth professional training:

- a one-year course programme called *internatura*;
- after the completion of the *internatura*, students may take (but not obligatory) another two year course, *ordinatura* (clinical-oriented program), or a Master programme (science oriented program).

Training in the “*internatura*” or the “*ordinatura*” takes place in hospitals, clinics, and research medical institutes. Graduates from the *internatura*, *ordinatura* and from a Master programme are awarded certificates that specify their specialization areas and entitle them to exercise their professions.

### 3.4.3 Curriculum

Master programmes are based on the curriculum of the respective higher education institution, which is designed according to the State educational standards approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan, as well as individual Master projects. The maximum weekly classroom workload for a full time Master programme is 14 hours.

### 3.4.4 Teaching Methods

Teaching methods are similar to those used in the first cycle.

### 3.4.5 Progression of Students

Progression of students is the same as for the Bachelor studies. Please refer to section 3.2.5

### 3.4.6 Employability

Please refer to section 3.2.6.

### 3.4.7 Student Assessment

The same principles as for the Bachelor studies apply. Please refer to section 3.2.7

### 3.4.8 Certification

The same principles as for the Bachelor studies apply. Please refer to section 3.2.8
3.5 Programmes outside the Bachelor and Master Structure

No programme exists outside the Bachelor and Master Structure.

3.6 Third Cycle (PhD) Programmes

3.6.1 Organisation of Doctoral Studies

PhD programmes consist of comprehensive scientific research and the publication of papers in scientific journals approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. A PhD thesis is the final part of the doctoral study programme. Arts study programmes require students to create an artistic project as the final part of their PhD studies.

The preparation procedures and conditions for the defence of the PhD thesis are defined by the particular higher education institution's regulations approved by the academic council and in line with those set by the Ministry of Education and Science. The institution where the PhD thesis is defended has the obligation to make it available to the public by uploading it on its web page, alongside with a printed version, which needs to be available at the respective HEI as well as at the national libraries.

The first PhD programmes in Tajikistan were launched in the academic year 2014-2015. According to the order of the Ministry of Education and Science signed on 27th April 2015, students can enrol in a PhD programmes at the following HEIs: Tajik National University, Tajik State Pedagogical University, Tajik Technical University named after academic M. Osimi, Tajik Agrarian University named after Sh. Shohtemur, Tajik State Medical University named after Abualilibni Sino, Tajik-Russian Slavonic University, Tajik State University of Commerce, Technological University of Tajikistan, Kulob State University named after A. Rudaki, Kurgonteppa State University named after N. Khusrav, Khujand State University named after the academic B. Gafurov, Tajik State University of Business, Law and Politics, Khorog State University named after M. Nazarshoev, Tajik State Institute of Art named after M. Tursunzoda.

The number of state funded places for studying in a PhD programme is determined by the MoES in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy, Development and Trade and the government, considering the estimated demand for the development of science, education and arts. HEIs are allowed to admit more applicants, if these are charged tuition fees, but the number of places must be agreed with the MoES.

3.6.2 Admission Requirements

Before being accepted in a PhD programme, the applicants must have completed a Master degree programme and obtained at least 360 ECTS during their previous studies (BA -240 ECTS and MA -120 ECTS); the same applies to those who have specialist diplomas (with the exception of clinical and medical specialties). A PhD candidate must be fluent in at least one foreign language (English, Dutch, French, Chinese etc.). Doctoral studies (PhD) are organized at HEIs with duration of minimum three years (120 ECTS, including 30 ECTS theoretical studies and 12 ECTS for the internship).

3.6.3 Supervision Arrangements

A special advisory commission is responsible for the scientific supervision of a PhD student's work. It consists of 2 mentors from domestic and foreign academia with relevant academic degrees (Doctor of Science, Doctor of philosophy (PhD), Doctor of the specialty). PhD mentors must have at least 2 or more publications in well-known local and international scientific journals over the past 5 years. A PhD mentor can have simultaneously a maximum of 5 students under his/her supervision.
3.6.4 Employability

Graduates with PhDs degrees will have diverse employment opportunities: academic careers (mostly in institutions of higher education, sometimes in professional bodies); consultancy; industry/business/market research for government agencies, other public bodies and trade associations or large international organizations that require a continuous research function; specialist occupations in a variety of economic sectors – particularly in knowledge-intensive roles requiring advanced levels of intellectual capacity.

