

# Professional Development for EC Educators in Nurseries and Kindergartens in 7 Arab Countries

***Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Tunisia***



EVIDENCE FOR ACTION SYMPOSIUM IN THE ARAB REGION

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# Literature Review

## *Challenges of the EC workforce*

The early childhood workforce is often underprepared, and underqualified

# Literature Review

Context in the MENA region

<b>Overall context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Increase in number of children and youth compared to previous years</li> <li>*Unprecedented humanitarian crisis</li> </ul>
<b>Changes in social, education, political landscape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Increase in number of working mothers</li> <li>*Increased awareness on benefits of early enrollment</li> <li>*Investing in education for prosperity in economic growth (Egypt &amp; Oman, 2025 vision)</li> </ul>
<b>Enrollment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Increase in demand → disproportionate enrollment rates</li> <li>*Culture taboos: Society considers mother's primary role as nurturing her child → resort to turning to family support/non-official EC care</li> <li>*Large discrepancies in SES</li> <li>*Nursery attendance not obligatory</li> <li>*Discrepancy in quality between urban and rural districts</li> </ul>
<b>Systems level structures for EC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Discrepancy in quality between urban vs. rural - implications on govt' oversight</li> <li>*Lack of coordination between governing bodies</li> <li>*Lack of pedagogical support - pre and in-service</li> <li>*Lack of data collection mechanisms</li> </ul>

# Literature Review

*Context in the MENA region*

<b><i>EC Workforce</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Predominantly female workforce</li> <li>*Male EC educators often in private schools (private sector → more human and financial resources)</li> <li>*Discrepant educational and professional expectations from nursery vs. KG levels.</li> <li>*Increased PD opportunities for private sector EC workforce</li> <li>*More systematic PD for early years workforce from KG onward</li> </ul>
<b><i>Challenges in EC PD</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Governments require human resources with expertise (policies, technical, education) in EC</li> <li>*Lack of coordination across different governing entities and organizations</li> <li>*No sustainable PD plans for EC workforce</li> <li>*Insufficient PD for EC workforce</li> <li>*Lack of follow up/accountability/monitoring &amp; oversight</li> </ul>

# Literature Review

## *Professional Development*

- Professional Development (PD) is an umbrella term for different forms and modalities of activities, both formal (workshops, conference, university degree) and informal (observations, peer feedback...)

PD is generally defined as:

*“facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional and designed to support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as its application in practice”*

*(Buyse, Winton, & Rous, 2009, p. 239)*

# Literature Review

## Professional Development: Frameworks for **Effective PD**

Buyse et al. (2009)	Guskey (2000)	Shaha et al. (2004)
<p>Who, what, and how.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “who” represents a <b>profile</b> about the learners, practitioners, and context of their settings.</li> <li>* “what” is the <b>content</b> of the PD itself.</li> <li>* “how” is the <b>format and length</b> of delivery providing more insight into the “active” ingredients for a successful early childhood PD program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* It is an adapted version of Kirkpatrick’s original business framework.</li> <li>* It is a five-level understanding of <i>effectiveness</i> of PD: reactions, learning, organizational support and change, use of new knowledge and skills, and pupil learning outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* A multidimensional approach to provide evidence and visibility of PD impact.</li> <li>* Incorporates 2 dimensions of analysis: <b>Focus</b> of impact and <b>levels</b> of impact. The <i>focus of impact</i> itself is addressed at the teacher and student levels, and the <i>levels of impact</i> target learning, attitudes, and resources</li> </ul>

## Research Questions

1. What is the professional and demographic makeup of the ECE workforce across the different levels?
2. What are the PD activities undertaken by the different levels of the ECE workforce?
3. How do ECE workforce across school types and levels perceive relevance and impact of professional development (PD) activities?
4. What are the ECE workforce barriers to accessing PD activities?
5. What are the gaps and priority areas that can be inferred in PD provision for ECE workforce?

