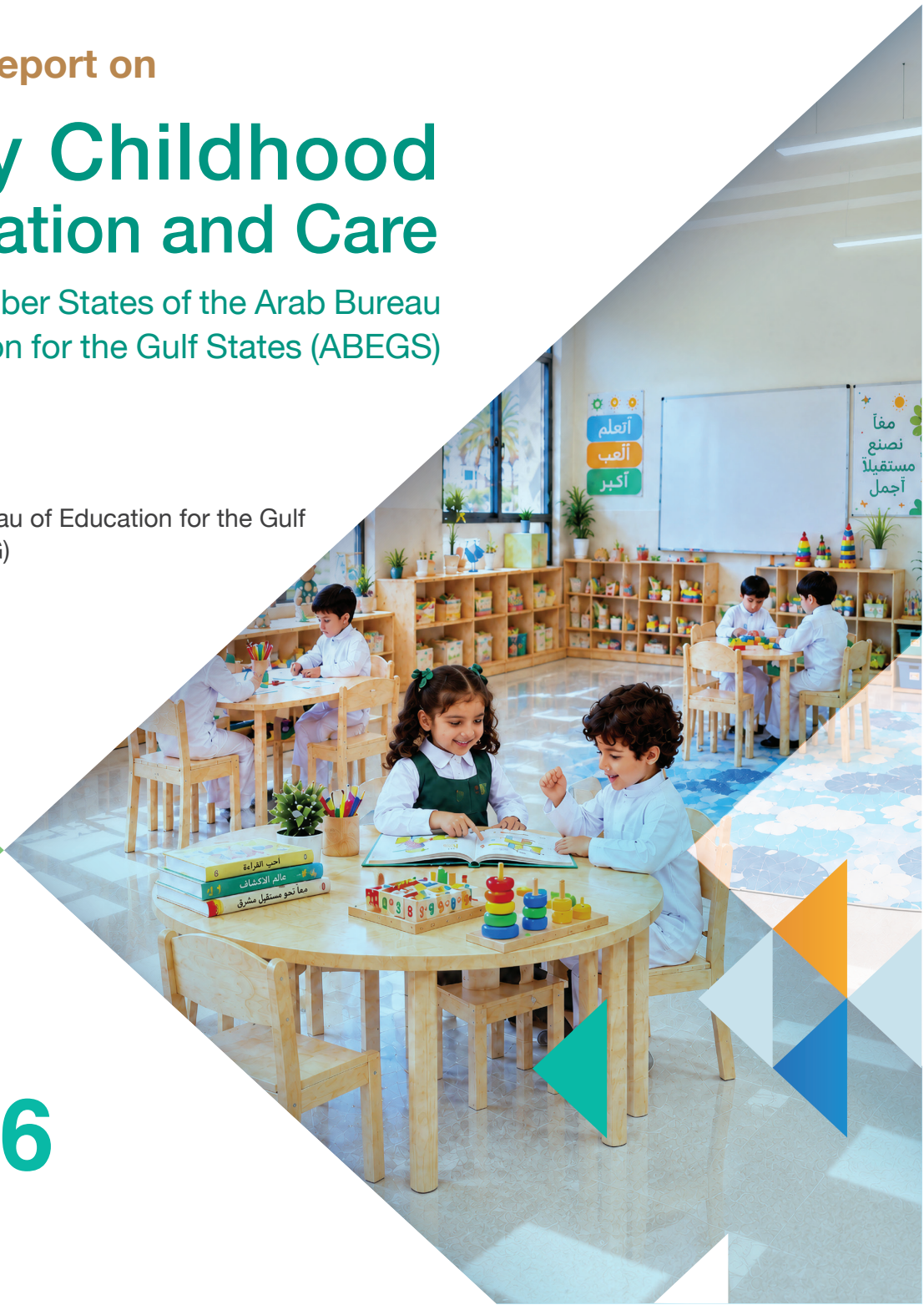
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في العمل التربوي المشترك

مكتب التربية العربي لدول الخليج
Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States

Status Report on

Early Childhood Education and Care

In the Member States of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS)



Prepared by

The Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABESG)

2026

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Foreword:

Investment in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is a cornerstone of sustainable human development and one of the highest-return investments societies and nations can make. Research and international experience consistently demonstrate that the early years of a child's life lay the foundations for learning, shape cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional development, and foster the values, dispositions, and skills that influence future life trajectories and contribute to building more prosperous and competitive societies.

Against this backdrop, the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) accords Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) particular priority, in keeping with its mission to advance education, strengthen integration and collaboration among its Member States, generate educational knowledge, and develop policies and programs responsive to the rapidly evolving global landscape. For more than four decades, ABEGS has advanced Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) through a broad portfolio of initiatives encompassing research, curriculum development, the production of educational guides and resources, professional capacity building, stronger family engagement, and support for regional initiatives. These sustained efforts have helped establish ABEGS as a leading center and think-tank of educational expertise across the region.

This report marks ABEGS first specialized regional assessment of the status of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) across its Member States. Drawing on national data, official documents, and leading international frameworks and benchmarks, it provides a comprehensive analysis of the ECEC landscape, highlights progress and achievements, identifies opportunities for further development, and sets out future priorities to support decision-makers in shaping more effective and sustainable policies.

The report highlights pioneering national practices that reflect the priority Member States accord to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), spanning the development of legislation and policies, strengthened governance, curriculum modernization, investment in the ECEC workforce, enhanced learning environments, and expanded partnerships with the private sector and the wider community. Equally important, it also showcases a rich diversity of national initiatives, demonstrating that Member States

possess distinctive expertise that can provide a stronger foundation for building an advanced GCC-wide Early Childhood ecosystem grounded in knowledge exchange, complementary expertise, and mutual learning.

At the same time, the report underscores the need for the next phase to shift the focus from expanding access to services toward improving the quality of outcomes and maximizing developmental impact. This calls for integrated governance frameworks, a highly qualified ECEC workforce, advanced monitoring and evaluation systems, data-informed decision-making, and stronger integration across education, health, and social protection-ensuring that every child has access to a safe, stimulating, and inclusive learning environment.

Reflecting ABEGS firm commitment to collective regional action, we view this report as a springboard for a new era of cooperation among Member States-one focused on developing regional quality standards, expanding the exchange of expertise, establishing shared databases and indicators, advancing applied research, and launching initiatives and programs that strengthen Early Childhood ecosystems, contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and better prepare future generations to thrive.

I am pleased to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Ministries of Education and the relevant national authorities across the Member States for their invaluable cooperation and support in bringing this report to fruition. I also wish to express my sincere appreciation to the following ABEGS experts, including Dr. Abdul Salam Al-Joufi, Dr. Abdu Noman Al-Mufti, and Dr. Ashraf Al-Tijani for their dedicated efforts and scholarly and professional contributions to the preparation and development of this report, and for the data, information, and insights that helped shape it into its final form. I hope this report will serve as a trusted reference for decision-makers, researchers, and development partners; inform and strengthen national policies; foster greater GCC cooperation; and reinforce a shared conviction that investing in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) delivers the greatest impact on the investment we can make in human potential and among the most sustainable investments in the future of our nations.

Dr. Mohammed bin Saud Al-Moqbel

ABEGS Director-General

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Introduction:

The Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) has maintained a sustained focus on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), recognizing the critical importance of the early years in establishing the foundations for learning and supporting children's physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and linguistic development. This commitment aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." The goal encompasses a focus on enhancing access to quality early childhood education for children of pre-primary age, ensuring a strong foundation for future learning.

Since the late 1980s, ABEGS's efforts in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) have evolved and expanded to encompass curriculum development, knowledge dissemination, teacher professional development, and stronger partnerships with families and communities. These efforts contribute to enhancing the quality of ECEC and ensuring safe, inclusive learning environments that foster children's holistic development and equip them with the capabilities to navigate and respond to future challenges effectively.

In the late 1980s, ABEGS issued and published a series of guidance materials designed to strengthen teachers' professional skills and promote children's holistic development. These included Family and Child Care: A Guide for Families (1985), the Educational Status of Children in the Arab Gulf States (1987), The Arabic Adaptation of the Burks Behavior Rating Scales (1988), and Children and Play: Theoretical Perspectives and Educational Applications (1990). These publications sought to empower families, enhance learning environments, support the identification and monitoring of behavioral challenges, and underscore the vital role of play in child development, while providing practical tools for implementation. In the 1990s, ABEGS began broadening the scope of its work to explore the impact of technology on Early Childhood. Its 1997 publication, the Role of Software in Enriching Children's Culture in the Gulf States, examined the constructive use of educational software to broaden children's horizons, while proposing educational safeguards to mitigate the potential adverse effects of emerging technologies.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, ABEGS placed greater emphasis on the quality of educational programs and practices through publications such as Strengthening the Role of Families in the Care and Education of Pre-Primary Children (2007), Developmentally

Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs (2011), and Childhood Challenges: Diagnosis and Intervention (2011), with the aim of strengthening teachers' professional competencies and promoting the adoption of international best practices in Early Childhood Education settings. ABEGS also placed particular emphasis on children's health and digital well-being through a range of publications, including Raising Children in the Digital Age: A Digital Citizenship Guide for Parents (2013), and A Practical Guide to Child Health (2016), providing guidance on general health, disease prevention, first aid, and responsible digital education. In addition, ABEGS strengthened the competencies of female teachers and female students through Field Training for Female Students: A Guide to Practical Education (2016) and provided practical tools to support positive behavior among children through the Family Education Program – Positive Education Competency Ecosystem (2016).

Most recently, a research study (2025) examined kindergarten curricula across the Member States with the aim of developing a unified curriculum framework and analyzing existing programs considering regional and international trends, with a focus on children's holistic development, the quality of the learning environment, play-based learning, digital skills, and partnership with families. The research study revealed five key outputs: The Report on the Status of Kindergarten Curricula in the Member States: The Kindergarten Curriculum Framework for the Member States, Educational Content, the Female Teacher's Guide, and Training Packages.

ABEGS also fostered a culture of reading among children through the Children's Enrichment Content Competition, helping to provide diverse knowledge resources that promote moral and cultural values and support the intellectual enrichment of younger generations. These efforts reflect ABEGS's sustained commitment to advancing Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and keeping pace with international best practices, in such ways that benefit both children and society.

The Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) continues its efforts to produce periodic reports monitoring the Status of education across its Member States, with a particular focus on tracking progress toward the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). Within this context, the current report extends ABEGS's series of reports, with a particular focus on Early Childhood in the Member States, given its importance in laying the foundations for learning. It is also the first report issued by ABEGS to monitor the Status of Early Childhood across its Member States. The report provides an analysis that connects local contexts with international practices and standards, highlights key achievements and existing initiatives, and identifies gaps and

challenges across several relevant areas. It also reflects ABEGS's commitment to contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, with particular attention to the quality of Early Childhood Education as a foundational stage. The report covers the following key areas:

- **Governance and Regulatory Frameworks**, which define the policies and procedures affecting early childhood.
- **Access and Participation**, to ensure that all children have access to appropriate educational opportunities and supportive environments.
- **Curricula and Educational Activities** provided to children, and the extent to which they align with developmental needs and international standards.
- **Early Childhood Workforce**, in terms of academic qualifications, continued professional development, and professional stability.
- **School Environment and Facilities** that support children's development and learning, including learning spaces, equipment, and materials that support educational activities.
- **Private Sector Role and Contribution**, alongside effective models of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in enhancing the quality of services provided to children.

Executive Summary:

Early Childhood is one of the most critical foundational stages of human life, laying the groundwork for children's cognitive, linguistic, physical, social, and emotional development. It directly influences their readiness and preparedness to learn, educational trajectories, and ability to integrate into and participate actively in society in future. From this perspective, investing in the early years of a child's life represents a strategic investment in human development, human capital development, the advancement of sustainable development, and the competitiveness of societies and knowledge-based economies.

In line with its mission to support educational development and strengthen educational integration among the Member States, the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) developed this report as the first specialized regional report to examine the Status of Early Childhood across its Member States. It provides a comparative analysis of their policies, programs, and national experiences, with a view to supporting decision-makers, educational leaders, and researchers; strengthening data- and evidence-based planning; and promoting the exchange of expertise and promising practices among the Member States. The report forms part of ABEGS's efforts to track progress toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), particularly Target 4.2, which seeks to ensure that all children have access to quality Early Childhood Development, Care and Pre-Primary Education. It is also grounded in the conviction that advancing Early Childhood extends beyond improving educational outcomes to encompass health, social development, family stability, and long-term economic productivity.

The report draws on data collected through a comprehensive questionnaire developed specifically for this purpose and completed by the Ministries of Education in the Member States. It is structured around an integrated analytical framework comprising six key areas: Governance and Regulatory Frameworks; Access and Participation; Curricula and Educational Activities; Human Resources; Learning Environment and Facilities; and Private Sector Role and Partnerships. This framework provided a comprehensive picture of the Status of Early Childhood ecosystems across the Member States, highlighting areas of strength, identifying shared challenges, and drawing out promising practices that can serve as a foundation for advancing joint Gulf cooperation.

The overall findings confirm that, in recent years, the Member States have made significant qualitative progress in developing national legislation and policies, strengthening governance and quality assurance, expanding Early Childhood services, modernizing curricula, improving learning environments, developing early childhood workforce,

and broadening partnerships. This progress reflects a gradual shift from viewing early childhood solely as a stage of care or preparation for school toward recognizing it as an integrated educational and developmental stage that lays the foundation for human development.

The report also highlights the richness and diversity of national experiences, with each Member State presenting a distinctive model for developing its early childhood ecosystem. The **United Arab Emirates** (UAE) has established an integrated national ecosystem that brings together modern legislation, multisectoral governance, national policies, professional development, and specialized institutions that strengthen integration across education, health, and social development. In the **Kingdom of Bahrain**, particular emphasis has been placed on developing professional competencies and strengthening qualification and continued professional development programs. The **State of Kuwait**, meanwhile, has distinguished itself by linking the development of this stage to its National Curriculum Development Strategy and adopting a participatory governance model across government entities. The **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia** has made notable progress in expanding early childhood services, developing curricula and learning environments, and aligning programs at this stage with the objectives of **Saudi Vision 2030**. The **Sultanate of Oman**, meanwhile, has continued to expand early childhood services, update regulatory frameworks, strengthen workforce competencies, and improve learning environments. The **State of Qatar** has notably adopted a national policy for early education and launched the **Sunrise Program** as an integrated strategic framework for developing early childhood services.

These experiences represent not only successful national models but, collectively, a valuable body of knowledge and practical expertise for the region that can be leveraged to build an integrated Gulf-wide early childhood ecosystem based on the exchange of expertise, the development of regional quality standards, the advancement of research and innovation, capacity building, and the development of shared monitoring and evaluation indicators. From this perspective, ABEGS plays a pivotal role in translating these national experiences into joint regional initiatives and programs that contribute to accelerating progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and positioning the region as a leading model for investment in early childhood.

Despite the progress achieved, the report identified several shared challenges that require greater attention in the next phase. Foremost among these are promoting equitable access to services, particularly for children under the age of three; reducing disparities related to geographic location and socioeconomic circumstances; strengthening inte-

gration across the education, health, and social development sectors; developing national data systems and indicators; harmonizing quality standards; advancing continued professional development; expanding inclusion services for children with disabilities; strengthening partnerships with families; and ensuring the safe and balanced use of digital technologies.

The report emphasizes that the next phase requires a shift from focusing on the quantitative expansion of services to prioritizing quality, impact, and sustainability. Accordingly, the quality of educational experiences, outcomes related to children's holistic development, the effectiveness of educational interactions, leadership effectiveness, the quality of the learning environment, and partnerships with families should become the key indicators of success for early childhood ecosystems.

The report affirms that the future of development in our countries begins in the early years of a child's life, and that investment in early childhood is no longer merely an educational choice, but a strategic investment in human capital with far-reaching economic and social returns. This is consistent with the Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development, issued by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the World Bank, which emphasizes that investment in early childhood development programs is a high-return investment, with estimates indicating a potential return of up to US$13 for every US$1 invested at this stage (World Health Organization [WHO], United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], & World Bank Group, 2018). Therefore, strengthening investment in early childhood represents a fundamental pathway to building human capital and improving children's future opportunities, requiring sustainable and integrated policies and financing that place this stage at the heart of national development priorities.

ABEGS renews its commitment to continuing to support the Member States in developing early childhood policies and programs, strengthening regional cooperation, building shared databases and indicators, developing regional quality standards, and sharing expertise and promising practices. These efforts contribute to building a leading Gulf-wide early childhood ecosystem capable of preparing generations equipped with the values, knowledge, and skills needed for the future.

ABEGS hopes that this report will serve as a strategic reference for decision-makers, educational leaders, researchers, and development partners, and as a starting point for high-impact initiatives and joint projects that advance early childhood, grounded in the firm conviction that every investment in children today is an investment in the future of our nations, people, and development.

Report Key Messages:

1. Early childhood represents the foundation for human development and human capital development, and one of the key pillars for achieving sustainable development and enhancing the competitiveness of societies.
2. The Member States have made significant qualitative progress in developing policies and legislation, strengthening governance, expanding early childhood services, improving curricula and learning environments, and developing workforce competencies.
3. The national experiences of the Member States offer diverse models and promising practices that constitute a valuable body of knowledge that can be shared, further developed, and leveraged at the regional level.
4. The key challenge in the next phase is to shift from the quantitative expansion of access to improving the quality of services and measuring their actual impact on children's learning and holistic development.
5. Integration across the education, health, social protection, and family development sectors forms the foundation for building comprehensive and sustainable early childhood policies.
6. The quality of the workforce, educational leadership, daily interactions with children, and the learning environment remain among the most influential factors in the quality of learning and development.
7. Accurate data, shared indicators, and monitoring and evaluation systems are essential pillars for policy development, measuring progress, and evidence-based decision-making.
8. Structured partnerships with the private sector, families, civil society, and regional and international organizations contribute to expanding services and enhancing their quality and sustainability.
9. ABEGS has a strategic opportunity to lead regional efforts in developing quality standards, establishing shared indicators and databases, exploring the establishment of a Gulf Observatory for Early Childhood, and strengthening the exchange of expertise among the Member States.
10. Investment in early childhood is one of the highest-return investments in people, society, and the economy, and a foundation for building generations equipped with the values, knowledge, and skills needed to lead the region's future.

Report Methodology:

This report adopted a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the Status of early childhood in ABEGS Member States through the collection and analysis of official data provided by the relevant authorities in each Member State.

First: Data Collection Tools

The development of this report was based on a specialized questionnaire designed to assess the Status of early childhood in ABEGS Member States. The questionnaire was developed based on the report's objectives, the indicators for SDG 4.2, and relevant international standards, to ensure the availability of quantitative and qualitative data that contribute to building a comprehensive and accurate picture of the Status of early childhood.

The questionnaire comprised six key areas covering the various components of early childhood, with each area addressing a specific aspect of educational policies and practices, as follows:

Governance and Regulatory Frameworks: This area focused on the legislative and regulatory framework for early childhood, the authorities responsible for overseeing this stage, national strategies, governance frameworks, oversight and quality assurance mechanisms, monitoring and evaluation indicators, the educational ladder, as well as national initiatives and policies supporting the development of institutional governance for this stage.

Access and Participation: This area addressed the status of access to early childhood services for children through enrollment and registration rates, the number of institutions and classrooms, children's continuity in programs, equitable access across different regions and groups, transition mechanisms to primary education, and family and community participation, as well as national initiatives aimed at enhancing opportunities for enrollment and participation.

Curricula and Educational Activities: This area focused on curriculum philosophy and approaches, learning areas and content, curriculum documents and guidance materials, educational values, teaching and learning methods, assessment strategies, educational activities, and the extent to which curricula are aligned with children's developmental characteristics and learning requirements in early childhood, in addition to curriculum-related development initiatives.

Human Resources: This area addressed the characteristics of the early childhood

workforce, including the qualifications of female and male teachers and educational leaders, licensing and professional practice requirements, preparation and qualification programs, continued professional development, recruitment and retention systems, as well as indicators of class size, child-to-teacher ratios, and other indicators related to the quality of human resources.