3.6.5 Assessment

PhD students are assessed on the basis of their overall performance and engagement, as well as on the basis of credits earned throughout their exams (midterm, final) during each semester. Final qualification exam is taken no later than 3 months before thesis defence. The PhD thesis, being the final part of the studies, is assessed on the basis of its scientific or artistic significance and contribution to the field of research. Each higher education institution sets its general rules of student assessment in accordance with the regulations of the respective PhD programme approved by the MoES.

3.6.6 Certification

Once a student has completed all of his/her examination obligations and defended his/her PhD thesis, he/she receives a diploma stating the official title. The competent certifying authority is the higher education institution itself. The authority responsible for the assessment standards is the Higher Attestation Commission.

4 Teachers and Education Staff

4.1 Initial Education for Academic Staff in Higher Education

Initial education, conditions of service and professional development of academic staff are regulated by the Law on Education and the Law on Higher and Professional Education.

There are no special programmes for the initial education of future academic staff in higher education. Likewise, there are no requirements concerning particular subjects during studies, such as psychology, pedagogy, teaching methodology or other education related subjects.

Admission to the academic profession is regulated by the specifics of the particular institution. Usually, in order to be admitted to the HEIs as a member of academic staff, the requirements include having a higher education degree, i.e. specialist, Master or PhD.

Research work and the publication of scientific papers are highly valued for students aiming for an academic career.

Nowadays, less than 30% of the academic staff has higher academic degrees (kandidatnauk, doctor nauk or PhD).

4.2 Conditions of Service for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education

According to the existing statutes and regulations, the staff of higher education institutions in the Republic of Tajikistan consists of academic staff, researchers, as well as administrative and educational support staff.

- Academic staff: professors, docents, teachers, and department assistants.
- Research staff: head of research department, leading, senior and junior researchers, laboratory assistants.
Administrative and educational support staff: rector and vice-rectors, technical support staff.

Higher education institutions in Tajikistan pay attention to improving the qualifications of young teachers. This task requires constant supervision from the heads of departments, the academic supervisors and the university administration, in order to help young teachers in choosing relevant topics of research, in thesis preparation, and in the publication of scientific articles and teaching aids. In order to improve the qualifications of young teachers and motivate students for future academic career HEIs have adopted several policies including:

- Supervision of young teachers by the departments in order to improve their academic qualifications;
- Allocation of institutional funds for the publication of materials by students and young teachers;
- Introduction of benefits for young teachers for their active participation in public activities or for combining teaching responsibilities with research activities and training during graduate school;
- Establishment of norms for one-time material incentives for graduate students who defend their dissertations on time;
- Introduction of a contract system with teachers who are sent abroad for education and training opportunities;
- Provision of moral and material incentives for young teachers through the introduction of contests for the best teacher in the department and university;
- Organisation of seminars and workshops for young teachers;
- Promotion of the careers of young teachers through the development of academic qualifications (after their thesis defence).

### 4.2.1 Planning Policy

No planning policy has yet been established in terms of teacher supply and demand in Tajikistan's higher education.

### 4.2.2 Entry to the Profession

See section 4.1.

### 4.2.3 Professional Status

The current situation in higher education institutions in Tajikistan is characterised by the constant growth of the average age of teachers (especially those with academic degrees and titles) and the outflow of young people from academia. All academic and administrative staff members of HEIs are considered as public employees. Until the early nineties, it was considered to be very prestigious to stay after graduation to work in the department, and only the best graduates could do so. Then the changes in the country’s economic situation dramatically affected the age structure of the university staff. Young people actively sought out employment in the business community where they could find relatively higher pay. Institutions of higher education are losing middle-aged teachers (30-45 years) as well, who have begun to change to other fields of employment. As a result, today the average age of teachers with advanced degrees in institutions of higher education in Tajikistan has reached 55 years of age. In this situation, some higher education institutes attempt to implement the following activities:
• To establish various benefits and incentives for engaging students in research and academic activities during the whole process of study;
• To make bilateral agreements (between HEI and students), which exempt students from paying tuition fees. Then these students have to stay in their universities and work in teaching positions during 3 years after graduation.

