Scaling Quality in Early Childhood Education

Séminaire international: Préscolaire : politiques, pratiques et stratégies de développement

Rabat le 11 février 2026 INE, CSEFRS

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Agenda



- Evidence from early childhood education (ECE) in Morocco today
- Access–quality–cost balance: Growing Fast, Growing Right
- Global lessons
- Recommendations for Morocco

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ECE in Morocco 2018-2025

National preschool enrollment increased from 45% to 80% in just six years,

Even higher increases in rural areas from 33% to 91%.

Quality assurance efforts- Equalizing child development

Innovative PPP approach



Quality Assurance in Morocco ECE

- Development and consolidation of preschool quality standards, at the level of the ministry and the preschool operators
- Development, piloting and launch of the Quality Assurance tool to assess performance of preschool units against quality standards
- Development, piloting and use of other quality measurement tools (quality of the learning environment in preschool unit ; AWALI ; general outcome measures ; child formative and summative assessment, etc.)
- Updating the preschool curriculum framework based on experience and feedback

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Preliminary results: Cost-effectiveness Analysis

- Investment: ~22.5 billion DH over 10 years (2018-2028)
  - Average cost per additional child: 4,613 DH
- Fiscal savings: ~11 billion DH (nearly half of investments)
  - Net cost after savings: average cost per additional child drops to ~2,348 DH
- Cost-effectiveness: **0.48 LAYS per $100 spent**

	Indicator	Value
Costs	Additional cost of the reform	22.5 billion DH
	Average cost per additional child enrolled in school	4,613.0 DH
Benefits	Additional pre-school children	4,871,641
	Repetitions avoided (2018–2028)	658,562
	Dropouts averted (2018–2028)	50,703
	Annual savings generated by avoided repetition	512.5 million DH
	Annual savings generated by avoided abandonments	590.9 million DH
	Savings generated by repetition and dropout avoided (2018-2028)	11.0 billion DH
Cost-effectiveness	LAYS per eligible child	2,71
	Average cost per additional child enrolled after deduction of savings from reducing repetition and dropout rates	2,347.65 DH
	LAYS earned for every $100 spent	0,48

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Outcomes: Learning Adjusted Years of Schooling (LAYS)

Definition: LAYS measure years of schooling, while adjusting those years by the amount of learning that takes place during them;
i.e., a simple way to combine how long children go to school (quantity) with how much they learn (quality) :

$$LAYS_m = S_m \times L_m^c \times t$$

- S_m: Measure of average number of additional years of schooling in country m
- L_m^c: Measure of average learning in country m, relative to a benchmark, country c
- t: Length of time that preschool-induced gains in schooling are assumed to persist

In Morocco:

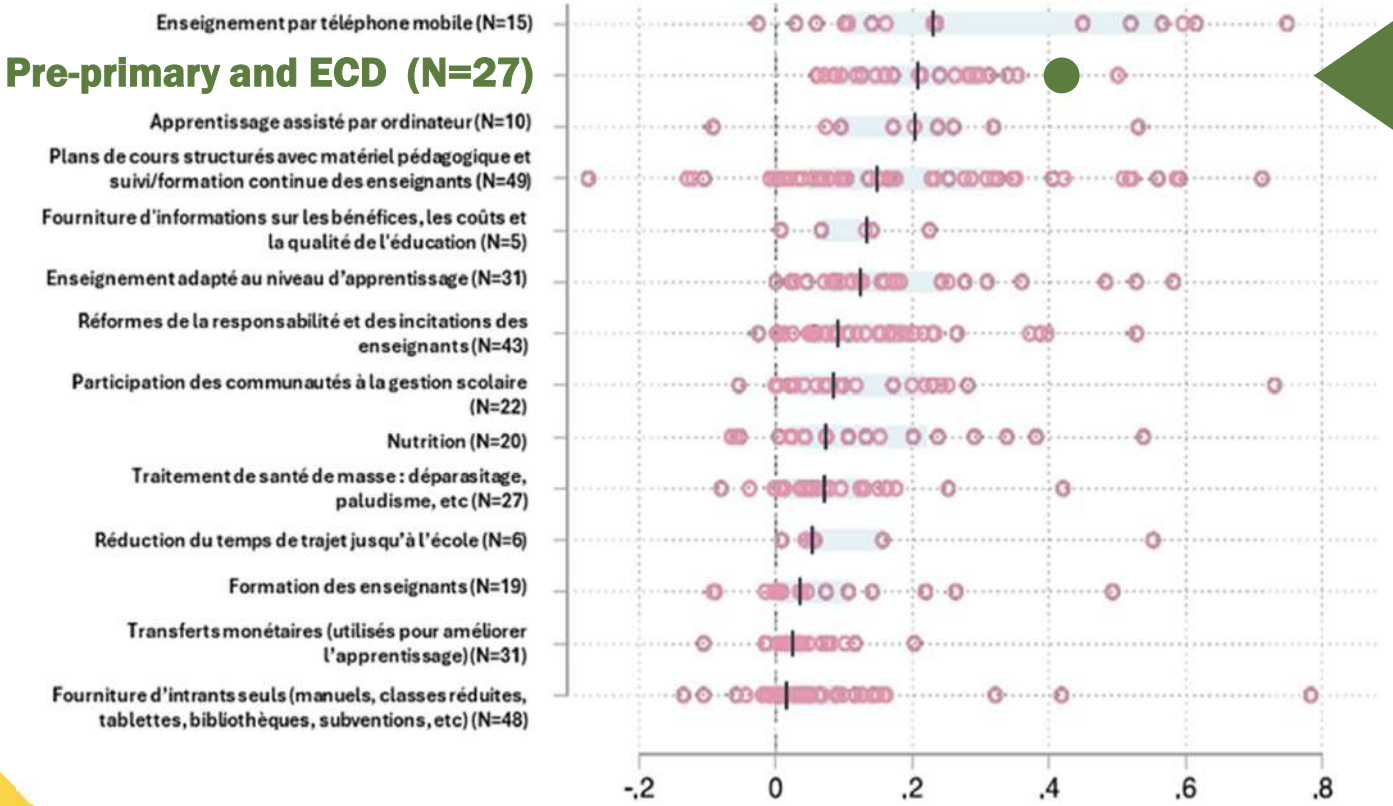
$$LAYS_m = 0.61 \times 0.61 \times 7 = \mathbf{2.71}$$

- 0.61: *Number of additional children enrolled in public preschool thanks to the reform / Total number of children eligible for public preschool*
- 0.61: *Estimated from harmonized learning outcomes (HLO), a global indicator introduced by Angrist et al. (2021) and used in the Human Capital Index (HCI)*
- 7: *Corresponds to 1 preschool year + 6 primary years, based on the international literature that highlights the lasting effects of preschool on educational trajectories.**

On average, Morocco's preschool expansion will yield nearly three additional years of learning for children.

**Although no study covers the entire primary cycle in Morocco, preliminary analyses suggest that the impact of preschool goes far beyond the preschool year alone.*

