









DISTANCE EDUCATION TO IMPROVE ACCESS AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN KYRGYZSTAN, MONGOLIA AND TAJIKISTAN

PRELIMINARY RESULTS
OF QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

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METHODOLOGY: GEOGRAPHY OF THE RESEARCH

4 settlements in *Kyrgyzstan:* housing estates "Altyn Ordo" (Bishkek), Kochkor (Naryn), Uzgen (Osh), Uch Korgon (Batken);

3 settlements in *Tajikistan:* Dushanbe, Khujand, Darvoz;

3 in *Mongolia:*Khovd province, Gobi
province and Bayancyr district
of Ulaanbaatar capital city.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

WHAT ARE THE SPECIFICS OF THE VULNERABILITY OF DIFFERENT GROUPS STUDYING IN THE DE FORMAT?

- How different are the vulnerabilities of schoolchildren, boys and girls living in remote areas, including those from ethnic minorities?
- Are other inequalities and specific vulnerable groups emerging in the countries besides those identified in the project?

WHERE AND WHAT INNOVATIVE PRACTICES OF DE HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED?

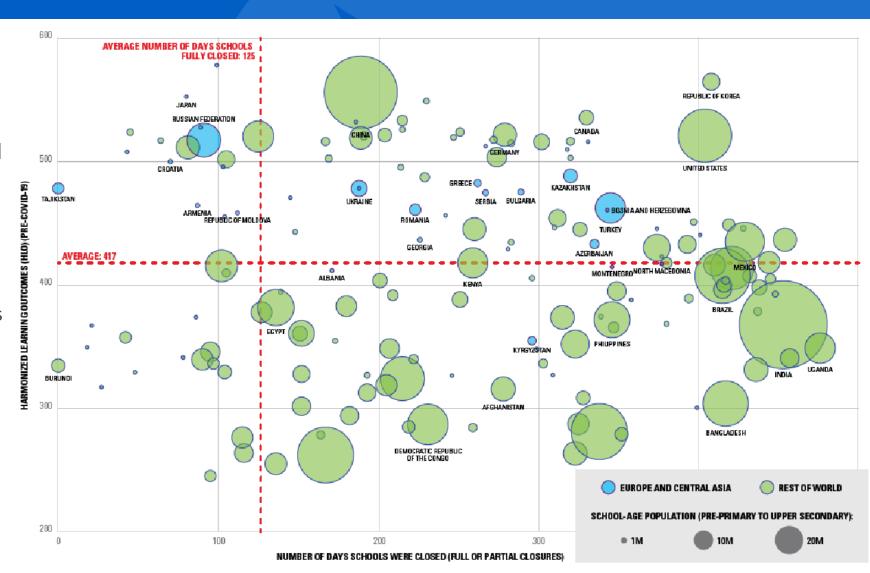
- Who establishes them, who identifies them?
- Who determines what innovation is?
- How can such practices be scaled up, in what formats for different vulnerable groups?

MODELS: PRACTICES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Mongolia: about 200 days of quarantine, the mode has been varied depending on the density of local population and different periods (lockdown was declared 7 times). There is a persistent demand for DE for children of livestock herders.

Tajikistan: the schools were not closed due to pandemic in rhetoric, but the respondent from private school in *Khujand* spoke about the actual practices of distance learning. The relevance of Distance learning is with linked to the implementation of the National Digitalization Program.

Kyrgyzstan: almost **300** days of distance learning (with an average of 125 days of complete shutdown of schools around the globe)