4.2.4 Salaries
Monthly salaries in 2013/14 ranged from TJS 472 (EUR 72) for teachers without a scientific degree to TJS 1,753 (EUR 266) for professors with a degree. Junior teaching staff and those without a scientific degree are especially poorly paid, less than or equivalent to the average salary. Low salaries force faculty staff to take multiple jobs, leaving less time for research. The wages for professors and lecturers with a scientific degree or a PhD are higher than the average, but even a professor with a scientific degree earns less than somebody working in the construction sector, transportation or financial mediation7.

4.2.5 Working Time and Holidays
Full time higher education employees work 36 hours per week, with all other requirements being determined by their contract and class schedules issued by the higher education institution. Academic staff members are entitled to a maximum of 56 vacation days per year. The vacation period usually begins in early July till the end of August. A staff member may use paid absence days in situations determined by the institution (professional development, conferences, illness, maternity leave etc.)

4.2.6 Promotion, Advancement
Being involved in research activities and obtaining Master and PhD degrees are relevant aspects for the career advancement of faculty members.

Scientific achievements allow them to move from a lower position to a higher one. Career growth begins from the head of department or committee member up to the level of vice rector or even rector. A higher-ranking position also brings an increase in salary.

Honourable professor emeritus title may be assigned to a professor for distinguished scientific work and contribution to higher education. Professor emeritus may be involved in all teaching activities at the second and third degree levels of study.

4.2.7 Retirement and Pensions
Since faculty members are considered as public employees they should follow general labour legislation. Academic staff may retire at the age of 63 (men) and 58 (women). Retired academic staff can extend their employment under the terms of the particular higher institution, but they cannot hold an administrative position.

4.3 Continuing Professional Development for Academic Staff in Higher Education

4.3.1 Organisational Aspects
Professional development in HEIs can be organized in various forms, such as short and long professional development courses, study theses, trainings and seminars, international and domestic conferences, language courses and similar activities. Institutions are required to provide conditions for the professional development of their staff, including the time for the completion of such engagement within regular working hours.

4.3.2 Incentives for Participation in Continuing Professional Development Activities

Any institution of HE is responsible for the professional development of its academic staff. Young academic staff may receive additional funding for research work, or participation in conferences and other important academic events (short time training, seminars...).

The administration of the higher institution may approve 6 months of sabbatical leave for teachers’ professional development and scientific research purposes. The institution is obliged to approve the absence of the staff for the purpose of professional development, especially for participation in international scientific projects, preparation of PhD or mobility programme (Master exchange programme, PhD exchange programme).

5 Management and Other Education Staff for Higher Education

5.1 Requirements for Appointment

According to the legislation, rectors of higher education institutions are appointed or dismissed from their services by the founder. The new regulations on higher education institutions define the system for the appointment and dismissal of rectors from service. Rectors of state HEIs are nominated jointly by the state department for HEI and the relevant ministries and responsible authorities. Rectors of private institutions of higher education are appointed and dismissed from service by their founders (board meeting of the founders).

The general management of a HEI is carried out by the representative body, the Scientific Council headed by the Rector. The responsibilities of the Scientific Council and the rector are defined by the Charter of the HEI.

Vice-rectors of state higher education institutions are appointed and dismissed from service by the rector in consultation with the founding body, while in private higher education institutions it happens the other way around: vice-rectors are assigned and dismissed by the founding body based on the rector’s decision. Heads of faculties and other structural units are appointed and dismissed from office by the rector.

Higher education institutions have autonomy in selecting and appointing academic staff, including deans of faculties, heads of departments, professors, associate professors, senior instructors, instructors and assistants. The legislation envisages the following procedure for employing academic staff: all academic staff with the exception of vice-rectors, deans of faculties and heads of departments is employed on a contractual basis for up to five years. All academic staff is employed on the basis of a competition advertised in local newspapers.