# Methodology

- Mixed methods approach.
- Both primary and secondary data resources were collected through
  - 1) **A scoping review of effective early childhood PD programs in the MENA region.**
  - 2) Survey questionnaires and focus group discussions (FGD) with principals and teachers





# Scoping Review

*Adopted framework (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005)*

## Stage 1

Identifying research questions;

## Stage 5

Collecting, summarizing, and reporting the results;

## Stage 2

Identifying relevant studies;

## Stage 3

Study selection;

## Stage 4

Charting the data;



# Scoping Review

## **Stage 2:** Identifying relevant studies

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Time period	year 2000 until present	before year 2000
Languages	English and Arabic	Non-English and Non-Arabic
Types of documents	Empirical primary resources published in peer reviewed journals Secondary resources are published dissertations for Masters and Doctoral programs	Unpublished documents article reviews manuscripts reports
Sample focus	Participants are EC workforce from principals, supervisors, preservice, and inservice teachers attending EC PD programs	Caregivers and children PD programs not relevant to EC
Literature Focus	Documents addressing effectiveness of PD programs within early childhood education	Documents addressing attitude and perceptions of teachers towards PD programs PD programs as interventions with caregivers at home or refugee locations.

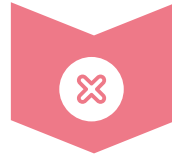
# Scoping Review

**Stage 3:** Study selection;

**Stage 4:** Data charting;



300 documents identified



Addressing EC workforce's attitude and perceptions of PD programs/ intervention with caregivers



Only **8** documents obtained



Dates 2013 - 2024; 3 Arabic/5 English; topics include teacher-child interactions/development of teaching; STEAM; tech; creativity; support for gifted learners

# Scoping Review

**Stage 5:** Collecting,  
summarizing, & reporting  
results

- Effective EC PD programs consistently emphasize **3 key features**: (1) *active participation*, (2) *reflective practice*, and (3) *constructive feedback*.
  - **Active participation** → opportunities for participants to observe, compare, and internalize newly introduced pedagogical approaches & applied through lesson planning, material development, and classroom observation.
  - **Reflective practices** were encouraged through instructive feedback from facilitators and peers.
  - Across all *effective PD* programs, **constructive feedback** → active engagement in transformative processes - shifts in mindset that were visibly reflected in their professional behaviours.

## Methodology

*Strategic Research Model (SRM)*

*Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco,  
Oman, Palestine, Tunisia*

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# Methodology

*Strategic Research Model  
(SRM)*

Based on the SRM approach:

- Data varied from one country to another based on country specific contexts, research team availability, accessibility, and connections to the target populations
- Required 250 surveys from educators using a non-probabilistic sampling design
- No distinction between KG or nursery levels, private or public sector, or teacher/principal gender
- Minimum of 50-70 surveys from principals and supervisors; 2 FGDs with educators; and 1 FGD with principals and supervisors

## Data collection team

<b>Country</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Egypt	Arab Council for Childhood and Development
Jordan	National Council for Family Affairs
Lebanon	Higher Council for Childhood (Ministry of Social Affairs), Syndicate of nursery owners, Syndicate of professional nurseries
Morocco	Moroccan Foundation for the Promotion of Preschool Education
Oman	Individual researcher from Sultan Qaboos University
Palestine	Palestinian Network for Early Childhood
Tunisia	Tunisian Network for Early Childhood

# Surveys & Interviews

## **Surveys:**

- 2 data surveys (Arabic and English) for teachers and principals/supervisors.
- Close and open-ended questions
  - Demographic background, perspectives on the importance of PD activities; engagement in types of formal PD and informal PD activities in the past 18 months and support from caregiver, school administration, teacher, colleague support

## **Interviews:**

- FGDs delved into the participants' own perspectives about ECE, their roles, quality of teaching and learning, accountability, and PD activities.