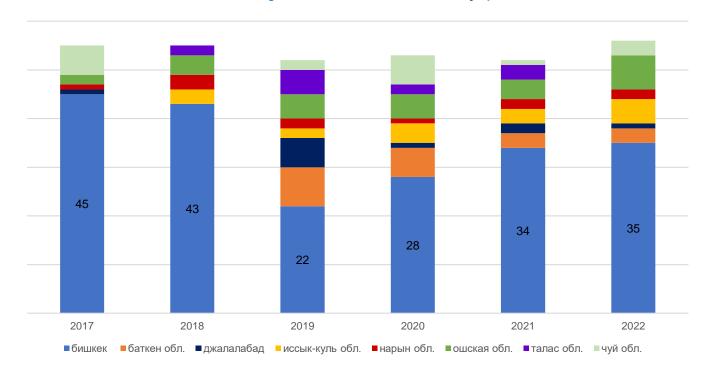


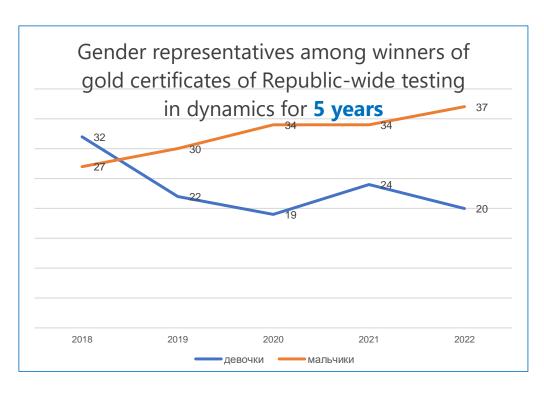
DISCUSSION ABOUT DE EXPERIENCE

- At the global level there are concerns that offline/online learning will separate the richest and "the most advanced" students from poor students.
- Criticism about low quality of education and decreased motivation to learn and teach.
- There is lots of criticism, but there are no national systematic assessments and measurements of DE impacts.

какой заголовок можно поставить?

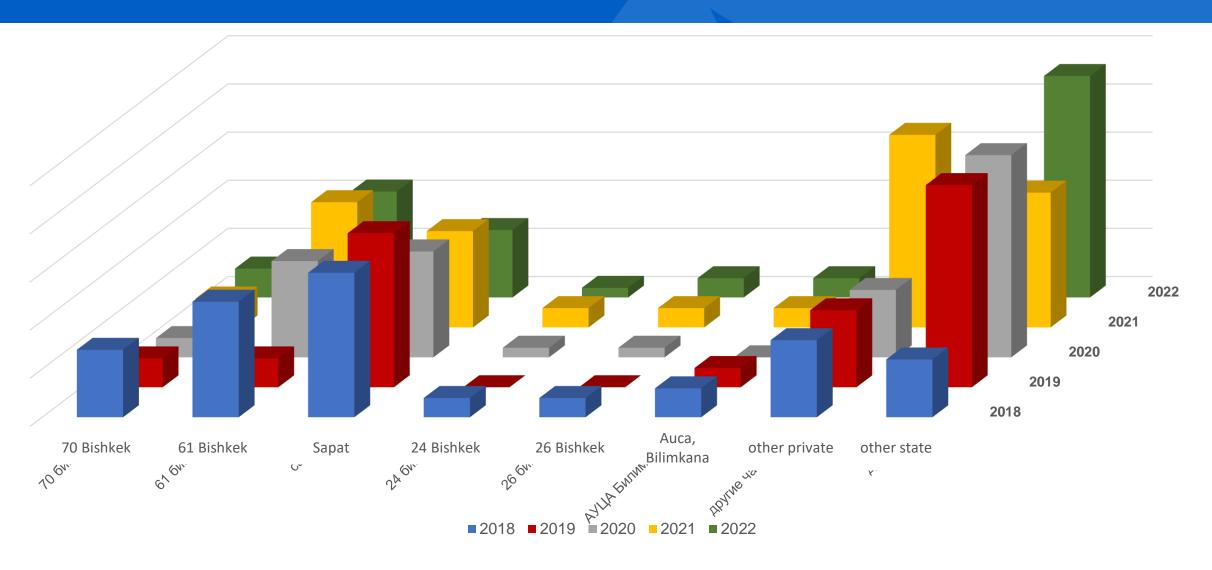
Winners of the Gold Certificate of the nationwide testing for the **last 5 years** broken down by provinces





Among indirect indicators that capture trends of KR's educational process outputs, the result of the nationwide testing are also relevant.

PROGRESSION OF SCHOOL GRADUATES AMONG THE WINNERS OF GOLD CERTIFICATE OF THE NAITONWIDE TESTING



CHALLENGES FOR SCHOOLS ACTING AS A KEY SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS OF EDUCATION AND UPBRINGING OF CHILDREN

- Informal educational centers have become a better alternative for children aimed at acquiring specific in-demand competencies. Such centers worsen the situation for schools, creating a competition and depleting school staff.
- Schools lose their maintenance budget \ scale back the functional ambitions and fail to implement a competence-based approach, not being able to achieve the results.
- School are also behind in organizing a space (varied from shed to barrack). Alternative: experience of Mongolian schools, private schools in KR.
- •"Reduction" and actual refusal to implement practices and experience of DE, as well as the objectives to develop such practices, result in the loss of opportunities (attempt to forget and return to the pre-pandemic state, despite achieving a number of positive results).
- Lack of technological support of schools required for the development of modern competences.