Learning Environment and Facilities: This area focused on the physical and educational environment in which early childhood services are provided, including buildings and facilities, stimulating learning environments, safety and security standards, facilities and support services, educational technologies, and the extent to which the environment is designed to meet children's developmental and educational needs.

Private Sector Engagement and Partnerships: This area addressed the role of the private sector in providing early childhood services, the regulatory frameworks governing its participation, the extent of contribution to service expansion, public-private partnerships, and cooperation with civil society organizations and relevant organizations, as well as joint initiatives that contribute to improving service quality and expanding reach.

In designing the questionnaire, consideration was given to ensuring a diversity of data appropriate to the nature of the information required. Accordingly, it combined quantitative and qualitative data through several types of items, including:

- Multiple-choice items (selecting one option from several alternatives).
- Multiple-response items allowing the selection of more than one option when needed.
- Binary-response items (Yes/No).
- Scaled-response items based on specified levels or categories.
- Open-ended items for textual and descriptive responses.
- Tables for completing statistical data and official indicators.
- Items requesting official percentages, rates, figures, and statistics.
- Templates for documenting national initiatives and policies, including a description of their objectives, outcomes, and implementation mechanisms under each area of the questionnaire.

This diversity of item types made it possible to collect comprehensive data combining statistical indicators with descriptive information, thereby contributing to the development of an integrated information base that reflects the status of early childhood in the Member States and supports more in-depth analyses and conclusions, while maintaining the accurate representation of official data provided by the relevant authorities in each country.

Second: Questionnaire Validation

To enhance the validity of the instrument and ensure its suitability for the research study objectives, the questionnaire was reviewed by two early childhood subject-matter experts. They reviewed the areas and items in terms of the accuracy of the wording, comprehensiveness, alignment with the report objectives, clarity, and applicability by the relevant authorities. In light of the feedback provided by the designated reviewers, the necessary revisions were made to several items in terms of wording, sequence, and the inclusion of additional aspects, until the questionnaire reached its final approved form.

Third: Data Collection Procedures

Following approval of the questionnaire, the Director-General of ABEGS formally contacted the Member States, requesting that the questionnaire be completed by the department responsible for ECEC within the Ministry or by the relevant official authority in each country. The relevant departments within the Ministries of Education-or the authorities responsible for ECEC, depending on each country's administrative structure-completed the questionnaire and submitted it to ABEGS. These submissions constituted the official, validated data on which the report was based.

Fourth: Review of National Reports

Following receipt of the completed questionnaires, the report development team analyzed the data and developed a standalone report for each country, presenting the submitted data in a structured format and including a tailored introduction. The draft report for each country was then returned to the relevant national authority for review and verification of the accuracy of the data prior to final approval. This stage resulted in the following:

- Some Member States provided comments and revisions, which were incorporated into the final version of the report.
- Other Member States confirmed that the report accurately reflected the data they had submitted and indicated that they had no comments.

Fifth: Peer Review

Following completion of the report, review of the national reports, and validation of the data they contained, the full report was submitted to two independent experts specializing in Early Childhood for peer review. The review aimed to assess the methodological rigor and integrity, the accuracy with which the data and findings were presented, and the overall coherence of the content, while further strengthening the report academic and professional quality. The peer review process generated several comments and

recommendations for improvement, which were incorporated into the final version of the report. Key recommendations included: Detailing the data collection methodology and procedures; enhancing the presentation of findings; drawing a clearer distinction between the data and findings derived from Member States' responses and the analytical conclusions reached by the report development team; producing a glossary of key terms; and developing an executive summary highlighting the report principal findings and conclusions. This stage enhanced the report reliability and methodological clarity, while strengthening structure and content to facilitate the effective use of the findings and outputs revealed.

Accordingly, both the data and the report underwent a comprehensive series of review, verification, and peer review procedures, beginning with the review and validation of the data and national reports by the competent official authorities in the Member States and concluding with peer review of the report by subject-matter specialists in early childhood and the incorporation of their feedback. These procedures enhanced the accuracy of the data and the reliability of the findings, while strengthening the academic and methodological rigor of the report and its outputs.

Sixth: Data Presentation and Analysis Methodology

The report presents its findings based on the official data provided by the competent authorities in the Member States, without modifying their content or reinterpreting the data. The findings were organized according to the questionnaire domains, with each domain comprising:

- A presentation of the official data and responses submitted by the Member States.
- An analysis of the findings highlighting key strengths and overarching trends.
- Conclusions drawn by the development team based on the data provided.
- Selected information, experiences, and notable initiatives are featured in Content Boxes to highlight noteworthy practices, national models, and explanatory insights that enrich the interpretation of the findings, without forming part of the original data submitted by the Member States. This methodology strikes a balance between presenting the official data as submitted by the Member States and providing analytical insights and evidence-based conclusions that enable decision-makers and researchers to better understand the status of ECEC and identify opportunities for further development across the Member States.

Seventh: Report Terminology

For the purposes of this report, a set of operational definitions was adopted to establish the scope of key terms and ensure consistency in their meaning when presenting and comparing findings across the Member States. These definitions were formulated in accordance with the scope of the report, the structure of the questionnaire, and the elements addressed under each domain, ensuring that each term reflects the specific dimensions within which data were collected and analyzed, as follows:

Early Childhood: The period from birth to age six, during which children undergo significant cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical development. For the purposes of this report, it encompasses children who benefit from care, learning, and development services and programs provided during this period.

Early Childhood: For the purposes of this report, this refers to the period from birth to age six (0–6 years) and the associated institutions, programs, and services for care, learning, and development. It encompasses ECEC for children under three years of age, as well as Pre-Primary Education programs for subsequent age groups up to age six. This is consistent with the age-level framework used in the questionnaire, which distinguishes between ECEC (from birth to under 3 years of age) and Pre-Primary Education for children aged (3) to (6).

Early Education: For the purposes of this report, the term refers to the learning processes and experiences provided to children during the early years to support their holistic development and learning through experiences and activities appropriate to their developmental characteristics. These encompass language, early mathematics, science, the arts, social skills, health, and physical activity, with particular emphasis on play, active exploration, and interaction with the environment.

Governance and Regulatory Frameworks: This refers to the institutional, legislative, and regulatory framework governing the management, oversight, and quality assurance of early childhood education. It encompasses the authorities responsible for this stage and their respective roles; the relevant legislation and regulations; national strategies; oversight, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms; quality indicators; the organization of educational levels within this stage; and coordination among relevant entities.

Access and Participation: For the purposes of this report, this refers to the extent to which children have equitable and inclusive opportunities to enroll in, benefit from, and remain engaged in early childhood programs and services. This encompasses enrollment and participation rates by age, gender, type of institution, and geographic location;

continuity of participation and dropout; equitable access for children in rural and remote areas; transition to primary education; and parental and community engagement in supporting children's learning.

Curricula and Activities: For the purposes of this report, it refers to the structured educational frameworks, content, and learning experiences provided to children to support their holistic development and learning. These encompass curriculum philosophy and orientation; learning domains and content; developmental and educational goals and outcomes; curriculum documents, educational guides, and guidelines; developmentally appropriate learning approaches; values; activities that promote holistic development; and approaches to assessment and developmental monitoring, with particular emphasis on learning through play and exploration and on integration across developmental and learning domains.

Early Childhood Workforce: For the purposes of this report, this refers to the teaching, support, and administrative personnel working across early childhood institutions and programs, including considerations related to workforce availability, competence, qualifications, recruitment, professional development, and retention. This includes teachers, teaching assistants, specialists, and administrative staff, as well as their academic qualifications and areas of specialization, and the standards governing recruitment, selection, qualification, training, and professional development.

Learning Environments and Facilities: For the purposes of this report, this refers to the overall physical, educational, health, and safety conditions, infrastructure, and resources provided by early childhood institutions to support children's learning, development, well-being, and safety. These encompass buildings, classrooms, spaces and facilities; furniture, learning resources, educational technologies, libraries, and play materials; facilities for play and experiential learning; health, safety, and comfort requirements; safety and quality standards; and the maintenance of facilities and resources and the ongoing development of infrastructure.

Curriculum Philosophy and Orientation: It refers to the pedagogical foundations and principles underpinning the early childhood curriculum, as well as the approaches that guide its design and implementation to support children's holistic development across cognitive, linguistic, social, physical, and emotional domains. It also encompasses learning through play and active exploration and establishes the guiding approaches for drawing on approved curricula and pedagogical models in such ways that are appropriate to the characteristics of the early childhood stage.

Theoretical Background:

Early childhood is the most critical period in human development. Accordingly, inclusive, high-quality education at this stage can make a significant contribution to children's physical, motor, cognitive, social, and emotional development, including language acquisition and the development of early literacy skills. Children are active learners from birth, and the early years are a critical period in shaping their success at school and throughout their future lives. Pre-primary education can be understood as education that takes place before the start of compulsory education. The term refers to education in its broadest sense, encompassing both care and development. This includes early childhood services provided in kindergartens, early childhood care, pre-primary classes, childcare centers, and other similar institutions. This concept extends beyond what is sometimes referred to as preschool education, as it constitutes a distinct form of education. Its purpose is not limited to preparing children for school, but rather to preparing them for life more broadly, with all other parts of the education system also contributing to this developmental pathway (Okusun & Onyeizu, 2019).

Early childhood education is of great importance to the development of young children before they enter formal schooling (FGN, 2014). It contributes to children's cognitive development at an early age and directly influences their subsequent school attendance and participation. This form of education is considered an essential step in a child's journey into the world of knowledge, while also enabling them to lead a healthy and purposeful life. This education system also helps children become more independent and self-confident and promotes their holistic development (FGN, 2014). Research reports have confirmed that children undergo significant cognitive and physical development from birth to the age of six. Moreover, children who receive high-quality care during early childhood are better able to benefit from education and other social services later in life, become productive citizens, and actively contribute to societal development (FGN, 2014).