## Quantitative data

*N = 2,475 teachers*

*N = 973 principals*

*(Nursery & KG, public, private  
and subsidized)*

**Table 1:** Principals and Teachers distribution

Country	Principals		Teachers	
	N	%	N	%
Egypt	156	16.0%	263	10.6%
Jordan	166	17.1%	250	10.1%
Lebanon	60	6.2%	121	4.9%
Morocco	80	8.2%	895	36.2%
Oman	70	7.2%	43	1.7%
Palestine	385	39.6%	749	30.3%
Tunisia	56	5.8%	154	6.2%
Total	973	100.0%	2475	100.0%

## Qualitative data

*Total: 15 FGDs*

*N = 82 teachers*

*N = 52 principals & supervisors*

**Table 2:** FGD Country Distribution

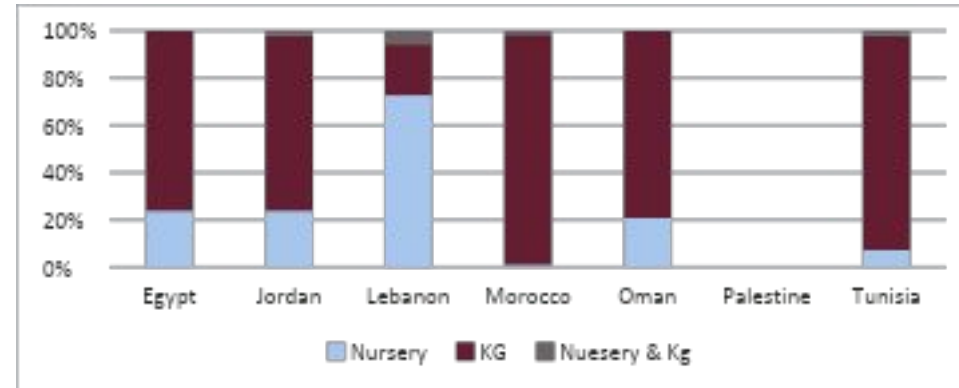
Country	Egypt	Jordan	Lebanon	Morocco	Oman	Palestine	Tunisia
#FGD	2	4	1	2	2	3	1
Teachers	15	23	5	15	10	6	8
Principals & Supervisors	0	21	2	unknown	13	10	6

## Research Question 1 (*Teachers*)

- Teacher sample overwhelmingly female
- Predominantly aged between 20 to 40 years
- Work mostly in private sector except in Jordan; Lebanon with a balanced workforce in both private and public
- Bachelor's degrees most common qualification; *education* reported as the primary field of study
- Majority are KG teachers; except for Lebanon in which majority were nursery level.

What is the professional and demographic makeup of the ECE workforce across the different levels?

**Figure 1:** Distribution of teaching level

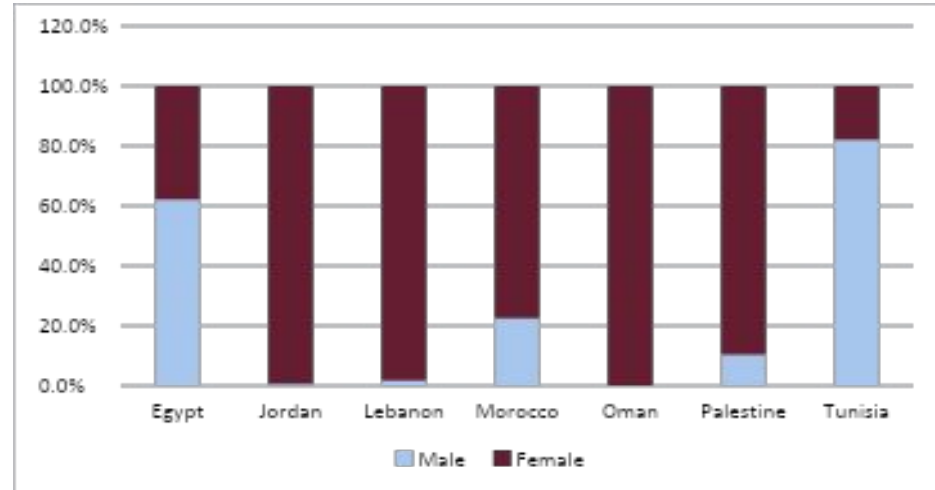


\*Overall, the sample was unevenly distributed, with notable overrepresentation from Morocco and Palestine.