A strategic reform compared to other reforms undertaken in 52 countries

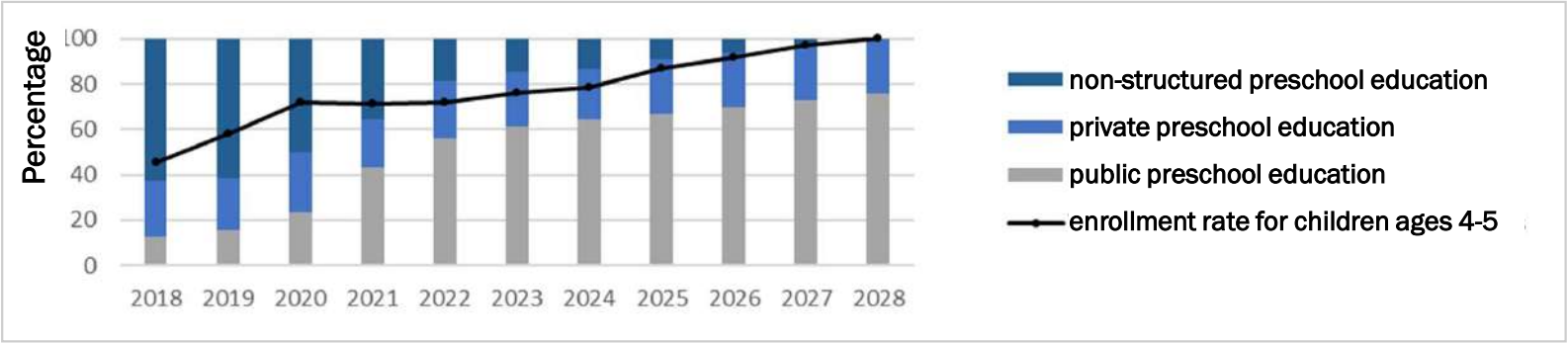


Compared to 27 other studies of interventions in pre-primary and ECD, this study places the Moroccan reform among the interventions generating the highest number of LAYS per eligible child.

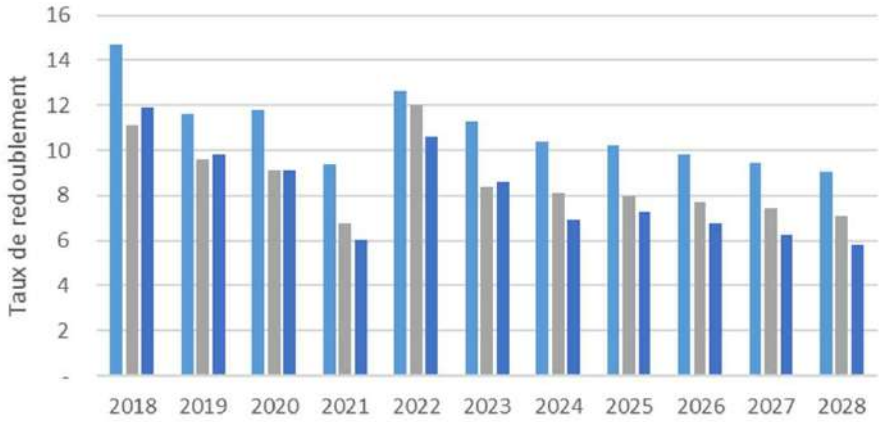
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Benefits

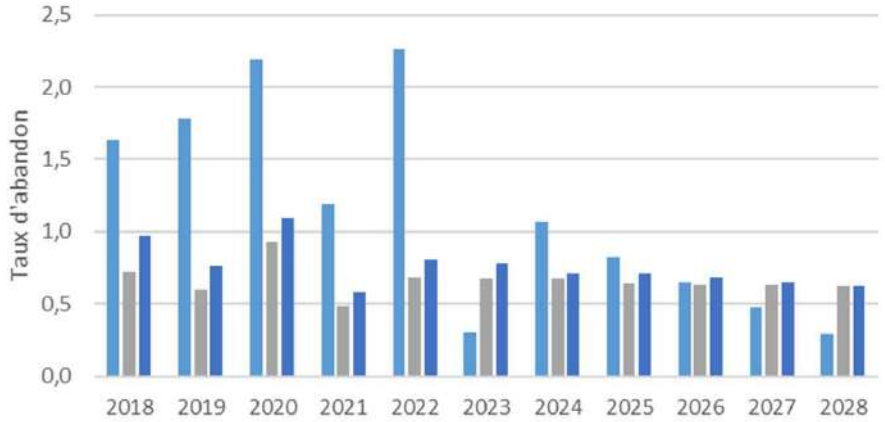
Increased enrolment rate of children ages 4 to 5