Theme One: Governance and Regulatory Frameworks

Governance in early childhood is a fundamental pillar for ensuring the quality of services provided to children. It refers to the processes and structures that regulate relationships among the entities responsible for planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, based on the principles of transparency, accountability, and integration across sectors. This, in turn, contributes to achieving the best developmental and educational outcomes for children (OECD, 2017). The absence of a clear governance framework can lead to fragmented efforts among the relevant entities, reducing the efficiency

of services and limiting their impact, particularly given the multisectoral nature of early childhood programs, which span education, health, and social protection (World Bank, 2018). In terms of institutional oversight, approaches to overseeing early childhood vary across countries. Some systems adopt a centralized model in which the Ministry of Education (or otherwise officially named) assumes full responsibility for oversight, while others adopt collaborative models involving multiple ministries or independent bodies. Reports by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicate that systems characterized by a high degree of institutional coordination achieve higher levels of service quality and policy coherence. Consolidating oversight under a single entity or establishing a national coordinating body also helps reduce duplication and improve the efficiency of resource management (OECD, 2020; OECD, 2017).

As part of efforts to enhance governance effectiveness, legislative and regulatory frameworks are particularly important as the legal foundation governing early childhood services. These frameworks establish quality standards, licensing requirements, the competencies required of educational staff, and specifications for the learning environment. A clear and up-to-date legislative framework helps ensure minimum standards of quality and promote equal opportunities for children (UNESCO, 2012). Regularly updating such legislation is also essential to keep pace with educational and technological developments and ensure that policies are aligned with international best practices (UNICEF, 2020). This is complemented by national strategies that provide a reference framework for guiding early childhood policies and programs. These strategies set out a clear vision, strategic objectives, implementation plans, and performance indicators, thereby helping to align national efforts and strengthen integration across sectors (UNICEF, 2019). Evidence has shown that countries with integrated national strategies achieve better outcomes in improving the quality of early childhood education, enhancing children's school readiness, and reducing social disparities (World Bank, 2018).

Within the context of these frameworks, oversight, monitoring, and quality assurance are fundamental pillars of effective ECEC systems. Their role extends beyond verifying compliance with regulatory requirements to providing the evidence needed for continued improvement, identifying strengths and areas for development, and strengthening accountability and the quality of services provided to children. The OECD emphasizes the importance of developing integrated quality monitoring frameworks that encompass both structural quality-such as staff qualifications, child-to-staff ratios, group sizes, and resources-and process quality, which relates to children's daily experiences, interactions, and pedagogical practices. It also underscores the importance of using direct observation when assessing process quality within early childhood settings (OECD, 2025a).

The quality of early childhood services is also linked to a set of interconnected elements, including workforce competence, qualifications, and professional development; pedagogical practices and interactions with children; the physical and organizational environment; leadership and governance; and engagement with families. Findings revealed by the TALIS Starting Strong 2024 survey show that the early childhood workforce plays a pivotal role in shaping high-quality experiences and environments for children, and that the characteristics of the working environment, professional development, structural conditions, and daily practices collectively constitute key elements in understanding and enhancing service quality (OECD, 2025b).

Indicators and data systems play a pivotal role in monitoring the performance of the early childhood ecosystem, enabling a shift from tracking only inputs and enrollment in services to monitoring actual participation, continued participation, the quality of services provided, and child development outcomes. The OECD emphasizes the importance of developing integrated data systems and coordinated governance frameworks that bring together indicators covering inputs, processes, and outcomes, helping to identify disparities and target interventions, policies, and resources more precisely and effectively (OECD, 2026a).

At the level of measuring child development, the Early Childhood Development Index 2030 (ECDI2030), developed by UNICEF, is one of the key international tools used to monitor Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 4.2. The index enables the generation of nationally representative and internationally comparable data on the proportion of children aged 24–59 months who are developmentally on track for their age. The index covers three interrelated domains: health, learning, and psychosocial well-being. It is based on a 20-item instrument, supporting the monitoring of children's developmental status, cross-country comparisons, and the use of findings to inform national policies and programs (UNICEF, 2026).

Regarding international comparisons, the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) provides a reference framework for classifying education programs, thereby enhancing data consistency and comparability across countries. Early childhood programs fall under ISCED level 0 (ISCED 0), which distinguishes between early childhood educational development programs (ISCED 01), primarily intended for children under the age of three, and pre-primary education (ISCED 02), typically intended for children from age three until the age of entry into primary education. This classification continues to be used in recent international reports and surveys, including the OECD's TALIS Starting Strong 2024 survey (OECD, 2025b).

Effective governance of the early childhood ecosystem is reflected in a country's ability to integrate policy, regulation, financing, workforce development, quality assurance, and monitoring, while establishing clear mechanisms for coordination among the relevant entities. Recent international evidence indicates that fragmented responsibilities and governance, alongside financial constraints and workforce shortages, pose challenges to achieving consistent levels of quality and equity. By contrast, shared quality frameworks, system-level monitoring, integrated data systems, and cross-sectoral coordination contribute to building systems that are better able to ensure service quality and sustain continued improvement (OECD, 2025a; OECD, 2026a). Recent evidence on services for children under the age of three also indicates that diverse service delivery models and the distribution of responsibilities across different entities can lead to variations in quality, reinforcing the importance of coherent governance, shared standards, and mechanisms for continued improvement (OECD, 2026b).

Theme Two: Access and Participation

International organizations use a range of quantitative and qualitative indicators to assess access to and participation in early childhood programs. These indicators measure the extent to which educational opportunities are available to children and how these opportunities are distributed across different population groups. Among the key indicators used in this area are enrollment and participation rates. Educational measures distinguish the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER), which measures the total number of children enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, relative to the population in the official age group corresponding to that level (UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS], n.d.). It is calculated as follows:

Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) = (Total number of children enrolled in the level of education, regardless of age ÷ Total population in the official age group corresponding to that level) × 100.

The Net Enrollment Rate (NER), by contrast, is limited to children in the official age group who are enrolled in the level of education corresponding to their age, relative to the total population of children in that age group. It is calculated as follows (UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS], n.d.):

Net Enrollment Rate (NER) = (Number of children in the official age group enrolled in the corresponding level of education ÷ Total population in the same official age group) × 100.

In the context of early childhood, enrollment rates by age group are used as an indicator to measure children's participation in early childhood education programs and to compare levels of access across countries. OECD data for 2023 indicate that the average enrollment rate in early childhood education programs was 85% among children aged 3–5 years, compared with 29% among children aged 0–2 years. Despite this disparity, enrollment rates have increased over the past decade, rising by 5 percentage points for children aged three and above and by 9 percentage points for children under the age of three. Nevertheless, participation rates vary considerably across countries, particularly among children under the age of three, due to differences in early childhood service delivery systems, service availability and cost, and national policy priorities, as well as differences across countries in whether certain care services provided to this age group are classified within education systems. Accordingly, enrollment rates for children under the age of three should be interpreted with caution, given the limited availability of data on certain ECEC services that fall outside ISCED 0. By contrast, data for children aged three and above are more widely available and comparable across countries (OECD, 2025).

This type of international comparison is used to identify gaps in access across countries and their regions, as well as among different social groups within the same country. The data show that children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds typically have the lowest enrollment rates, despite being among those who benefit most from early childhood education in the long term. This underscores the importance of adopting education policies aimed at ensuring equitable access (OECD, 2025).

These indicators are closely linked to the concept of Equity in Access, a prominent concept within UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring reports. The report points to clear disparities in children's participation rates in early childhood education across countries and regions, as well as among different social groups. Policies that expand service provision and provide financial support and equitable education help reduce disparities between children in urban and rural areas and between those from higher- and lower-income families (UNESCO, 2026).

The research literature also shows that greater participation in early childhood education is associated with better developmental outcomes, as appropriate educational programs aim to develop children's cognitive, social, and language skills, thereby enhancing their prospects for success in primary education and reducing the risks associated with unequal learning opportunities in the early years (Yoshikawa et al., 2016; Shuey & Kankaraš, 2018, as cited in OECD, 2025).

Although the most comprehensive international data typically cover enrollment rates in early childhood education, indicators such as retention and continued participation in programs, as well as dropout rates, are less widely available at the international level and vary across official sources depending on the availability of national statistics. Nevertheless, international initiatives emphasize that understanding these indicators is essential for improving education policies and ensuring children's smooth transition to higher levels of education. Effective policy planning requires tracking statistical data on both enrollment and retention to ensure the sustained impact of early childhood programs and their effectiveness in enhancing future learning opportunities. This requires expanding national databases and linking them to international statistics within the framework of SDG 4.2 indicators, which guide the monitoring of participation in early childhood education and pre-primary education (UNESCO, 2024).

Theme Three: Curricula and Educational Activities

Researchers maintain that an effective early childhood curriculum adopts a holistic view of development, recognizing the child whose cognitive, linguistic, social, physical, and emotional domains develop in interconnected ways. In this context, the framework of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in the United States indicates that high-quality educational practices should be grounded in Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), which emphasizes the importance of aligning educational content and teaching approaches with children's age-related, individual, and cultural characteristics. This concept provides a theoretical foundation for designing curricula that accommodate individual differences and support active learning through interaction and exploration (NAEYC, 2020).

Studies in educational psychology, including the work of Vygotsky, also emphasize that learning in the early years occurs more effectively through social interaction and guided play, with play serving as a natural means through which children acquire concepts, develop language, and build problem-solving skills. This perspective is further supported by recent early childhood research indicating that play-based learning promotes intrinsic motivation and fosters higher-order thinking skills compared with approaches based on rote instruction (Zosh et al., 2017).

In a similar vein, the World Bank, in its reports on ECEC, further highlights that curriculum quality depends not only on content, but also on clearly defined learning outcomes for each age group and the availability of practical tools to support teachers in

implementing learning activities. These reports indicate that the most effective education systems are those with clearly defined curricula supported by teacher guides, structured activities, and frameworks for ongoing developmental assessment (World Bank, 2018). The literature also emphasizes that learning activities in early childhood should be varied and interactive, provide opportunities for learning both inside and outside the classroom, and take children's interests and initiatives into account. This diversity is regarded as an essential element in promoting engagement in learning, as rich learning experiences are associated with higher levels of participation and motivation among children (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002).