## Research Question 1 (*Principals*)

- Sample *overwhelmingly female*; Egypt and Tunisia have higher proportion of male principals.
- Principals aged 20-30 were in Morocco; Egypt and Oman 31-40; and the rest are over 41.
- *Private sector* predominant except in Tunisia; Jordan balanced between both sectors; Morocco within subsidized
- *Bachelor's degrees* most common with noticeable variations in MA/Ph.D. & vocational degrees.
- Workforce distribution mostly KGs except Lebanon; Jordan relatively balanced.

**Figure 2:** *Distribution of Principals*



\*Overall, the sample was unevenly distributed, with notable overrepresentation from Palestine.

## Research Question 2

(Teacher's - **formal PD**)

- *Workshops* were the most commonly attended *formal PD* - (particularly in Morocco, Oman, & Egypt) indicating a strong preference for structured, in-service training formats; Tunisia reported lowest
- Attendance of conferences was low in all countries.
- Engagement in discussions with peers was widely practiced.
- Conducting individual or collaborative research was common in Lebanon & Morocco relative to counterparts
- Networking with teachers outside of the center/school recorded the highest in Oman & lowest in Lebanon

*Formal PD Activities from Teacher Workforce Perspective*

**Table 3:** Percentage of teacher engagement in formal PD

Country	Total cases	Workshop		Independent readings		Attending conferences		Discussion with peers or professional on related topics		Individual or collaborative research on topic of interest to you personally		Networking with teachers outside of your centre/school	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Egypt	263	23	88.60	22	85.90	17	67.70	222	84.40	21	80.60	186	70.70
Jordan	250	3	%	6	%	8	%		%	2	%		%
		19	79.20	17	71.20	95	38.00	188	75.20	15	60.00	142	56.80
		8	%	8	%		%		%	0	%		%
Lebanon	121	94	77.70	10	82.60	76	62.80	88	72.70	88	72.70	60	49.60
			%	0	%		%		%		%		%
Morocco	895	85	95.50	80	90.30	38	43.10	786	87.80	75	84.70	540	60.30
		5	%	8	%	6	%		%	8	%		%
Oman	43	40	93.00	36	83.70	18	41.90	35	81.40	31	72.10	32	74.40
			%		%		%		%		%		%
Palestine	749	61	82.00	63	84.60	35	46.70	612	81.70	56	75.30	477	63.70
		4	%	4	%	0	%		%	4	%		%
Tunisia	154	85	55.20	14	91.60	58	37.70	139	90.30	72	46.80	97	63.00
			%	1	%		%		%		%		%

## Research Question 2

(Teacher's - **formal** PD)

### **By country:**

- The highest participation rates were reported in Morocco, Egypt, & Oman, indicating widespread onboarding support in these contexts.
- In contrast, Lebanon, Tunisia & Palestine reported significantly lower levels of induction participation, *suggesting gaps in early-career support mechanisms.*

*Formal Teacher Induction or Orientation Programs*

### **By school type:**

- Teachers in public and subsidized schools more likely to report receiving formal induction support vs. private schools (*highlighting potential differences in onboarding practices between institutional settings*).

### **By teaching level:**

- Majority KG teachers reported receiving formal induction, compared to their nursery teacher counterparts.