WHAT IS THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF VULNERABILITY OF VARIOUS GROUPS STUDYING THROUGH DE? GENDER

The study of the experience of DE among boys and girls has led to the following "findings":

- 1. Gender division of labor in the household and the specifics of workload among girls and boys.

According to pandemic impact assessment in Mongolia (Save the Children, 2020) it'd been established that domestic workload of children increased significantly, especially of girls (looking after younger brothers and sisters, sick family members, cooking, cleaning etc.). This corresponds to some of the view expressed during interviews and focus-group discussion. However, children and school teachers stated that boys were more occupied.
FGD with girls in Tajikistan (Darvaz) revealed that schoolgirls had to not only do all the housework, but also to be responsible for the care and education of younger children. One of the participants of FGD admitted that she had to get down to her homework late at night, and basically she fell asleep without having done the homework.
In the southern regions of the Kyrgyz Republic, there is a practice when the parents of underage girls send them to labor migration to work as nannies in the families of compatriots who are also labor migrants. There are no accurate and disaggregated data on those children who dropped out of schools and left for labor migration. However the media sometimes receive information about underage girls working as babysitters who became victims of violence in migration.
Boys are commonly engaged in farmer works – in the field or pasture. Meanwhile the researched in KR and RT noted alternative scenarios: girls and boys in some wealthy and some poor incomplete families do not perform any domestic work.

WHAT IS THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF VULNERABILITY OF VARIOUS GROUPS STUDYING THROUGH DE? GENDER

2. Gender stereotypes and cultural taboos

Access to internet and devices transformed the abilities of students, especially girls.

• Before pandemic schoolgirls in some religious communities of KR were usually not allowed \ delayed as much as possible to be allowed to use a smartphone. Lot of myths are spread about moral depravity of girls caused by the use of social networks. Necessary provision of students with mobile phones and other devices has given opportunities for girls to develop their digital skills too.

3. Gender-indifferent design of rural schools

Some respondents noted **as a positive aspect of online learning** the fact that during their "periods" teenage girls could stay at home. In may rural school the sanitary-hygienic conditions do not meet the needs of girls.

WHAT IS THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF VULNERABILITY OF VARIOUS GROUPS STUDYING THROUGH DE? REMOTENESS OF THE AREA FROM THE CENTER

Remoteness has two types: geographic and social. In both cases citizens, including school students and their parents are facing limited access to resources and risks of social isolation.

- 1. Remote schools: security risk \ forced separation from family \ life outside the community
- Herders in Mongolia have to leave their children either in their neighbors' care, or put them in the boarding schools, since the need to move cattle to the remote pastures deprive children of access to education. During pandemic children returned to their parents and were cut off from online education (unavailability of Internet during nomadic cattle migration).
- In the remote villages in Tajikistan, the research revealed many cases when boys and girls were forced to attend the schools in another villages, because of the lack of teachers in nearby schools. There is no regular public transport between the villages. It makes it difficult to get to their destination on foot or by hitchhiking, that is why many children are forced to live with relatives during the school week. At the same time, religious canons do not encourage girls to be separated from their families and walk to a remote school on her own.
- In RT and in some areas in KR and Mongolia the respondents complained about poor Internet, which wouldn't let to work with those formats of programs proposed by teachers. There is no constant access to electricity without interruptions.
- One of the 'socially distant' settlement in KR selected for the survey has no school as a place for the attraction of the community. Girls and boys living in this area are not integrated in a unified space; their daily trajectories do not allow them to share the commonality and solidarity in the place of their living.

WHAT IS THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF VULNERABILITY OF VARIOUS GROUPS STUDYING THROUGH DE? ETHNIC MINORITIES

1. Communities of ethnic minorities are often remote (geographically and socially).

- The education management structures in some countries have minimized the impact of pandemic, however the "neglected" ones appeared to be ethnic minorities. For examples, in KR, in the process of developing video lessons during pandemic, it was not government, but the international organization that addressed the needs of schools that teach in the languages of ethnic minorities (the lessons were prepared in Uzbek and a few in Tajik languages).
- Social isolation, perception that the government does not care about the needs of ethnic minorities led to public frustration, conflictual relationships with other communities and demonization of the majority. The cycle of rejection repeats. Case Study in Pas Ozgon.
- Darvaz, Tajikistan. Parent: "Who can I turn to for help? No one since the school teacher says that the answers to all questions are on the Internet ... It seems that this is an outright neglect ..."