Regarding values, the educational literature indicates that values should not be incorporated into curricula separately from educational content, but rather integrated into everyday activities. Values such as cooperation, respect, and responsibility are developed in children through practice and social interaction within the learning environment, rather than through direct instruction. Research studies on early moral education confirm that classroom environments that foster positive social interaction contribute to the more sustainable development of value-based behaviors (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

Regarding assessment, the National Research Council (2008) emphasizes the importance of adopting authentic developmental assessment in early childhood, recommending the use of multiple tools, such as systematic observation, ongoing documentation, and portfolios, rather than relying solely on traditional tests. Research evidence indicates that observation-based assessment in natural settings provides a more accurate understanding of child development, as data can be collected continuously during daily activities and used to adapt teaching and improve learning. Assessment in early childhood aims to develop a comprehensive picture of children's development and learning, extending beyond the measurement of academic achievement alone. The nature of children's development and learning requires information to be gathered about their progress and performance across a variety of contexts and situations. Accordingly, ongoing assessment based on multiple sources and methods, such as observation, samples of children's work, interactions, and authentic activities, is more appropriate for assessing children's learning and development and guiding educational practices (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2020).

In this context, portfolios are among the most prominent tools used in authentic assessment. They bring together samples of children's work and teachers' observations over time, enabling developmental progress to be tracked and strengthening communication with parents about their children's learning and development. Moreover, recent literature

emphasizes that integrating assessment into everyday classroom practices contributes to improving educational planning and instructional decision-making, as teachers use findings from observation and documentation to adapt learning activities to children's individual needs (NAEYC, 2020). Early developmental assessment also contributes to the early identification of learning needs and supports appropriate educational interventions, thereby enhancing the long-term effectiveness of educational programs (National Research Council, 2008).

Theme Four: Early Childhood Workforce

The early childhood workforce is a fundamental pillar of educational program quality, with the quality of teachers, their qualifications, and professional experience among the strongest factors influencing children's learning and holistic development. Studies show that daily teacher–child interactions and the quality of pedagogical practices are closely associated with the level of teachers' preparation and professional qualifications (OECD, 2019; World Bank, 2018). The availability of accurate workforce data-including the numbers of teachers, specialized support staff such as psychologists, speech specialists, and special education specialists, as well as administrative staff-supports educational planning and decision-making and helps to ensure the equitable and effective allocation of human resources (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022).

The OECD (2019) indicates that the academic and specialized qualifications of early childhood teachers are a key indicator of education quality, and that high-performing education systems require a minimum level of specialized pedagogical qualification in early childhood, rather than merely general qualifications in education. Teachers who specialize in this field are also better equipped to implement developmentally appropriate practices, understand children's needs, and design appropriate learning activities.

Regarding recruitment and hiring policies, clear and transparent criteria for appointing teachers contribute to improving the quality of the teaching workforce. Effective strategies for attracting qualified professionals, such as professional incentives and development opportunities, are also important for recruiting and retaining qualified teachers (World Bank, 2018). Continued professional development is also of considerable importance and is regarded as a key element in improving the quality of education. Effective professional development programs are characterized by being ongoing, practice-based, and aligned with teachers' actual needs, while providing opportunities for collaborative learning and professional reflection (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

In the context of quality assurance, the OECD (2019) highlights the importance of implementing professional teacher licensing systems to ensure that teachers possess the minimum professional competencies and knowledge required for teaching. These systems are used in many countries as a means of regulating the teaching profession and strengthening professionalism and are often linked to qualification requirements and continuous professional development. The Child–Teacher Ratio is one of the key indicators of the quality of the learning environment. The Child–Teacher/Staff Ratio is an important structural indicator of the quality of ECEC services. Lower ratios and smaller group sizes allow staff more time to respond to children's individual needs, while creating greater opportunities for positive interactions and the development of richer relationships with children. Evidence indicates that lower child-to-staff ratios are, in many cases, associated with higher-quality interactions, particularly in terms of the emotional support provided to children. However, the effectiveness of this indicator depends on its integration with other dimensions of quality, such as staff qualifications and training. Appropriate ratios also vary according to children's age, as younger children require higher levels of responsive, individualized interaction with caregivers (OECD, 2025a).

Theme Five: Learning Environments and Facilities

The learning environment in early childhood is a critical factor in shaping children's earliest learning experiences. Recent literature indicates that the quality of the learning environment-including its physical and organizational dimensions-plays a fundamental role in supporting children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, as their cognitive and behavioral capacities are shaped through continued interaction with their surrounding environment (OECD, 2025; UNICEF, 2023). Ecological theory emphasizes that children's learning does not occur in isolation from its context but is shaped through the interaction between the child and the surrounding environment, including the school and its facilities. Constructivism by Piaget and Vygotsky also highlights the importance of a stimulating learning environment that provides children with opportunities for exploration, experimentation, and interaction, thereby enabling them to actively construct their own knowledge (Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978). A Safe Learning Environment also contributes to strengthening children's sense of security and belonging, which in turn positively influences their engagement in learning (OECD, 2017). Key elements of such an environment include physical safety, including safe facilities and playgrounds; psychological safety, through a threat-free environment; and open spaces for physical activity. UNESCO (2021) emphasizes that free play in well-equipped playgrounds is

an essential component of developing children's motor and social skills, supporting the inclusion of survey items related to playgrounds.

The space allocated and available per child and the number of children in each classroom are also key indicators of the quality of the learning environment. Lower classroom density improves teacher–child interactions (Blatchford et al., 2011), while adequate space supports movement, exploration, and active learning (Maxwell, 2007). NAEYC standards (2020) also emphasize the importance of providing flexible spaces that accommodate a variety of activities and reducing overcrowding to ensure high-quality interactions.

In terms of educational resources, the availability of books, educational toys, and digital technologies contributes to the development of language and cognitive skills, promotes self-directed learning, and supports exploration-based learning (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009). UNICEF (2019) also emphasizes the importance of integrating Developmentally Appropriate Technology in such ways that are aligned with the characteristics of each age group. Regarding furniture, its ergonomic suitability for children (Furniture Ergonomics) is an important factor in promoting physical comfort, reducing strain, and improving concentration and attention (Evans et al., 2010).

Dimension Six: The Role and Contribution of the Private Sector

Private sector participation in ECEC is a key driver of sustainable human development. International literature indicates that the quality and availability of services at this stage depend not only on the public sector but are also significantly influenced by the level of private sector participation, particularly in education systems that rely on partnerships or mixed models of service provision. OECD reports emphasize that private sector participation in early childhood education has become a key factor in expanding capacity and improving access, while challenges related to equity and service quality persist (OECD, 2023; OECD, 2024).

UNICEF reports also indicate that disparities in public and private investment in early childhood education directly affect the quality of the learning environment, particularly in terms of the availability of appropriate facilities, safety standards, learning resources, and the quality of educational programs. These reports indicate that insufficient or inadequately regulated private sector investment can lead to significant disparities in the quality of services provided to children, particularly those under the age of three (UNICEF, 2021; UNICEF, 2023).

From an economic perspective, the World Bank highlights investment in early childhood education as one of the highest-return investments in human capital, generating long-term benefits in education, productivity, and health. Nevertheless, the level of private sector participation varies considerably across countries and is influenced by the regulatory framework, government incentives, and the level of demand for early childhood education services (World Bank, 2018; World Bank, 2020).

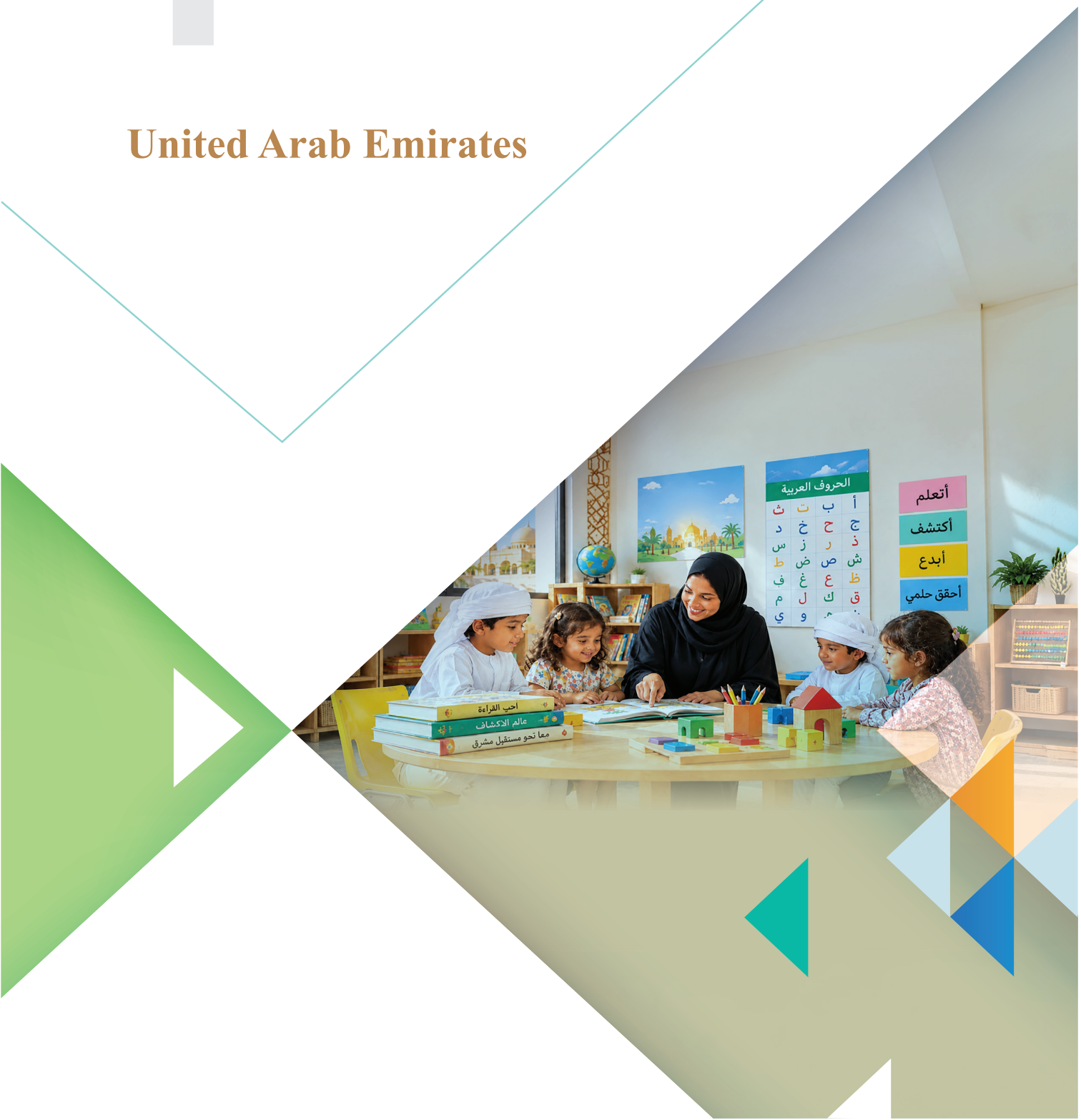
Regarding the scale of investment, international reports indicate that funding for early childhood education services in many countries remains below the level required to achieve universal access to high-quality services. According to OECD estimates, expenditure on early childhood education in developed countries generally ranges from 0.5% to 1.5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with considerable variation across countries in the private sector's contribution (OECD, 2023). UNICEF reports also indicate persistent funding gaps in preschool education (ages 3–6) and services for children under the age of 3, highlighting the need to expand partnerships with the private sector to ensure adequate coverage and efficiency (UNICEF, 2023).