5.2 Conditions of Service

Faculty members work according to individual contracts. Salaries of faculty members are paid according to the national scale; however, each higher education institutions can pay additional funds from their own funds, which come mostly from student tuition fees. The teaching load for faculty members is measured by stavka. One stavka ranges from approximately 540 hours to 720 hours per year. There are also faculty members who teach and work part-time, from 0.25 to 0.5 stavka).
6 Quality Assurance in Higher Education

6.1 Responsible Bodies

Since Tajikistan has committed to implement the principles of the Bologna Process and EHEA, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area are used as a frame of reference and analysis of Tajikistan's quality assurance system for higher education. Tajikistan's external quality assurance system currently consists of three consecutive steps of licensing, attestation, and accreditation. This system, which heavily relies on licensing, attestation and accreditation based on minimum standards, overburdens the system and yields limited quality enhancement. All of these steps are drawing on the same standards and using more or less the same procedures and actors, thus overburdening HEIs without adding value to system's improvement and enhancement.

The main body, which is responsible for Quality Assurance is the State Agency on Supervision in the Sphere of Education (SASSE), which operates under the Ministry of Education and Science.

6.2 Approaches and Methods for Quality Assurance

The licensing, attestation and accreditation are all based on the same criteria and the validity period of the three tools is for five years. This means that to initiate an institution or a programme, a license should be obtained first, which is a one-time procedure. Following the license, every five years, all HEIs must pay and undergo an evaluation against the same criteria twice (first attestation and within three months accreditation). The consequences of the two are the same with regard to the right to issue a diploma. On the other hand, these tools overlook functions such as quality enhancement, professional certification of graduates and provision of information, which are necessary for the effective operationalization of a quality assurance system. None of the tools engages major stakeholders such as faculty staff, or students, let alone employers. In addition, these stakeholders are never informed of the results of these evaluations.

In order to get licensing, HEIs have to obtain a license from SASSE before starting to operate. SASSE sends a team of experts to conduct the licensing procedure. A licensing procedure and criteria are applied by SASSE to check the compliance with the minimum requirements to start an organization. A license is issued for 5 years, and after 5 years HEIs have to undergo attestation in order to renew the license for another 5 years. In case HEIs establish new programmes, SASSE establishes a committee and then amends the license by adding the new programmes.

Attestation: The first cycle of attestation takes place after 5 years of HEI establishment, followed by two-year cycles for subsequent attestations. The agency prepares an attestation plan every two years for particular HEIs for the Ministry's approval. Based on the plan, the HEIs in question receive a notification about the procedure and the Ministerial decree. A year before the launch of the attestation procedure, SASSE requests the HEI to indicate the number of students, based on which the agency sets the price for attestation for the HEI, with the maximum fee at TJS 10,000 (approx. USD 2,200) per procedure. According to the regulation, prior to attestation the HEI has to draft a self-attestation report and submit it to the agency. After receiving the self-attestation report, which is primarily based on the attestation and licensing criteria and revolves around collections of quantitative data without in-depth analysis, the agency sends an expert panel to conduct the site visit. During the site visit, the team (which includes 4-5 agency members and, depending on the number of programmes, one expert per programme) compares

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8Tajikistan: Higher Education Study (World Bank, 2014)
9Tajikistan: Higher Education Study (World Bank, 2014)
the results submitted in the self-attestation report with their own observations. One example is that the visiting team is divided into two groups: the invited experts look purely at the programme’s content and the agency staff looks at the administrative management of the HEIs. According to the procedures, the attestation is supposed to take two weeks.

Institutional accreditation: After a HEI receives a positive attestation result, within 3 months, the HEI management applies for accreditation, providing the required documents and including the conclusion of the attestation procedure. Accreditation is mandatory. Prior to the application, it should be approved by the Academic Council of the HEI. While the same standards are applied for attestation and accreditation, a different procedure is applied for accreditation.10

7 Educational Support and Guidance

7.1 Support Measures for Learners in Higher Education

7.1.1 Definition of the Target Group(s)

According to the Law on Education, the institutions of higher education provide entrance to their respective institutions to disadvantaged learners based on funding from the state budget, i.e. free of tuition fees. They are also provided with monthly stipend from the government/state budget as well as with food, free dormitory and some funds for clothing. An individual approach is used to identify those students. Disadvantaged learners include students with disability, orphans and students with low social and economic background.