WHAT IS THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF VULNERABILITY OF VARIOUS GROUPS STUDYING THROUGH DE? ETHNIC MINORITIES

- 2. In the research sites, a mother's educational level influences a child's motivation to learn, his/her vision for the future and learning strategies. In ethnic minorities, women more often do not have a vocational education, and often do not even have a complete general education.
- Respondents in Darvaz complained very much that they had only 9 grades of education and were not able to help their children with studying during pandemic.
- In ethnic minority communities in the Kyrgyz Republic, young women also have a low educational status and are often not interested in their children's education.
- In Mongolia, according to UNESCO, there is a significant gap in the results of knowledge assessment between schoolchildren from central regions and peripheral ones, in places densely populated by ethnic minorities.
- 3. Due to discriminatory practices, the life experience of parents of ethnic minorities often conflicts with the value placed of education.
- Achievement-based reference in the communities of ethnic monitories is oftentimes lowered. Case on Pas Ozgon: the career of labor migrant and ideals open a butcher shop in the village... Mother's position: rather than chasing unnecessary knowledge, it is better to start earning money earlier.
- Role models among children in such communities does not open up any horizons related to education.

ARE THERE OTHER INEQUALITIES AND SPECIFICALLY VULNERABLE GROUPS EMERGING IN THE COUNTRIES BESIDES THOSE IDENTIFIED BY THE PROJECT?

- 1. Children of livestock breeders
- 2. Children dropped out of school after pandemic.
- 3. Children who left for labor migration
- 4. Children with disabilities
- 5. Children from large families
- 6. Children of internal migrants

Types of vulnerability	Features of access to digital education	Quotes	Assistance provided (government, volunteers, business etc)
Large families	Lack and / or insufficiency of gadgets for all children	"Firstly, there are many children in the family (four or five), and there is one gadget/one phone. It is not enough for children, and we have old gadgets that do not support Zoom app" (pilot FGD among mothers) R3: And we have one phone for five people, this is also a problem. At the same time, one child had a phone, the other didn't, but we somehow tried to turn on one phone, if it didn't work, we tried to call a classmate in the evening, ask what was the homework. (pilot FGD among mothers)	Support of state\local authorities: community mobilization and provision of devices, TVs to low-income families with school-age children. Support from volunteers (migrants): purchase of devices from fund allocations, humanitarian aid Support for foreign groups and organizations: P1: Arabs maintained our school, so they provided the funds Support for traditional social networks: relatives, neighbors: R6: The state has nothing to do with it, the neighbors help mostly. Neighbors, relatives actually see the problem, they bring shoes; volunteers also do the work, they bring something, then the children go to school, when mother visit the school, sh also asks for help.
	Increased food expenses	Interviewer: Perhaps the costs have been reduced? R5: Yes, but the food expenses went through the roof. If there are four or five children, they still need to be fed. When they were sent to school, they had lunch and spent time there, but here you have to eat at home (pilot FGD among mothers)	
	Caring for younger as a responsibility of older	P5: for example, I didn't have to help my brother while we were studying at school, and during the online, my mother assigned my brother's lessons to me and I also helped him, it was difficult for me. After the 4th grade, we did lessons ourselves, but during online period we helped him. My mother helped when he was at school, and during the online I helped him (FGD among girls - Uch Korgon)	
	Lack of personal space	R1: We have neighbors, last year their daughter studied online in the first grade, but they have small children, it was hard for them, small children interfered, sometimes (they were bringing them to us) to look after them, it seems there was no chance to study normally. R2: There are situations when the house has 2 or 3 rooms, and when you study in the same room, other younger children interfere, then teachers also railed asking to attend in a silent place (pilot FGD among children)	