Decreased repetition rate in primary



Decreased dropout rate in primary

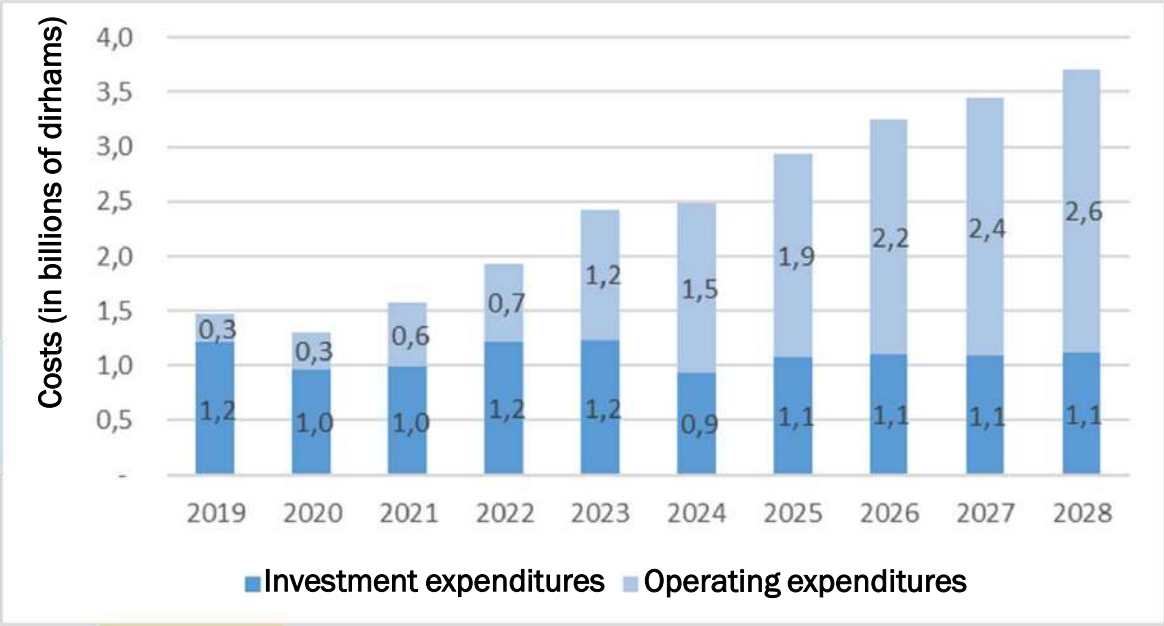


first year of primary second year of primary third year of primary

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Operating expenditures increased while investment expenditures remained stable