7.1.2 Specific Support Measures

The support measures mostly include financial support. However, there is some help coming from the administrative staff and faculty support. No alterations to building facilities or specialist staff exist in HEIs.

7.2 Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education

7.2.1 Academic Guidance

The academic guidance in HEIs comes from individual teachers/academics by their own initiative during classes and individual consultations. There are academic supervisors for Bachelor, Master and PhD theses. However, no special sessions/courses exist in HEIs focused on academic guidance.

7.2.2 Psychological Counselling

No psychological counselling exists in HEIs.

7.2.3 Career Guidance

Limited career guidance exists in HEIs. However, HEIs have taken various steps to strengthen cooperation with actors of the labour market through guest lectures, master classes, supervision of course projects and graduation theses, supervision during internships etc. Some HEIs have been able to create career centres and techno parks.

8 Mobility and internationalization in Higher Education

For the time being, there is no particular national strategy dealing with internationalization and mobility, but the overall Strategy for Education Development in Tajikistan by 2020 envisages the mobility of

10 Tajikistan: Higher Education Study (World Bank, 2014)
international and local students as well as teachers.

Most of the possibilities related to mobility and internationalization are nowadays offered through the Erasmus+ projects. These projects contribute to the adoption of national and university strategies for internationalization, and the incorporation of standards for mobility in the accreditation standards for HEIs.

Tajik HEIs are active in the EU programmes for international cooperation, including the former Tempus and Erasmus Mundus programmes. In Tajikistan, in the period 2004-2012 Tempus has funded 35 projects for an overall budget of EUR 8.27 million with the involvement of 22 HEIs from Tajikistan. Tempus has been a useful instrument to retrain staff and help the most advanced universities in re-establishing links with the international academic community. Tempus has played an instrumental role in modernizing curricula, upgrading skills and promoting the use of information technologies. The programme made a significant contribution into the implementation of the higher education reform process, including the introduction of the ECTS.

There is a great interest for participation in all types of projects under the new Erasmus+ programme, which expands the opportunities for cooperation. Under the first 2 Erasmus+ calls, a total of 18 HEIs from Tajikistan are involved in 5 approved Erasmus+ Capacity Building projects (CBHE), with the participation of the Ministry of Education and Science. In addition to that, Tajik HEIs participate in 8 Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility projects approved in the 2015 Call, together with European HEIs.

8.1 Student Mobility

Student mobility in Tajik HEIs is still very rare and not sufficiently promoted by HEIs. However, the new Erasmus+ Programme offers new possibilities for the Tajik HEIs, in particular through student mobilities under the International Credit Mobility action. Higher education institutions from Tajikistan have also been participating in a number of Tempus projects, which offered possibilities for student mobility. In addition, Tajik HEIs have participated in other student exchange programmes with Central Asian and European universities.

8.2 Academic Staff Mobility

Academic staff mobility in Tajikistan has been mainly promoted through the Tempus Programme. Tempus has been the largest financial instrument of support for the modernization of higher education in Tajikistan and it provided possibilities for the capacity building of teaching staff through mobility periods abroad. A number of academic staff of Tajik HEIs has participated through Tempus in visit programmes to European institutions.

Overall, in the education system of Tajikistan, HEIs themselves are responsible for the organization and coordination of mobility. The authority responsible for the overall internationalization policy developments is the Ministry of Education and Science.

8.3 Other Dimensions of Internationalisation in Higher Education

Tajikistan is striving to be a part of the Bologna process by the adoption of the Bologna Declaration. The objective of these actions is the harmonization of Tajikistan’s education system with the education systems of the EU countries and with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

8.4 Bilateral Agreements and Worldwide Cooperation

The development of international cooperation in the educational sector is based on treaties and agreements signed by Tajikistan with other countries on a bilateral and multilateral basis. It has
undoubtedly had a positive impact on the implementation of the national sustainable development strategy in the HE field.

The Ministry of Education has signed numerous agreements in the field of HE with relevant educational organisations in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS countries; former Soviet republics), Asian and European countries and the USA. A treaty on the attestation of scientific-pedagogical staff of Tajikistan in the Russian Federation was signed between the Governments of Russia and Tajikistan in 1997. Agreements on the mutual recognition and equivalence of documents on education, scientific degrees and titles were signed between the Governments of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan in 2001.