*[KG educators may have greater access to structured support mechanisms during their entry vs. nursery]*

## Research Question 2

(Teacher's - **informal** PD)

- Oman & Egypt → highest engagement across most non-formal PD types (e.g. teachers participating in common planning time, engaging in regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers; being mentored and mentoring another teacher)
- Jordan & Tunisia → lowest participation levels, particularly in regularly scheduled collaboration being mentored & mentoring others

*[Opportunities for informal and peer-driven PD are more institutionalized and accessible in some countries—especially Oman and Egypt—while other countries may lack systematic implementation of such collaborative practices]*

Teacher perspectives on Informal PD activities

**Table 4:** *Percentage Engagement in informal PD by country*

Country	Total cases	Common planning time with other teachers		Regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers (non-administrative)		Being observed or mentored by another teacher		Observing or mentoring another teacher	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Egypt	263	210	79.85%	199	75.67%	213	80.99%	202	76.81%
Jordan	250	135	54.00%	127	50.80%	137	54.80%	136	54.40%
Lebanon	121	75	61.98%	68	56.20%	70	57.85%	72	59.50%
Morocco	895	609	68.04%	523	58.44%	592	66.15%	616	68.83%
Oman	43	38	88.37%	36	83.72%	31	72.09%	29	67.44%
Palestine	749	530	70.76%	460	61.42%	509	67.96%	517	69.03%
Tunisia	154	109	70.78%	72	46.75%	70	45.45%	95	61.69%

## Research Question 2

(Principals - **formal** PD)

- Principals viewed “Discussion with peers” as the most effective PD activity.
- Activities involving active or peer engagement were more favorable than conferences and independent readings.
- While PD is perceived beneficial, there remains room for improvement in effectiveness and relevance.

### *Principal Workforce Perspectives on Formal PD Activities*

**Table 5:** Principals' Perspectives on effective *formal* PD for teacher engagement

	Mean Score	A Lot	Moderately	Somewhat	Not at All
Attending workshops	2.31	18.7%	37.1%	39.0%	5.2%
Independent readings	2.43	12.7%	38.9%	41.0%	7.4%
Attending conferences	2.81	9.4%	26.4%	38.0%	26.3%
Discussion with peers or professional on related topics	2.22	23.7%	36.7%	33.5%	6.1%
Individual or collaborative research on topic of interest to you personally	2.4	19.7%	33.2%	34.0%	13.1%
Networking with teachers outside of your centre/school	2.58	13.0%	32.0%	38.4%	15.7%



## Research Question 2 (Principals)

*Additional topics identified by principals*

### 1. **“Learning through play”**

most commonly reported major PD focus overall, especially in Morocco, Palestine, Oman & Lebanon *reflecting a strong regional emphasis on play-based learning approaches*

2. **“New methods of teaching and learning”** ranked highly, in Morocco, Oman & Lebanon identifying it as a key focus

### 3. **“Mental health of teachers”**

received low attention across all countries, with Tunisia, Egypt & Jordan showing the least emphasis,

*[Suggesting a widespread neglect of educator well-being in PD programming]*

4. **“Teamwork”** was emphasized most in Morocco while countries like Tunisia & Egypt showed much less focus in this area.



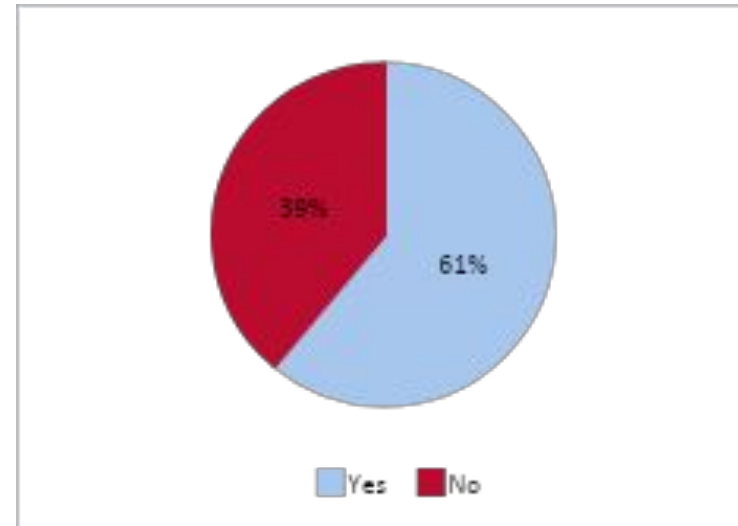
## Research Question 2 (Principals)