Accordingly, the private sector's contribution to early childhood education-for children under 3 and those aged 3–6-can be analyzed using indicators that measure the percentage of investment coverage relative to actual needs, with the level of contribution classified as high, moderate, low, or very limited. This reflects the extent to which the private education market is able to bridge the funding gap and provide a safe learning environment characterized by high-quality buildings, adequate facilities, and a diverse range of educational programs and learning activities.

Recent educational literature also emphasizes that the adequacy of investment is measured not only by the level of expenditure, but also by the quality and allocation of that investment. UNESCO's early childhood quality framework indicates that an effective learning environment requires balanced investment in safe infrastructure, qualified staff, and curricula grounded in active and play-based learning, thereby supporting holistic developmental outcomes for children (UNESCO, 2021).

1

United Arab Emirates



Introduction:

Since the establishment of the United Arab Emirates in 1971, education has constituted one of the national foremost strategic pillars for developing human capital and achieving sustainable development. Since the era of the Founding Father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, and his fellow Founding Fathers, the UAE's leadership has accorded the development of education the highest priority, reflecting a firm belief in its pivotal role in developing national talent capable of driving the country's development journey and keeping pace with rapidly evolving global developments. Over more than five decades, the UAE has continuously invested in developing its education system, mobilizing human, technological, and financial resources to build an advanced system comparable to those of the world's leading countries (UAE Ministry of Education, 2026a).

The education sector in the UAE has undergone significant qualitative developments, including the modernization of curricula, the advancement of assessment and measurement systems, improvements in the quality of the learning environment, and the expanded use of digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and smart learning platforms, contributing to improved learning outcomes and greater efficiency in the educational process. Equally important, the UAE has also adopted advanced national learning standards and diverse educational pathways that consider students' abilities and interests and support the development of future-ready skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, scientific research, and the ability to adapt to the demands of a knowledge-based economy (UAE Ministry of Education, 2026a).

Efforts to advance education are guided by a clear national vision of achieving "Innovative and Sustainable Education for a Globally Leading Nation." The Ministry of Education seeks to provide a flexible and innovative regulatory and legislative environment and deliver high-quality educational services in partnership with various educational and community institutions, thereby enhancing quality of life and providing lifelong learning opportunities for all members of society. Current education strategies also focus on aligning learning outcomes with future skills, enhancing the quality and efficiency of educational institutions and their workforce, fostering scientific research and innovation in line with globally competitive standards, and leveraging advanced technologies to support learning and improve its outcomes (UAE Ministry of Education, 2026a).

Within the framework of these priorities, the UAE places particular emphasis on developing globally competitive human capital by equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in a rapidly changing world, strengthening the

capabilities of teachers and educational leaders, and fostering the values of positive citizenship, national belonging, and social responsibility. These efforts have contributed to establishing education as a key driver of the UAE's future vision and strengthen the country's capacity for innovation and sustainable development. This is reflected in its active participation in international research studies and assessments and its continued efforts to improve the quality of education and outcomes in line with leading international standards (UAE Ministry of Education, 2026a).

Recognizing the importance of the early years of a child's life as the foundational period with the greatest influence on development and lifelong learning, the UAE has placed increasing emphasis on the early childhood sector and has sought to develop an integrated national framework that ensures the provision of care and education services in accordance with the highest standards of quality and inclusivity. In this context, Ministerial Resolution No. (644) of 2020 adopted the National Policy for Early Childhood Care and Education, with the aim of regulating and developing care and education services for children within an integrated ecosystem that brings together education, healthcare, nutrition, family support, social development, and child protection, security, and safety (UAE Ministry of Education, 2026a).

The policy covers all children from 45 days of age through eight years and encompasses various public and private care and education service models, including early childhood care, early learning centers, pre-primary education, Grades One and Grade Two, before- and after-school care programs, and licensed home-based care. It also covers services provided to children of determination and children with individual needs. The policy also focuses on ensuring children's holistic development across all developmental domains; providing inclusive, high-quality services that are accessible to all; building a qualified workforce; and developing a national framework for early childhood curricula, standards, and assessment. It further seeks to strengthen governance and coordination among relevant entities, enhance licensing and quality assurance systems, and measure the impact of services on children, families, and society (UAE Ministry of Education, 2026a).

Against the backdrop of this comprehensive national approach, this report reviews the Status of Early Childhood in the United Arab Emirates across the six themes, providing a comprehensive analytical overview of the current landscape and development priorities. The six themes include:

- **Governance and Regulatory Frameworks**, which define the policies and procedures affecting early childhood.

- **Access and Participation**, to ensure that all children have access to appropriate educational opportunities and supportive environments.
- **Curricula and Educational Activities** provided to children, and the extent to which they align with developmental needs and international standards.
- **Early Childhood Workforce**, in terms of academic qualifications, continued professional development, and professional stability.
- **School Environment and Facilities** that support children's development and learning, including learning spaces, equipment, and materials that support educational activities.
- **Private Sector Role and Contribution**, alongside effective models of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in enhancing the quality of services provided to children.

Theme One: Governance and Regulatory Frameworks

This theme examines the governance system and regulatory frameworks for early childhood in the United Arab Emirates, including the entities responsible for oversight, governing legislation and policies, oversight and monitoring mechanisms, quality indicators, and the education structure, as well as key national initiatives aimed at developing the sector and enhancing the quality of early childhood services.

1. Early Childhood Oversight Entities:

The United Arab Emirates' response to the questionnaire indicated that oversight of early childhood is undertaken by several specialized federal and local entities, reflecting the decentralized nature of the country's education system, as follows:

First: Ministry of Education: The Ministry of Education is the principal federal entity responsible for developing national policies, legislation, and standards governing education, including early childhood, and overseeing implementation in the educational institutions under its jurisdiction.

Second: Local Education Authorities: Several local and regional authorities are responsible for regulating and monitoring early childhood institutions within their respective geographical jurisdictions, including:

- The Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) in the Emirate of Dubai.
- The Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

- The Sharjah Private Education Authority (SPEA) in the Emirate of Sharjah.
- The Ras Al Khaimah Department of Knowledge.
- The Private Education Affairs Office in the Emirate of Ajman.

These authorities are responsible for licensing, oversight, quality assurance, and monitoring the performance of private educational institutions, including early childhood institutions.

Third: Supporting and Specialized Entities: Other entities contribute to the development of the early childhood ecosystem through regulatory, strategic, and coordination roles, most notably:

- The Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority (ECA), established in 2019 to develop an integrated early childhood ecosystem in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi encompassing health, nutrition, child protection, family support, and children's holistic development.
- The Education, Human Development and Community Development Council, which serves as the highest-level body overseeing the UAE's education and human development ecosystem and is responsible for setting the sector's overarching strategic directions and policies.

The governance system for early childhood in the UAE is characterized by integrated roles across federal, local, and specialized entities, contributing to the provision of high-quality educational and developmental services for children during their early years.

2. Legislative and Regulatory Framework:

The United Arab Emirates' response to the questionnaire indicated that early childhood is underpinned by a legislative and regulatory framework comprising a range of laws, regulations, and national policies governing the operation of early childhood institutions, with the aim of regulating services provided to children, ensuring their quality, and protecting children's rights. The key legislation and policies identified by the UAE include the following:

First: Legislation and Regulations Governing Early Childhood: Early childhood in the United Arab Emirates is supported by an integrated legislative and regulatory

framework designed to ensure the quality of education and care services provided to children, protect their rights, and regulate the operation of early childhood institutions in accordance with unified national standards. Key legislation and policies governing this stage include:

- Federal Law No. (3) of 2016 concerning Child Rights (Wadeema's Law), as amended, which establishes children's rights to care, protection, education, and holistic development.
- Federal Decree-Law No. (18) of 2020 concerning Private Education, as amended, which regulates the operation of private educational institutions, including those providing early childhood services.
- Federal Decree-Law No. (51) of 2022 concerning the Regulation of Nurseries, which sets out the regulatory and operational requirements and quality standards governing nurseries in the UAE.
- Ministerial Resolution No. (137) of 2019 concerning the Regulatory Controls for Existing Nurseries, which governs the operational and administrative aspects of nursery institutions.
- Resolution No. (644) of 2020 concerning the Early Childhood Care and Education Policy, which sets out the national directions for providing integrated services that combine care and education for children in their early years.
- Resolution No. (659) of 2020 concerning the Child Protection Policy in Educational Institutions, which ensures the provision of a safe and supportive learning environment for children.
- Resolution No. (206) of 2020 concerning the Positive Behavior Management Policy for Children in Early Childhood Institutions, which guides pedagogical practices toward promoting positive behavior and developing children's social and emotional skills.
- The Nursery Oversight Framework, which sets out quality standards and mechanisms for the assessment and oversight of nursery institutions.
- The UAE Unified School Inspection and Evaluation Standards Framework, which includes the assessment of the quality of teaching and learning in Pre-Primary Education within the school education system.
- The Policy on the Mandatory Teaching of the Arabic Language, Islamic Education, and Social Studies in the relevant educational institutions.
- The Admission Policy for Early Childhood Institutions, which regulates the requirements and procedures for children's enrollment in educational institutions and nurseries.