Annual evolution of investment and operating expenditure

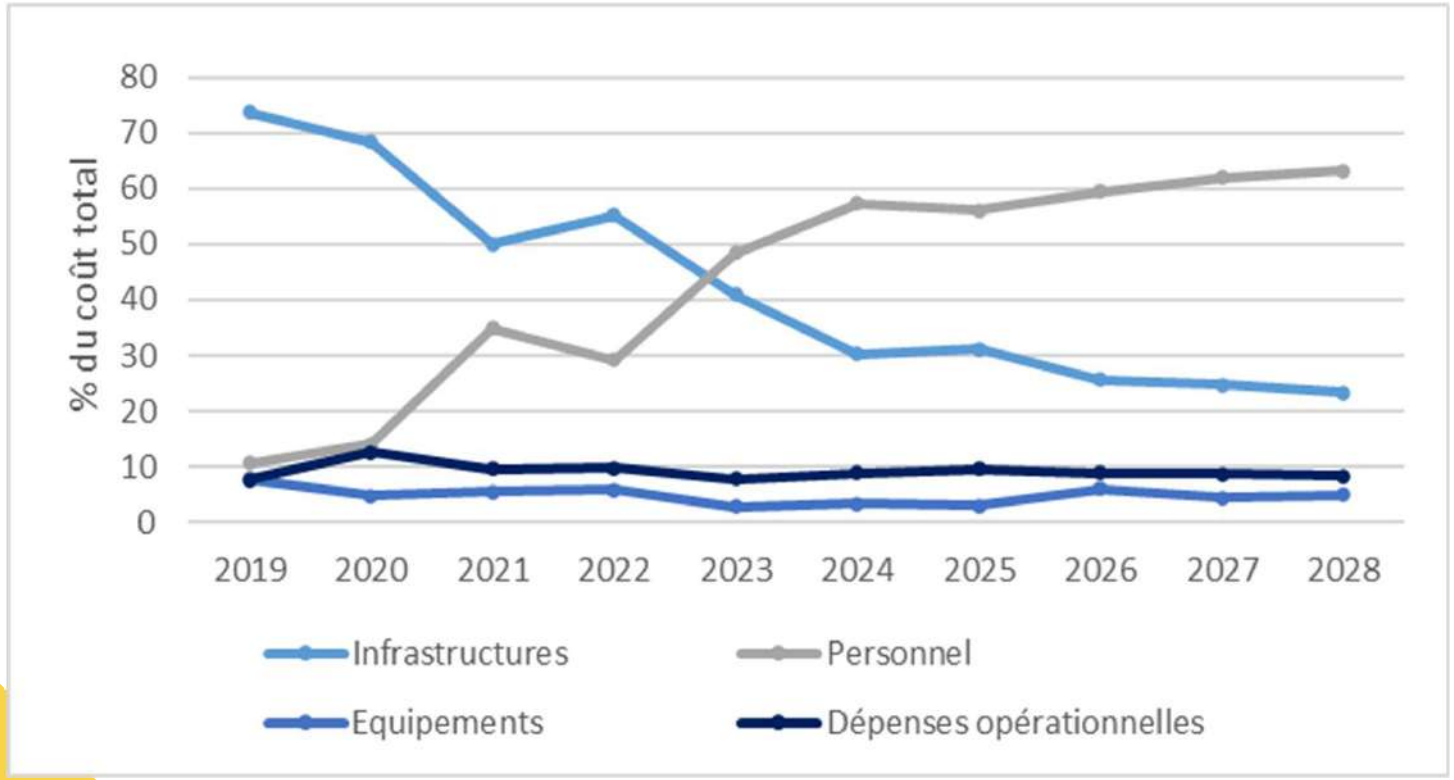


- **Operating expenditures increased** from 0.3 to 2.6 billion DH between 2019 and 2024, and this trend is projected to continue.
  - increase in the number of preschool classes created, the recruitment of educators, and efforts to improve quality.
- **Investment expenditures remained stable**, around 1.1 billion DH per year.
  - It is reasonable to assume that they will decline significantly after 2028, once the preschool reform is completed.

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Evolution of Expenditure in ECE

