



Royaume du Maroc



Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale
de la Formation Professionnelle
de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique



Concept Note

“African Conference on the Quality of Early Childhood Education and the Professionalization of Educators”

4-5 December 2019, Casablanca, Morocco



In partnership with:



OFFICIAL CARRIER



Introduction

The importance of early childhood education (ECE) for children's learning and development is well documented and widely recognized. ECE contributes to the achievement of important societal goals, such as the efficiency of the education system, gender equality, inclusion, and economic development¹.

Quality ECE helps children transition successfully from home or institutional programmes to primary school and improves their academic performance and future employment prospects. It helps disadvantaged children to start primary school on an equal footing. Research in neurosciences shows that the early years represent the most active period for developing neural connections, and that early intervention requires fewer resources and less effort and is more effective than interventions that take place later in life.

Many countries around the world acknowledge the importance of ECE and are giving it greater political attention. Globally, the gross enrolment rate in pre-primary education rose from 31% in 2000 to 50% in 2017. In 2017, this rate was 32% in Sub-Saharan Africa and 41% in North Africa. The participation rate in organized learning activities one year before the official primary school age is 69% worldwide, 42% in Sub-Saharan Africa and 57% in North Africa. Recognizing that ECE represents a critical period for learning and development, 45% of countries have introduced one year of free pre-primary education and 22% of countries have implemented one year of compulsory pre-school education².

In Morocco, under Royal instructions, pre-school education has become a priority area and one of the urgent measures to strengthen programmes that support school enrolment and prevent school drop-out³. On 18 July 2018, Morocco launched the National Programme for the Generalization and Development of Pre-school Education. Led by the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research (MENFPESRS), the national programme aims to universalize pre-school education within a 10 year period. In order to finance the programme and mobilize relevant stakeholders, partnership agreements have been signed between various actors, including MENFPESRS, local authorities, civil society, foundations and the private sector. This mobilization will ensure the creation and revitalization of approximately 58,000 pre-school classrooms, as well as the training and professional development of 58,000 educators⁴. In addition, the Ministry, with the support of UNICEF, has produced the "Reference framework and curriculum for pre-school education" as the basis for the national programme.

Research shows that teachers are the main determinants of quality pre-primary education⁵. The evidence indicates that quality teacher training and support, recognition of their efforts, as well as decent working conditions positively impact the competence, motivation and practice of teachers. Thereby, professional development and support are key quality imperatives. In response, Morocco has been working to upgrade the competences of 27,000 educators, as well as train 58,000 new educators between 2018 and 2028.

¹ Marope, PTM et Kaga, Y. 2017. Investing against Evidence: The Global State of Early Childhood Care and Education. UNESCO.

² UNESCO, 2018. Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, displacement and education - Building bridges, not walls. [See the document.](#)

³ Throne speech from 29 July 2018 [See the speech](#)

⁴ Media 24, 18 July 2018, Education: le programme national du préscolaire nécessite un budget de 30MMDH [Education: the national pre-school programme requires a budget of 30MMDH] [See the document](#)

⁵ UNESCO, 2015. Global monitoring report on Education for all 2015. Education for all 2000-2015: achievements and challenges. [See the document.](#)

However, the reality is that many pre-school educators are poorly qualified, underpaid and lack recognition and professional conditions. Almost one quarter of the 80 low- and middle-income countries indicated that less than half of their pre-primary educators met national training needs in 2009⁶. The shortage of qualified teachers is especially acute in remote, rural and marginalized areas⁷. This situation is particularly problematic, as children living in these areas have the greatest need for quality ECE, which could compensate for the disadvantages they face.

In addition, and despite the fact that pre-primary and primary teachers generally have similar working hours, pre-primary teachers have a lower conditions and lower remuneration than primary school teachers, which can lead to low job satisfaction and high staff turnover.

Given this reality, there is an urgent need to recognize the critical role ECE teachers play in developing a strong foundation for lifelong learning and the development of children. Even with the best material conditions within ECE structures, young children will not be able to benefit from quality learning without attentive, responsive, well-trained and motivated teachers, which demonstrates the need for increased and sustainable investment in training, improvement of conditions, and the development of professional careers and career prospects for ECE personnel.

Institutional context

In order to meet this urgent need for action, as well as national and international objectives in the field of education, the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research (MNEVTHESR), UNESCO and the International Labour Organization (ILO), in partnership with the German Development Cooperation (BMZ/GIZ), the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (TTF), the Moroccan Foundation for the Promotion of Pre-School Education (FMPS), the Regional Center for Quality and Excellency in Education (RCQE), the Monegasque Cooperation for Development and Royal Air Maroc, are organizing an African conference on the quality of ECE and the professionalization of educators. The conference will include high-level officials and technical representatives from 19 African countries and will convene on 4 and 5 December 2019 in Casablanca, Morocco.

The conference aims to address two targets of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education:

- Target 4.2: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education;
- Target 4.c: By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States.