Second: Updating Legislation and Regulations: The legislation and policies governing early childhood are continuously reviewed and updated to keep pace with national priorities and international best practices. The early childhood ecosystem has undergone several significant legislative updates and reforms since 2016, including major developments in 2020 and 2022, reflecting the UAE's commitment to advancing early childhood policies and improving the quality of services provided to children and their families. The updating process does not follow a fixed cycle; rather, updates are introduced in response to national strategic priorities, monitoring and evaluation findings, and social and developmental changes that call for the further development of relevant legislative and regulatory frameworks.

The United Arab Emirates has a legislative and regulatory framework for early childhood that integrates the protection of children's rights, the regulation of care and education institutions, and quality assurance for the services provided, in accordance with clear national standards. The early childhood ecosystem is also characterized by flexibility and continued development, with legislation and policies regularly updated in line with national priorities and international best practices. This helps sustain the quality of early childhood services and supports the holistic development of children and their families.

3. Is there a national strategy specifically dedicated for regulating early childhood?

The data provided in the United Arab Emirates' response indicate that early childhood is an area of focus within several national and local strategies related to education and human development. According to the data provided, these strategies include objectives, indicators, and initiatives aimed at developing early childhood services and improving the quality of their outcomes. Key strategies include:

1. **The UAE National Agenda and UAE Vision 2021:** The National Agenda included objectives and indicators aimed at improving the quality of education, including strengthening learning in the early years and enhancing children's readiness for subsequent stages of education.
2. **Education 2033 Strategy – Emirate of Dubai:** Launched in 2024, the strategy aims to advance the education system through a learner-centered model and encompasses early childhood as a foundational stage in developing children's skills and capabilities.

3. **Early Childhood Strategy – Emirate of Abu Dhabi:** The Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority implements a strategy covering children from birth to the age of eight, with a focus on providing an integrated ecosystem that supports children's development across health, education, and social domains.

These strategies reflect the UAE's commitment to advancing the early childhood ecosystem and enhancing the quality of services provided to children and their families.

4. Oversight and Monitoring Mechanisms for Quality in Early Childhood:

The data provided in the United Arab Emirates' response indicate the existence of an integrated system for monitoring, oversight, and quality assurance of early childhood services. According to the data, this ecosystem is based on several structured mechanisms and procedures that include assessing service quality, verifying compliance with regulatory requirements, determining the frequency of site visits, and defining the areas covered by oversight and monitoring. The key mechanisms identified in the UAE's response are outlined below:

A. Quality Monitoring and Assurance Mechanisms:

The United Arab Emirates implements an integrated ecosystem for monitoring and assuring quality in early childhood, structured around two main pathways: the Quality Evaluation ecosystem and the Compliance Inspection ecosystem, which together support improvements in the quality of education and care services and ensure compliance with regulatory and legislative requirements.

First: Quality Evaluation: The Quality Evaluation ecosystem focuses on assessing the quality of pedagogical and educational performance in educational institutions, including Pre-Primary Education (ages 4–6), and covers the following:

- Conducting periodic evaluations of public and private schools that include Pre-Primary Education (ages 4–6), in accordance with a unified national framework for evaluation and quality.
- Assessing the quality of teaching and learning, the learning environment, children's outcomes, school leadership, and the quality of care provided.
- Requiring educational institutions to develop self-evaluation reports prior to evaluation visits, thereby fostering a culture of continued improvement.

- Issuing detailed evaluation reports that set out performance levels, areas of strength, opportunities for improvement, and the required follow-up plans.
- Evaluating schools against approved national standards, with additional follow-up visits conducted for institutions requiring performance improvement.

Second: Compliance Inspection The Compliance Inspection ecosystem focuses on verifying that Nurseries and Pre-Primary Education settings comply with approved legislation, regulations, and standards, and covers the following:

- Conducting periodic inspection visits to verify compliance with licensing and operational requirements, health and safety standards, and regulatory requirements.
- Issuing inspection reports that include observations and required corrective actions.
- Monitoring the implementation of improvement plans and the resolution of identified issues through oversight systems and periodic follow-up procedures.
- Increasing the frequency of visits to institutions that require additional support or demonstrate low levels of compliance to ensure sustained compliance.

Local education authorities across the UAE also apply specialized evaluation and monitoring frameworks to early childhood institutions within their respective jurisdictions. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education is developing a unified national framework for evaluating the quality of early childhood services, with the aim of enhancing consistency in standards and improving the quality of outcomes nationwide.

B. Frequency of Site Visits and Evaluations:

Inspection visits to Nurseries and Pre-Primary Education settings are conducted at least once a year to verify compliance with approved regulations and legislation. Schools that include Pre-Primary Education (ages 4–6), however, undergo comprehensive evaluations every two years as part of the Quality Evaluation ecosystem, with additional follow-up visits conducted where necessary for institutions with low performance levels or those required to address specific findings. Follow-up inspection visits are also conducted within the Compliance Inspection ecosystem to address critical findings and monitor institutions with lower levels of compliance, thereby supporting continued improvement and enhancing the quality of education and care services.

C. Areas of Oversight and Monitoring:

The Quality Evaluation and Compliance Inspection ecosystems cover all key areas related to the quality of services provided in early childhood, most notably:

- Teaching and administrative staff, and support staff.
- Curricula, programs, and learning activities.
- Learning environment, equipment, and facilities.
- Security, safety, and child protection.
- The quality of care provided to children and the level of compliance with governing policies and regulations.

These mechanisms help ensure the provision of safe, stimulating, and supportive learning environments that promote children's development and learning in accordance with approved national standards.

The United Arab Emirates has an early childhood quality assurance ecosystem that combines the evaluation of pedagogical performance with oversight of compliance with legislation and regulations. This includes regular inspection visits and periodic evaluations covering all elements of education and care provision, including staff, curricula, the learning environment, security, and safety. The move toward developing a unified national framework further enhances the consistency of standards, supports sustained improvement, and raises the quality of services provided to children across the UAE.

D. Monitoring Indicators:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates indicated that it uses a set of indicators to assess quality in early childhood. It also noted that these indicators are used to monitor the quality of education and care services and to verify the extent to which early childhood institutions comply with the applicable standards and regulations. The UAE also reported that its quality measurement ecosystem includes indicators for pedagogical evaluation and regulatory compliance, as well as mechanisms for using monitoring and evaluation findings to support continued improvement, as follows:

A. Indicators for Measuring Quality in Early Childhood:

The United Arab Emirates uses a set of indicators to measure quality in early childhood, which can be classified into evaluation indicators and compliance indicators.

First: Evaluation Indicators: These indicators are used to measure the quality of educational and pedagogical outcomes in Pre-Primary Education (ages 4–6) and include:

- The quality of children's learning and their developmental progress across linguistic, cognitive, social, and physical domains.
- The quality of teaching and pedagogical interactions within the learning environment.
- The quality of the learning environment and its suitability for children's needs.
- The effectiveness of educational leadership and management and their role in improving performance.
- The level of parental engagement and partnership with families in supporting children's learning.

These indicators are measured within the school evaluation ecosystem using standardized performance levels that reflect the quality of performance and areas for improvement.

Second: Compliance Indicators: These indicators are used to verify early childhood institutions' compliance with the applicable legislation and regulations and include:

- Compliance with licensing requirements and approved professional standards.
- Compliance with health, safety, and child protection requirements.
- Compliance with operational requirements and governing policies.
- The readiness of buildings, facilities, and educational equipment in accordance with approved standards.

These indicators are monitored through periodic inspection visits, compliance reports, and the associated improvement plans.

For early childhood institutions serving children aged 0–4 years, indicators are currently applied within local oversight frameworks that vary across the Emirates, pending the adoption of the unified national framework being developed by the Ministry of Education to standardize quality measurement criteria across the UAE.

B. Using Monitoring and Evaluation Findings for Improvement and Development:

Monitoring and evaluation findings are systematically used to support continued improvement and enhance the programs and services provided by early childhood institutions. This is achieved through the preparation of detailed evaluation reports identifying strengths and opportunities for improvement, requiring institutions to develop improvement plans and implement corrective actions within specified timelines, and regularly monitoring implementation progress. The Ministry of Education and local education

authorities also use the analysis of data and indicators to inform the development of policies and programs and support evidence-based decision-making, thereby enhancing the quality of education and care services and improving children's learning outcomes.

C. Education Structure for Early Childhood:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates outlined the education structure for early childhood in accordance with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011), including the educational stages, target age groups, the availability and compulsory status of each level, and the official designations used in the UAE. Table (1) presents the education structure as reported in the data provided by the UAE.

Table (1) presents the early childhood education structure in the United Arab Emirates:

Table (1)1

International Level (ISCED)*	International Designation	Typical Age	Age Specified in UAE	Level Availability (Available–Not Available)	Stage Compulsory Status (Compulsory–Non-Compulsory)	Level
ISCED 010	(ECEC 0–3)	Under 3 Years	45 Days–3 Years	Available	Non-Mandatory	Nursery
ISCED 020 – Year 1	(Pre-Primary 1)	3–4	3 - 4 Years	Available	Non-Mandatory	Nursery (Pre-Kindergarten)
ISCED 020 – Year 2	(Pre-Primary 2)	4–5	4 - 5 Years	Available	Non-Mandatory	Kindergarten (1)
ISCED 20 – Year 3	Advanced Pre-Primary Education	5–6	5 - 6 Years	Available	Non-Mandatory	Kindergarten (2)

* Note: This classification is based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) issued by UNESCO and is intended to assess the alignment of national education systems with the international standard in terms of age, the compulsory status of each stage, and the sequencing of pre-primary education stages.

The data presented in Table (1), based on the United Arab Emirates' response, indicate that the early childhood education structure is broadly aligned with the International

Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011), encompassing levels of early care and education from Nursery through Kindergarten 2 (KG2). According to the data provided, early care and education services begin for children at 45 days of age through nurseries, followed by Pre-Kindergarten (ages 3–4), Kindergarten 1 (KG1) (ages 4–5), and Kindergarten 2 (KG2) (ages 5–6).