Evolution of the structure of expenditure in total cost



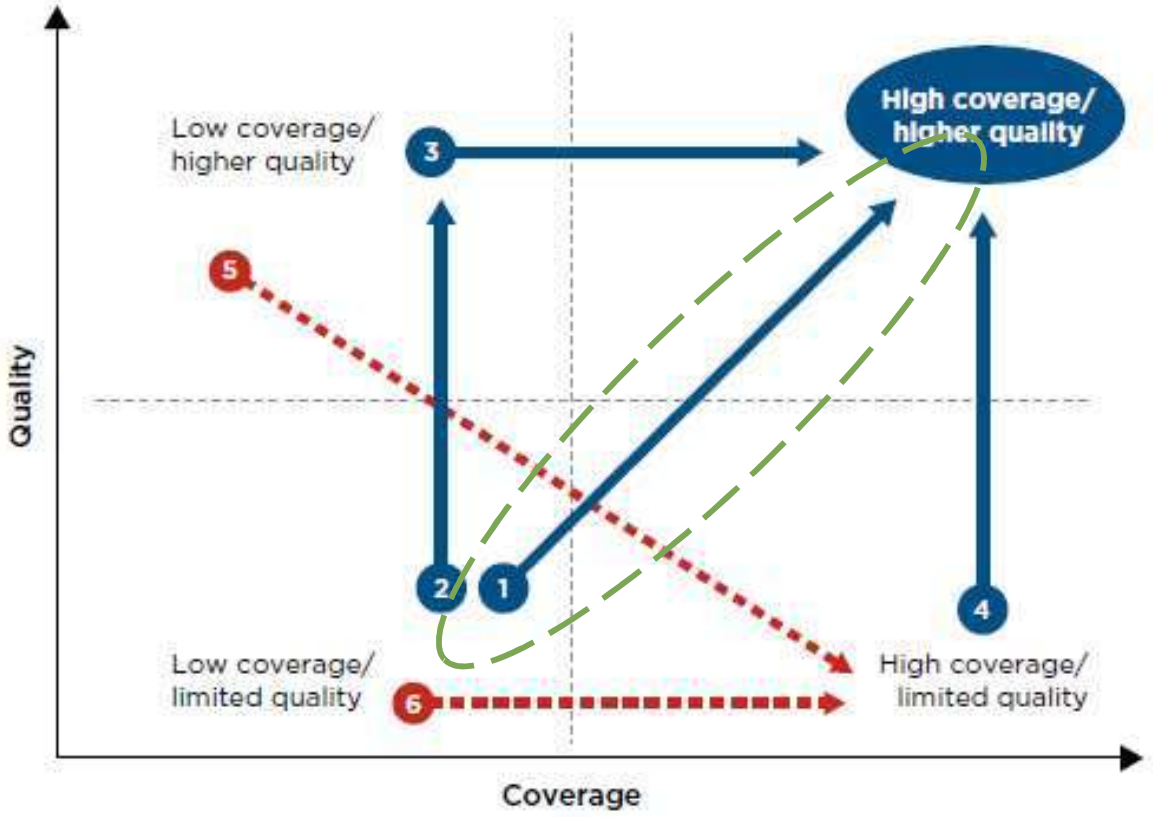
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Global Lessons



Pathways to scaling quality and access

Increasing access to ECE should be balanced with efforts to ensure and improve quality



Morocco has managed to follow Path #1

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Leverage partnerships with clear rules and supervision

Innovative financing

Public-private partnerships

Clear standards

Monitoring systems





New Zealand

Policy and funding

- **MoE plays a key role in funding, regulation and ensuring ECE services meet minimum quality standards**
- **All children** aged 3-5 years are entitled **to 20 hours per week**, paid to facilities. **Additional funds** available for some children (low-income, minorities, special needs). **Monthly grants** are also provided to ECE service providers in isolated communities.
- **ECE financing: 0.9% of GDP** | **Cost per child: US$11,465**
- As of 2019, **64% of children aged 0-4 years attend ECE** (95% of all 4-year-olds attend some form of ECE)

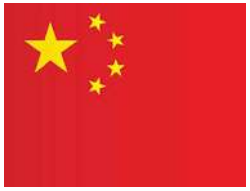
Diverse types of provision

- All operators are **nongovernmental with 10+ models**
  - **Teacher-led:** Kindergarten, full-day care, home-based, correspondence (virtual)
  - **Parent-led:** Playcenters, playgroups, language immersion

Quality assurance

- All ECE services **must be licensed and meet minimum quality standards.** Subsidies are tied with licensing and **additional financial incentives** are provided to providers that have more qualified teachers.
- Structural and process **quality monitored** through external evaluations by The Education Review Office
- All ECE services are expected to implement the Te Whāriki **national curriculum, which provides a framework of principles** but allows for individual difference in service providers

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Guanxi Province, China

Municipality offers public land and school buildings and invites private providers to open kindergartens

Municipality provides annual subsidy of US$100 per student enrolled with bonus of US$130 for children from poor families

These private kindergartens cannot charge more than public kindergartens

Kindergartens are subject to government regulation but maintain administrative autonomy