In recent years, the Ministry of Education has negotiated with a number of CIS countries on the allocation of quotas for Tajik students to allow them to study abroad certain specialities that are not offered by the Tajik HEIs.

HEIs have the right to establish cooperation and apply to international organisations for grant support. Each HEI has within its organisation a position of vice-rector for international relations and a department of international relations. Most Tajik HEIs are making use of the opportunities offered by international organisations working in the field of education: the European Commission through the Erasmus+ (previously Tempus) Programme, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Open Society Institute, USAID, Agha Khan Foundation, German Technical Assistance, the World Bank, etc.

By establishing international cooperation the Tajik HEIs are aiming to:

− develop a long-term mobility plan for teaching and academic staff, students, postgraduates and young researchers;
− increase the opportunities for the improvement of teacher qualifications in leading universities throughout the world;
− develop research and intercultural cooperation relations on an agreement and project-partnership basis;
− establish and strengthen business relations with foreign international organisations and companies.

9 On-going reforms and Policy developments

9.1 Overall national education strategy and key objectives

In June 2012, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan adopted the National Strategy of Education and Development of the Republic of Tajikistan by 2020. The National Strategy envisions objectives, challenges and mechanisms for the education system reforms on all levels of education in Tajikistan. It has been developed following best practices from different countries and adapting them to the real conditions and perspectives of the country’s development.

The main goal of the National Strategy is the creation of the necessary conditions that would ensure a functional and effective provision of educational services and access to appropriate quality education for everyone. The aim is to reach the following objectives:

− Ensuring the well-being of citizens and social stability in the society;
− Establishing a skilled work force for economic growth in priority sectors, developing technologically effective production and attracting investments into the country’s economy.

The following priority directions of the National Strategy have been identified:
- Modernization of the education system;
- Structural changes in the education system;
- Ensuring accessibility to quality education.

Since the adoption of the Strategy in June 2012, a number of activities have been implemented. The main legislative change took place in 2013, when the new Law on Education was adopted. In line with the National Strategy, the Action plan and the midterm Action plan for 2012-2015 were adopted as well.

9.2 Overview of the education reform process and drivers

The Ministry of Education and Science is the main structure in charge for higher education policy and reforms in Tajikistan. Duties of the MoES include: development and introduction of state educational standards for higher education; development and approval of sample curricula and educational programmes with compulsory subjects together with the organization and publication of course books; promoting development and implementation of innovative technologies; organization of licensing, attestation, and accreditation procedures; defining templates for state higher education documents, drawing up regulations on recognition and equivalence regarding foreign states’ documents on higher education and academic status, issuing recognition documents; coordination of HEIs activities and sectorial and regional systems of higher education; establishment of HEI admission regulations for students, postgraduate and doctoral students; development and implementation of measures on the social security of students, postgraduate students and HEI employees in partnership with public organizations; contracting international agreements in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan; and taking part in the definition of needs per specialization.

9.3 National reforms in Higher Education

9.3.1 2015
- Establishment of Higher Attestation Commission for PhD programmes.

9.3.2 2014
- Launch of a Unified University Entrance Examinations for admission into Higher Education Institutions;
- Reduction of the number of specializations at the Bachelor level in HEIs.

9.3.3 2013
- Introduction of PhD programmes in HEIs, accepted standards of third level of study.

10 Legislation

6. State Education Development Programme of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2010-2015”;
7. State Programme on Provision of Study Rooms and Scientific and Research base to Educational and Scientific Institutions;
8. State Programme on Development and Publication of Books for 2007-2010
9. State programme on the study and teaching Russian and English languages in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2001-2014

10. Resolution of the Government of the RT “On approval of Resolution on international stipend of the President of the RT “Durakhshandagon”, № 208, from April 2, 2009;


12. Regulations on doctoral studies in the specialty (endorsed by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan on April 3, 2012, № 127);

13. The establishment and approval of dissertation councils for the protection of dissertations on competition and the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), the specialty of the doctor (approved by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan on November 2, 2012, №625);

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