Leadership engagement in professional development (PD):

- More than 60% of the surveyed principals reported that they had participated in PD activities with their teachers.
- Lebanon recorded highest participation rate with Tunisia reporting lowest participation in PD
- Topics were “new methods of teaching and learning followed by “learning through play”

*Active principal involvement in PD*

**Figure 3:** Distribution of Principal Participation in Teacher PD Activities



## Research Question 2 (Principals)

*Professional development (PD) topics that principals were likely to engage in*

### ***Integration of Educational Technology***

*KG level principals were significantly more likely to participate in PD related to technology integration, while Nursery principals were significantly less likely.*

### **Learning Through Play**

KG principals were less likely to report participation in PD around play-based learning, which

[Somewhat unexpected given the emphasis on play in early childhood education]

### **Mental Health of Teachers**

Nursery principals were more likely to engage with PD on teacher mental health, while KG principals were significantly less likely.

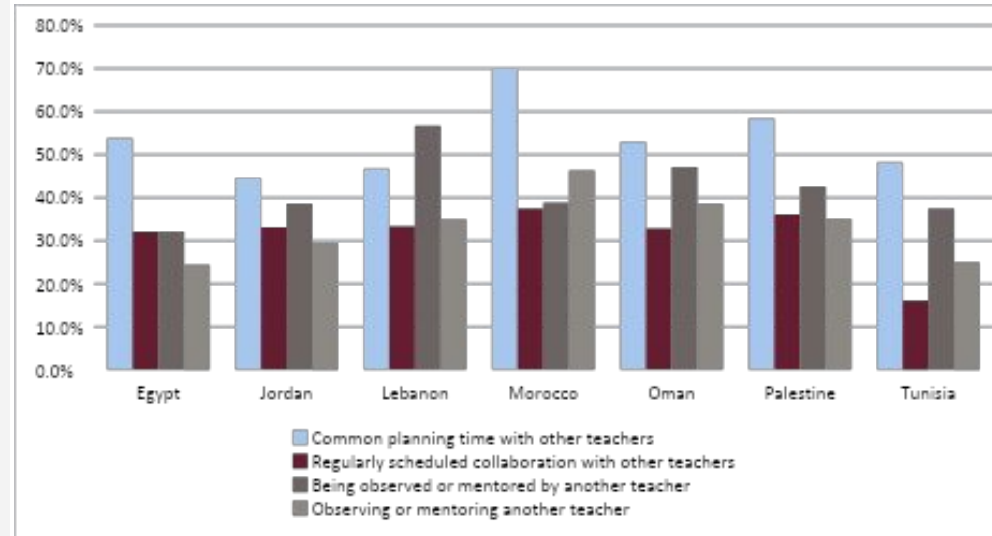


## Research Question 2 (Principal's - *informal PD*)

- **Most** frequently reported *informal* PD activity was “Common planning time with other teachers”; and the **least** was “Observing or mentoring another teacher”.
- Lebanon and Morocco generally reported higher participation; unlike Egypt and Jordan with lower participation.
- Some informal PD are common across school type; while collaboration and mentoring are more present within private and subsidized.

What are the PD activities undertaken by the different levels of the ECE workforce?

**Figure 5:** Distribution of Informal PD participation (reported by principals)



## Research Question 2

(Principal's - **informal** PD)

*Informal PD activities from principal's perspective*

**Private schools** showed significantly higher participation in “Regularly Scheduled Collaboration with Other Teachers”

**Public schools** demonstrated significantly lower than expected participation in the same activity.

**Subsidized schools** reported significantly higher participation in “Observing or Mentoring Another Teacher.”

*[These findings suggest that while some informal PD practices are equally common across school types, others, particularly “collaboration” and “mentoring activities”, are more prevalent in private and subsidized schools.]*

## Research Question 3 (Teachers)

*Correlation between formal PD training hours & perceived improvement from teacher's perspective*

\*Results revealed a weak negative correlation between higher engagement in PD hours with higher self-reported improvement.