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Diversify delivery models to reach the last mile

Expanding access while also reaching the most disadvantaged and last mile



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Serbia

Challenges in 2018

- **Low enrollment** (52%) - below EU average
- **Less than 10% of children from the poorest families enrolled**—compared to over 80% of children from well-off families
  - Roma children particularly disadvantaged

Approach

- **Serbia built new ECE facilities and repurposed existing infrastructure** in disadvantaged areas
- **Equipped educators** with innovative training, mentoring, and resources
  - Teachers shifted from seeing themselves as knowledge providers to learning partners, implementing play-based curricula through collaborative approaches
- **A municipal grants program** supported tailored initiatives to engage parents and introduced flexible preschool options to increase demand for ECE among vulnerable groups

Enrollment rates for children aged 3 to 5.5 years increased from 52% in 2018 to 74% in 2024.

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Uzbekistan

Challenges in 2019

- High expenditure
- Low enrollment (27%)
- Urban-rural disparities poor physical infrastructure
- Low child development outcomes

Approach

- Diverse models
  - Half-day model in rural areas, with school libraries, story hours and parent engagement efforts
  - PPP in urban areas
- Ways to reach hard-to-reach and vulnerable children
  - **"One-Stop" community** model with free services. The approach prioritized school readiness, supported children with disabilities through home-based learning, and actively involved parents identified through the Mahalla (local community) system.
  - **Aqlvoy Bus**—a kindergarten on wheels—delivers ECE services to hard-to-reach, underserved communities.
- Quality Assurance
  - Teacher training and mentoring
  - Emphasis on play-based approach

Enrollment increased from 27% to 75% from 2019 to 2025.

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Build systems for continuous quality improvement

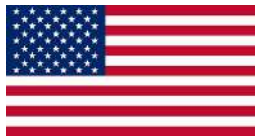
Ensuring a minimum level of quality with pathways to improve



Jamaica - Early Childhood Commission

- Standards promoting quality improvement for all service providers
- Functional agency with capacity and clear mandate:
  - Ensure integrated and coordinated delivery of ECD programs and services
  - **Responsible for inspecting all centers twice per year to ensure compliance with regulations**, and has authority to withdraw permits
- Flexible, but clear standards designed to promote improvement:
  - Institution standards established in 12 areas (staffing, finance, physical environment, interactions, developmental programs, etc.)
  - Possible ratings for each standard:
    - needs improvement, minimally acceptable or good practice
  - Some standards mandatory, some optional
  - **Centers given a timeline and action plan for improvement**

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United States

Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS)

- Assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in ECE programs
  - Similar to ★★ rating systems for hotels and restaurants
- Path of continuous quality improvement for providers
  - → from basic levels of health and safety to highest levels of quality
- It offers a series of opportunities
  - Increases quality of ECE services offered by providers
  - Increases parents' understanding of and demand for high quality ECE services
  - Increases support to ECE providers in a coordinated manner (training, benchmarks, financial rewards)
- Path to formality that is based on incentives and support

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Integrate ECE with broader system improvements

- Aligning ECE practices with primary reforms to magnify gains
- Working across the intersection of finance, quality assurance and equity



Peru (1/2)
Early childhood reforms 1995-2015

Finance:
- Public expenditure in education increased from 3.4 % to 3.9 % of GDP (1999 to 2015)

Increased coverage:
- Pre-primary enrollment increased from 35% to 89% (1995 to 2015)

Equity :
- Target to achieve 100% pre-primary enrollment for children in the poorest districts and rural / indigenous zones

Quality:
- Teacher Careers Law (2007) – merit-based professional development trajectory, increased salaries
- Teacher Reform Plan (2012) - career path, teacher training, system of incentives