Children	Features of access to digital education different types of disabilities - different needs - different strategies for inclusion in online education are needed	Quotes We said that these children should at least be taught to count money, receive a pension (allowance) in the bank, so that they can do something on their own when their parents are gone. We were told that it would not work." (interview with teacher, Kochkorka)	Assistance provided
	in different formats in accordance with special needs	R: we go home and teach even when there were online lessons, we went home, went through lessons face to face, took PCR tests at the sanitary and epidemiological station, put on masks, took antiseptics with us, spent 2 lessons for half an hour, as a result, we spent one hour in total. R: I didn't visit when everyone was at home, from March 13, but since September I went to their house. (interview with a teacher, Kochkorka)	Support from government agencies: social workers help families with children with disabilities, providing rehabilitation and medical services; local authorities provide humanitarian assistance.
	teachers should be able to work with children, in accordance with their physical, cognitive capabilities	R: You can, of course, but I don't spend it like that (online). Because our state did it to us on purpose. So that we go and teach face-to-face, because when it is online, children do not study. When I taught online, I asked the head teacher how to teach them, she said, let them watch Aktan and Akylai, and let them retell what they understood. When I asked children to watch and retell me, a 9th grade boy swore at me, saying "why do you show children's cartoons to me, am I a 2, 3-year-old child or something?". There were such claims. He even swore at the head teacher, we explained to him that these lessons would be useful to him in the future, that principals may come and check what do we do in the lessons, and he said that he will not write, that he does not need it. R: March, April, May - I somehow taught the lessons, with torment, then holidays came and from September I was told that I should go and teach offline lessons for those who receive inclusive education.	Assistance from foreign organizations and foundations - the Arabs pay pensions (allowance) to some selected children with disabilities every three or two months, they have experience in building charitable housing for their families.
		R1: Teachers sometimes inflate her grades because she has diabetes R2: Sometimes she gets inflated grades, sometimes she doesn't (girl with diabetes) R3: Today I brought my daughter's classmate, she has been suffering from diabetes since the age of 6, and her mother says that she the girl was nervous all the time while online, it turns out that such children must not be put into stress situation. And some teachers did not know about her illness, and scolded her, so her mother always sat next to her during the lesson. We are neighbors, and I know how her mother was worried, and when offline training began, she came to each teacher and explained that a girl should not be put into stress (pilot FGD among mothers)	

Type of vulnerability	Features of access to digital education	Quotes
Children of migrants	Older children act/replace parents for younger ones (overlapping with the category of large families where parents do not provide support of care)	I can tell you about the family, in Naryn, the child (the boy) is in the 10th grade, the two younger ones are in the lower grades, there is no father, the mother works in Russia, sends money, the child (the boy) is in the 11th grade, he studies, works, they live in an apartment, for which) the mother pays, the boy sends two children to school, then he cooks food, buys clothes, it also depends on him. The second child is also too young, but he is working, goes to school and provides for himself by working at a car wash, his relatives told him to work and earn money. This is how children live in remote areas (pilot FGD mothers)
	Separation of migrant children from their parents – the difficulty of taking into account the needs of children and dependence on guardians	Such families restrict children's access to education. In spring, Uzbek families leave for Kazakhstan or Russia (mainly Orenburg), where they work as hired workers in the fields, grow vegetables and herbs. Children from an early age help their parents earn money. Children do not study during the fourth quarter. By September they come and continue their studies. City Department of Public Education employees and school teachers have already come to terms with this problem. School teacher put grades based on previous quarter. R5: For example, I had a phone, but there were no balance-money, my parents' work stopped, they didn't work at all, sometimes they put money to phone, my father asked his brother in Moscow for help, but his work also stopped due to the quarantine, I had such difficulties. R4: Some parents worked in Moscow, their work also stopped, they did not work and could not return to their homeland (pilot FGD children)

VULNERABILITY OF CHILDREN IN THE CONTEXT OF PANDEMIC

- Quarrels in the family, between children (aggravated as a result of lack of resources. Case: even the disk space on the phone could be a subject of contention. The inability to go out and play on the street also negatively affected children and their parents)
- Violence against children: not only in the family, but also online bullying (case: an aggressive father was caught on video during a lesson, classmates posted it on networks and the child was bullied)

TEACHERS' AND PARENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS DE: MENTAL MODELS AS DRIVERS OF MOTIVATION AND RESULTS

Teachers' mental models:

- We must keep up with the times. If one does not ask what he/she don't know and don't learn, one does not develop and falls behind in everything (regarding online learning).
- First, family education is very important. In that case a child can learn a lot in the process of class development. Then a teacher must transfer the knowledge to a child. I think that only if all of them are integrated, a child will come out as a knowledgeable, educated and mature child.
- A diligent child will be able to master necessary knowledge and skills on their own (About a successful child) he/she has abilities from God
- Imperative of inclusion of all students: basic education is compulsory for every Mongolian according to the education law of Mongolia

Parents' mental models:

- The teacher doesn't care what our children do
- When you come to some place, you are not distracted for several hours, but at home this is not the case...
- And teachers didn't care about kids who couldn't sit in class online
- Regarding children: If a child is talented, he will always break through
- Parent involvement is very important, especially for younger students.
- I want children to study at home and go to school ... to study more at home extra classes are available...

Children's mental models:

- Parents pay little attention to school attendance of their children, and teachers pay attention only to whether they attend classes.
- It was very difficult to fulfill the requirement to open the camera because I was with my family.
- About family: "We used to go to our rooms and disappear. Then we watched movies every evening. At that time, we learned to watch movies together and sit together, and now we still sit together.
- In the end, we got tired of each other, and there were many quarrels in the yurt.
- There are many old teachers in our school. Although student enrollment was low due to home conditions, it was very difficult to communicate with senior teachers, Facebook communication was impossible because they did not know how to use it, and they also had many technical problems when they took online classes. Especially my math teacher couldn't do it. When I returned to mathematics and passed the entrance test, the general level was very poor

1. On organizing and managing the DE process:

- Distinguish between groups (identification ability) and their specific needs in the learning process.
- Education Management Information System should become the basis for decision-making
- There should be a general plan for rendering educational services in emergency situations
- Conduct a vulnerability analysis of different groups from the perspective of missed/used opportunities (lessons learned)
- The lack of national assessments of DE introduction impacts on the quality and access to education it is advisable to apply world-tested indices (for example, readiness for distance learning)
- Use existing best practices and resources in the education process (databases of volunteers, best practices, depository of video lessons and other methodological resources) best practices in Mongolia
- Unpacked applications for digital learning (accept the requirements for teacher skills and organization of practical training for teachers in the format of educational programs for advanced training and professional development, models of digital technologies inscribed in the lessons)

On increasing motivation of students to study in the form of DE:

- Establish groups of high school students as mentors for the younger students (classmates with advanced skills)
- Appoint high school students with advanced digital skills to support teachers in preparing lessons
- Model the inclusion of disinterested students by presenting its significance in the educational process (distinction)
- Change lesson models new developments are needed inefficiency of translating traditional lessons into digital format
- Integration of resources of global educational platforms into the learning process (upgrading language skills, as well as obtaining high-quality content).

On increasing motivation of parents' participation in the education process:

- Involving groups of parents by establishing communication and proposing interaction models on formatting/adjusting home environment for children Groups of influencing fathers (guardians men)
- Organizations based on higher schools (modular) parent schools
- Promoting schools as centers of community (community schools) and continuing adult education

INNOVATIVE PRACTICES IN EDUCATION

WHERE AND WHAT INNOVATIVE PRACTICES OF DE HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED?

- "Geography" of innovations: minimum conditions transport, information accessibility ... For more peripheral areas special measures are required to introduce these innovations as life models. There is no centralization of innovations there are no actors who would build the entire vertical of innovations. In the city centers there is a space for additional education/volunteer movements, etc., which offer techniques to achieve/improve specific results: language, nationwide testing, IT all that help to reduce requirements for schools.
- The political economy of innovation (for consolidation): how can an innovator remain the leader at the school? What resources can be attracted for innovation?
- Innovations do not spread like an infection; measures are required to routinize practices.

UNDERSTANDING THE TERM INNOVATION (KR)?

Innovation (novation) - the end result of innovative activity in the form of a new or lacking product (service) or good (service) with improved qualities on the market (LAW OF THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC "On Innovation Activity" No. 128, dated October 25, 1999, as amended by the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic dated April 22, 2020 No. 51 - Article 3. Basic concepts and terms)

There is no discourse of innovations in education management, except for the Regulations on Experimental Platforms in General Education Schools. There are innovative schools by name (in the project pledge).