\*Findings underscore the importance of focusing not only on the quantity of PD provided but also on *quality, relevance, and alignment* with **teacher's specific roles and contexts**.

\*Less experienced and younger teachers perceive formal PD, namely workshops, to be more impactful.

**[Private school teachers** reported the **highest average (mean) scores** on items measuring perceptions of professional development (PD), **followed by public school teachers**, and then **subsidized school teachers** at the lower end]



## Research Question 3 (Principals)

How do ECE workforce across school types and levels perceive relevance and impact of professional development (PD) activities?

\*There was a generally high agreement on the importance of PD

*Morocco reported lowest agreement and Tunisia fully agreed*

\*Nursery level leaders perceive a stronger alignment between professional development and student goals than KG level.

## Research Question 4

What are the ECE workforce barriers to accessing PD activities?

Main **barriers** for PD access:

- \*Lack of policies;
- \*Lack of systematic planning within EC institutions;

Poor working conditions:

- \*lack of flexibility in working hours;
- \*insufficient payment;
- \*no job security;
- \*Absence of collaborative approach to involve EC teachers in decision making and planning for their own PD needs.

## Research Question 5

Gaps & priority areas for EC workforce PD provision

EC workforce stressed on the following:

- \*Continuous PD activities on regular basis instead of annually
- \*Systematic planning & coordination between EC leaders, ministerial personnel, and EC teachers
- \*Prioritize classroom visits amongst EC teachers
- \*Improve PD content by introducing less theories and more practical content
- \*Improve working conditions: Payment, working hours, and overall teacher wellbeing;



## Existing leverage to enhance early childhood

### Tunisia

#### Expanding already existing policies and issuing new policies at the governmental levels:

- *Sept 18th 2023*: A new policy that fully waives registration and academic fees for orphanages, children with autism, and children from low socio-economic backgrounds.
- *2023*: an internal policy was shared to waive all registration fees for students entering kindergarten within public schools.

#### Increasing public investments through:

- Preparation of 47 municipal kindergartens with a capacity of 3,250 children and with services in 2022
- Expansion of the public sector, to increase the contribution of the public sector in one year from 6% in 2022 to 7.5% in 2023 (Ministry website Children's Status Report 2023)
- Continuation of the Children's Support Programme for vulnerable families
- The Ministry has developed a special program to train in-service teachers who do not have any certificates or degrees. Same program.
- Ministry entered into cooperative agreement between the National Centre for Continuous Training in January 2024 extending to 2028, expected to target 4,000 practitioners within the private sector.

## Existing leverage to enhance early childhood

<b>Jordan</b>	<p><b>To address fragmentation of education sector under diverse ministries with little to weak communication channels/coordination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- April 2024: Decree issued to establish a new ministry called the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development.</li> <li>- All education sectors to be managed and unified under new ministry to ensure <i>alignment</i> and <i>systematic</i> development of all aspects of educational needs; training, monitoring, higher education, and so forth.</li> <li>- 2023: Quality system for ECE institutions built and developed through several phases of experimentation, on-the-ground implementation, and mechanisms involving a number of experts, specialists and practitioners in ECE.</li> <li>- Accreditation system submitted to different ministries to be published and utilized all over the country.</li> </ul>
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## Existing leverage to enhance early childhood

<b>Oman</b>	<p><b>To recruit qualified ECE practitioners into ECE institutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ministry of Education recruiting specialized graduates and enrolling them into comprehensive training programs to acquire professional skills to recruit for employment.</li> </ul>
<b>Lebanon</b>	<p>There are platforms to build on for early childhood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Higher Council for Childhood (under Ministry of Social Affairs)</li> <li>- Syndicates for early childhood (Ministry of Public Health)</li> <li>- 2025: Initiative by Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) to consolidate all early childhood initiatives/efforts</li> </ul>

THANK YÖÜ!