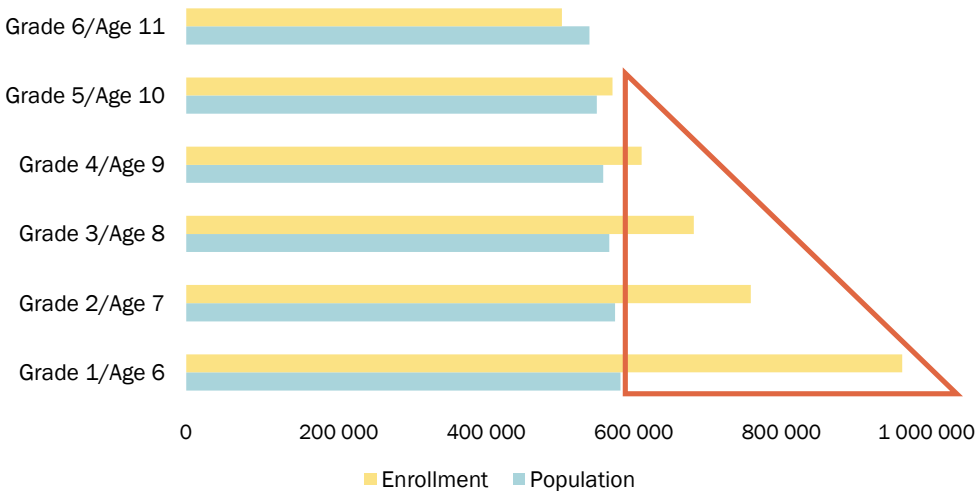
Diverse services:
- Home visiting, community-based programs, home-based services, preschools, childcare centers

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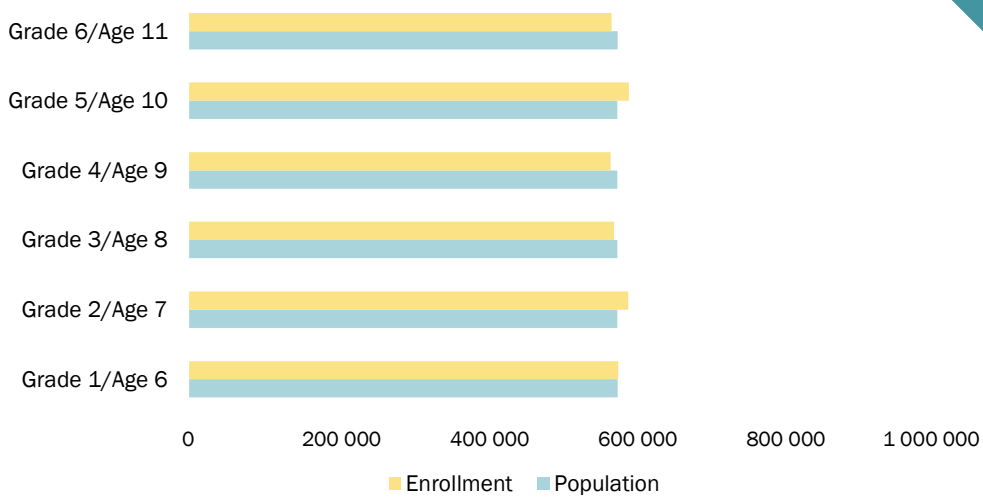
Peru (2/2)
Early childhood reforms 1995-2015

Primary school enrollment by grade/age in Peru

1995



2015



Results:

- Repetition in Grade 1 reduced from 27% to 1% (1999-2015)
- Primary school completion increased from 63% to 96% (1997-2014) and from 20% to 88% in the poorest districts.

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What can we learn from international comparisons to inform future efforts in Morocco?

- Deepen workforce quality cost-effectively (training, coaching, careers, supervision)
- Scale Quality Assurance/labeling as an improvement engine (dashboards, feedback, core standards)
- Differentiate service models for equity (mobile/home-based, repurposed spaces, outreach)
- Keep the data loop tight (measure outcomes, use data to inform decisions, target coaching, train coordinators)
- Integrate ECE with grades 1–2 reforms (structured pedagogy; Teaching at the Right Level)

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Thank you

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