In line with SDG target 4.2, and on occasion of the National Day on Pre-school Education on 18 July 2018, Morocco launched the National Programme for the Generalization and Development of Pre-school Education 2030. This programme is inscribed within the framework for implementing education reform

⁶ ILO, 2013. ILO Guidelines on the Promotion of Decent Work for Early Childhood Education Personnel. [See the document](#) ; ILO, 2012. Good beginning: Early Childhood Educators. [See the document](#).

^{7,8} Neuman, M.J., K. Josephson, P.G. Chua. 2015. A literature review: ECCE personnel in low- and middle-income countries. [See the document](#).

which, in line with the Strategic Vision 2015-2030, “aims to build a new school, based on quality and equity, equal opportunities, the promotion of the individual and the progress of the society”⁸. The programme has two objectives: i) to increase the pre-school enrolment rate from 50% in 2017 to 67% in 2021 and to 100% in 10 years; and ii) to enhance the quality of pre-school services. Between 2018 and 2019, 28,000 new teachers will be recruited, a new initial teacher training programme will be launched, and the number of children enrolled will be increased, especially in rural areas, through an equity-based approach. Pre-school education in Morocco benefits not only from a strong commitment from the State, but also from a new and growing momentum amongst civil society groups, the private sector and local authorities⁹. Given these developments, Morocco is the ideal country to host an African conference that will foster the movement toward quality ECE for all.

In relation to SDG target 4.c, TTF has as its main goal to improve the quantity and quality of teachers at all levels of education. In its Strategic Plan 2018-2021, TTF identifies as one of its objectives to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, expertise and experience on key dimensions of the teaching profession. Morocco is one of the 133 TTF member countries and generously hosted the 7th Policy Dialogue Forum of the TTF in December 2014. ILO and UNESCO are coordinators of the Thematic Group on Early Childhood Care and Education Teachers and Facilitators, which is established within the framework of TTF and aims to promote joint action in favour of quality early childhood teachers. The proposal to organize a conference in Morocco on quality ECE and the professionalization of educators emerged at the annual thematic group session in Lomé, Togo in 2017, where ILO, UNESCO and FMPS agreed to work closely with MNEVTHESR to realize this conference.

Objectives

- Reaffirm the importance of increasing investment in the policy and institutional environment for ECE personnel and quality ECE for all young children in the participating countries;
- Exchange good practices, experiences and challenges regarding the professionalization of ECE personnel and the promotion of equitable and quality ECE services in the participating countries.

Content

The conference will be an occasion to reaffirm political commitments to quality ECE for all children. It will also provide an international platform for exchange, reflection and debate on different topics related to the professionalization of ECE personnel and the promotion of equitable and quality ECE services in the participating countries. Topics that will be addressed in the conference include:

- The situation of ECE personnel (e.g. educators, managers) in the participating countries (e.g. professional profiles of personnel, training and professional development, pedagogical and professional practices, remuneration and working conditions);
- Policies and systems related to the development and management of ECE personnel (recruitment, deployment, professional support, evaluation, promotion and career progression);

⁸ « S.M. le Roi Mohammed VI affirme que l’enseignement préscolaire doit devenir obligatoire pour l’Etat et la famille » [His Majesty the King Mohammed VI affirms that preschool education should become obligatory for the State and the family], 18 July 2018, le [Matin.ma](#).

⁹ « Morocco aims to reach 100% enrolment in pre-primary education in ten years’ time ». [World Education Blog](#), Global Education Monitoring Report, posted on 25 July 2018.

- Good practices in the development and management of ECE personnel for equitable and quality ECE services.

Expected outcomes

- Situations, good practices, experiences and challenges related to the professionalization of ECE personnel and the enhancement of quality services identified and shared;
- ‘The Casablanca Declaration for Quality Early Childhood Education’ (tentative title) adopted.

Participant countries

With the view to representing the different regions in Africa, the participating countries will be: **Algeria, Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Comoros, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, and Tunisia.**

The delegation of each participating country will consist of four persons: the Minister responsible for ECE, one representative from the Ministry responsible for ECE, one representative of a trade union/national association of educators, and one representative from an employers’ association.

Organization

The conference is co-organized by the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Kingdom of Morocco, UNESCO and ILO, in partnership with the German Development Cooperation (BMZ/GIZ), the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (TTF), the Moroccan Foundation for the Promotion of Pre-School Education (FMPS), the Regional Center for Quality and Excellency in Education (RCQE), the Monegasque Cooperation for Development, and Royal Air Maroc.

Contact and venue

Contact:

Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research:
Mr Rachid Taleb: rachidtaleb20@gmail.com (00212620307635)

UNESCO Office for the Maghreb:
Mr Mohamed Alaoui: m.alaoui@unesco.org (00212661186493)

Venue:

Hyatt Regency Hotel, Casablanca, Morocco

Working languages

Arabic, English and French