Respondents' perception of the term innovation:

- Managers of education system:
- Teachers: there is no widespread understanding
- Parents: no understanding
- Students: no understanding

TYPOLOGY OF INNOVATORS AND CASES (MAINLY IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC AND A LITTLE IN MONGOLIA)

- The teacher is a missionary. The model is based on values, the innovator has an ambitious mission to change the world. Examples: Saydilkanov's author's school, physical education teacher at Jundubayeva's secondary school. They create communities of innovation.
- The teacher is a "guide through life", preaches pragmatic training in skills that will most likely be in demand in adulthood, a value-based approach is important: the guide demonstrates "what is good, based on social goals ...". Examples: a geography teacher Azamat from Talas.
- Teacher methodologist innovator. A model of a practically oriented professional who evaluates his work in terms of efficiency and attractiveness. Develops teaching models to ensure the greatest learning outcomes. In addition to the competence-based approach, they are usually not guided by ideological objectives.
- The teacher is the implementer of the innovative methodology as a strategy for rational professional behavior. A model of a result-oriented teacher who seeks to master and reproduce new teaching methods and practices in order to lead among colleagues and be in demand in the profession. (in Mongolia communities of professional innovators and implementers)
- Teacher entrepreneur innovator. Has a "sense" for the actual needs of teachers, students, and where the existing providers do not meet these needs. Adapts quickly and monetizes the ability to adapt and transfer indemand knowledge and technology.

THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN CASES OF KR INNOVATION (ESTABLISHING THE COMMUNITY)

- Involvement of parents in the community around the school (the principle of information funnel) the formation of a public space around the school / school community.
- Motivating students to learn
- Decentralization of decision-making and involvement of schoolchildren leaders in self-government
- Motivation of teachers based on a system of methodological and material, symbolic support and training, participation in decision-making, clear regulations and success criteria

PROFESSIONAL SOLIDARITY OF TEACHERS

- Spontaneous solidarities or the institutionalization of teacher networks
- The experience of collective work in Mongolia is institutionally conditioned.
- I worked as an individual. In cooperation with the department of education and culture of the aimak. Our district specialist provided us with a lot of consultation and help.
- Our teachers have worked very hard during e-learning. We learned from each other. Examples include Unurtsetseg, a biology teacher, Altanchimeg, a computer science teacher, and Amarmend, a health teacher. They worked together, learning new methods, teaching each other on information and communication technology, and preparing for lessons the way they learned.
- Reflection on the experience of DE and an attempt to scale the best practices:
- The Learning Manager, Ms. Munguntsetseg, presented her third book, The Methods and Experiences of Our School Teachers. Teachers who shared their experiences earlier will be able to do better next year.
- It is hoped that this will help teachers to share their experience in this way.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENT SELF-ORGANIZATION /SOLIDARITY

Mongolian experience:

• 12-graders have become more motivated to work independently as leaders. For example: one of our 6th grade teacher said that since he was a health teacher, he had a good discussion with the girls about the menstrual cycle, but at first the girls didn't want to talk to the male teacher, but they had to because it happened to them and they realized that information can be obtained.

The children who were neighbors also helped each other with their homework.

• Children with disabilities are helped by their classmates in the same way as by teachers. • Therefore, I believe that all schoolchildren should be instructed and told how to help and support them if they have children with disabilities.

Experience of KR and RT

"Natural" processes of solidarity within large families - not a practice as a result of the management of educational processes

PROMOTING PARENTAL SOLIDARITY

Experience in Mongolia:

The Fathers' Groups were established to improve the participation of fathers. In particular, the participation of fathers is very important in upbringing and development of boys, so we have created a group of fathers to work together and present 3–4 news items a week. Each class has its own group

Experience in KR:

Institutions of guardian councils and parent committees that were not significantly involved in the support of preschool education

- It is necessary to adopt standards on innovative educational activities and mechanisms for their integration into educational processes
- It is necessary to adopt standards on innovative educational activities and mechanisms for their integration into educational processes
- The most effective and reproducible may be innovative models based on the establishment of innovative school communities (school community), as well as models of professional groups that require the creation of hierarchical organizational structures.
- In order to disseminate innovative models, they must be integrated into the teachers training system or in the system of advanced training as a new norm of pedagogical activity (which requires a radical reorganization of pedagogical education)
- An institutional mechanism is needed to identify, monitor and promote the development and scaling of innovative practices.
- An institutional mechanism is needed to translate innovative practices into routinized methodological guidelines and supporting resources.