The data also indicate that all levels of early childhood are available across the UAE; however, they are classified as non-compulsory, with the decision to enroll children left to parents in accordance with the applicable regulations. The UAE's response indicates that the country has adopted a progressive education structure aligned with the international classification, supporting continuity in children's learning and preparing them for the transition to primary education.

The UAE further reported that, effective from the 2026–2027 academic year, the admission age for students to educational institutions was revised to be calculated as of December 31, rather than August 31 of the year of admission. This change was introduced pursuant to Education, Human Development and Community Development Council Resolution No. (8) of 2025, issued on December 18, 2025.

D. National Initiatives and Policies on Governance and Regulatory Frameworks in Early Childhood:

The United Arab Emirates' response to the questionnaire indicated that, in recent years, the UAE has introduced several regulatory initiatives and policies aimed at strengthening early childhood governance and developing its legislative and institutional frameworks, thereby contributing to improving the quality of services provided to children and enhancing coordination among relevant entities. These initiatives have encompassed federal legislation, education policies, specialized entities, and regulatory reforms related to admission to educational institutions, as follows:

1. The Policy on the Mandatory Teaching of the Arabic Language, Islamic Education, and Social Studies in Pre-Primary Education

The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with local education authorities, adopted an updated policy on the teaching of the Arabic Language, Islamic Education, and Social Studies in early childhood institutions, which came into effect from the 2025–2026 academic year. The policy aims to standardize requirements for teaching core subjects in Pre-Primary Education, strengthen children's national identity and religious and social values, and ensure the quality of educational practices at this stage.

The policy has contributed to strengthening children's language skills and national and social values through structured educational practices that are responsive to their developmental characteristics. It has also fostered a sense of belonging and national identity, provided more equitable opportunities for all children to learn the Arabic language-including those enrolled in private and international educational institutions-and supported social integration and cultural understanding within the UAE's multicultural society.

2. Federal Decree-Law No. (51) of 2022 concerning the Regulation of Nurseries

Federal Decree-Law No. (51) of 2022 represents one of the most significant legislative reforms in the early childhood sector, establishing a unified federal regulatory framework governing the operation of nurseries across the UAE under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

The Decree-Law aims to standardize licensing, operational, and oversight procedures and establish unified standards for quality, safety, and educational care, thereby ensuring safe learning and developmental environments for children. The implementation of the Decree-Law has strengthened institutional oversight and enhanced consistency in regulatory standards across the UAE Emirates, contributing to improved quality of services provided to children in their early years.

3. Establishment of the Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority:

The Government of Abu Dhabi established the Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority in 2019 as a specialized entity responsible for developing an integrated early childhood ecosystem for children from birth through the age of eight.

The Authority aims to coordinate efforts across the different sectors concerned with children, including education, health, social protection, and family support, through an integrated multisectoral governance model. The Authority has contributed to the development and implementation of several initiatives and programs supporting early childhood, most notably child protection programs, community awareness campaigns, and the organization of national early childhood weeks. It has also promoted the use of data and evidence in policymaking and decision-making related to early childhood.

4. Admission Age Adjustment Policy for Early Childhood

As part of efforts to improve access to early education, the Education, Human Development and Community Development Council (EHCD) approved, in December 2025, a policy to adjust the cut-off date used to determine the age of admission to educational institutions, effective from 2026–2027.

The policy establishes December 31 as the reference date for determining a child's age, replacing August 31, thereby enabling a broader group of children to enroll in early childhood and general education institutions. This measure aims to address enrollment gaps affecting children born during the final months of the year, promote equity in access to early education, and increase enrollment rates in early childhood.

These initiatives reflect the UAE approach to building an integrated governance ecosystem for early childhood based on three key areas: Strengthening the legislative and regulatory framework, developing institutional coordination among the relevant entities, and improving access to and the quality of early education services. They also reflect the country-level shift from a focus on service provision toward a more integrated approach based on multisectoral governance, harmonized regulatory standards, and strengthened accountability and quality, thereby supporting the achievement of human development goals and investment in early childhood as a foundational stage in building human capital.

Theme Two: Access and Participation

This theme examines the availability of early childhood services and equity in access across different population groups and geographical areas. It also highlights enrollment and retention rates in early childhood programs, reflecting the system's capacity to enroll and retain children. This theme provides a basis for understanding the level of inclusivity in early childhood and the extent to which it aligns with the principles of equal opportunity.

1. Enrollment Rates in Early Childhood:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates provided statistical data on the number of children enrolled in early childhood programs during the 2025–2026 academic year, including their distribution by age group, gender, school type, and geographical area, as well as data on the number of schools and classrooms. Table (2) presents the data provided by the UAE in response to the questionnaire.

Table (2)2 Number of Children Enrolled in Early Childhood Programs in the United Arab Emirates During the 2025–2026 Academic Year, by Gender, School Type, and Geographical Area

Variable		Type		School Type				Geography
		Males	Females	Public	Private*	Global**	City	Rural or Remote Areas (Villages, Outlying Areas, Small Settlements, etc.)
Number of Children	Under 3 Years	3359	2791	0	0	6150	6150	0
	3–6 Years	69334	65602	37858	12236	84842	127824	7112
Number of Schools	Under 3 Years	223	223	0	0	223	223	0
	3–6 Years	737	737	164	84	489	685	52
Number of Classes	Under 3 Years	785	785	0	0	785	785	0
	3–6 Years	6278	6278	1609	536	4133	5957	321

* Private: Private Schools Following * *the Ministry of Education Curriculum – International: Private Schools Following a Curriculum Other Than the Ministry of Education Curriculum

The data presented in Table (2), based on the United Arab Emirates' response, indicate that a total of 6,150 children under the age of three were enrolled in early childhood programs, comprising 3,359 boys and 2,791 girls. Equally important, the data also show that all children in this age group were enrolled in educational institutions classified as international schools, all of which were located in urban areas. No enrollment was reported for this age group in public or private schools or in rural or remote areas.

For children aged 3–6 years, total enrollment reached 134,936, comprising 69,334 boys and 65,602 girls. This reflects broadly similar enrollment levels between boys and girls, with a slightly higher number of boys. The data also show that international schools (private schools following curricula other than the Ministry of Education curriculum) enroll the largest number of children, at 84,842, followed by public schools with 37,858 children and private schools with 12,236 children. In terms of geographical distribution, most enrolled children were concentrated in urban areas, with 127,824 children, compared with 7,112 children in rural or remote areas.

Regarding educational institutions, the data indicate that 223 institutions provide services for children under the age of (3), all of which are international institutions (private

institutions following curricula other than the Ministry of Education curriculum) located in urban areas. For the 3–6 age group, there were 737 schools, including 489 international schools, 164 public schools, and 84 private schools, with educational institutions clearly concentrated in urban areas compared with rural or remote areas.

The data also indicate that there were 785 classrooms for children under the age of (3), all located in international schools in urban areas. For the 3–6 age group, there were 6,278 classrooms, comprising 4,133 in international schools, 1,609 in public schools, and 536 in private schools. Classrooms remained predominantly concentrated in urban areas, with 5,957 classrooms compared with 321 in rural or remote areas.

These findings indicate the broad availability of early childhood services across the United Arab Emirates, with differences in service delivery patterns between age groups. The data show that services for children under the age of three are provided primarily through international care and education institutions (private institutions following curricula other than the Ministry of Education curriculum), while services for children aged 3–6 years are distributed across international, public, and private institutions. The data also show a notable concentration of services and educational institutions in urban areas compared with rural or remote areas. Accordingly, cross-country comparisons should consider each country's demographic and geographical characteristics when interpreting these findings.

2. Program Retention and Continuity:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported high retention rates among children in early childhood programs through their transition to primary education. The data indicate that more than 75% of enrolled children remain in these programs through completion and subsequently transition to primary education. These data indicate high levels of continuity in early childhood programs, reflecting the capacity of educational institutions to retain children and enable them to continue benefiting from the educational services provided throughout this stage. The UAE also reported the availability of data on withdrawal or dropout from early childhood programs, with the withdrawal rate in public Pre-Primary Education institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi standing at approximately 7%.

When considered alongside the high retention rate, these data indicate that withdrawal from early childhood programs is relatively limited. This finding highlights the importance of continuing to monitor retention and dropout indicators and analyze the reasons for withdrawal, thereby informing measures aimed at strengthening children's retention in early childhood programs and ensuring that they benefit from learning and developmental opportunities throughout this stage.

3. Inclusive Access (Equity in Admission):

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that access to early childhood programs is widely available to children in rural and remote areas, with the data indicating that more than 75% of children in these areas have opportunities to enroll in early childhood programs. The data provided indicate a high level of availability of educational services for children across the UAE's different geographical areas.

These findings indicate that early childhood services are widely available and accessible to children in rural and remote areas, contributing to greater equity in access to early childhood education. The data also reflect efforts to expand educational services beyond urban centers, thereby supporting equal educational opportunities for children. At the same time, these findings underscore the importance of the continued development of educational infrastructure and services in rural and remote areas to maintain high levels of access and ensure their sustainability in line with population growth and future needs.

4. Mechanism for Children's Transition from Early Childhood to Grade One:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that a clear and comprehensive mechanism is in place to support children's transition from early childhood to Grade One. The UAE further indicated that this mechanism includes a range of pedagogical and organizational measures designed to prepare children for the transition to primary education. Key measures include restructuring the time allocated to Pre-Primary Education to align with the requirements of the subsequent stage and prioritizing the development of mother-tongue skills in the early years before gradually expanding the learning of other languages. The UAE also indicated that this mechanism includes organizational measures that strengthen integration between early childhood and primary education, including the expansion of a co-located school model in which both stages are provided within the same learning environment, replacing the previous model of Pre-Primary Education being provided in separate buildings.

These data indicate that the UAE education system places considerable emphasis on establishing structured mechanisms to ensure children's gradual and smooth transition to primary education, thereby promoting continuity in their learning and educational experiences across the two stages. These measures also reflect an effort to strengthen alignment between curricula and pedagogical practices and to minimize the challenges associated with the transition, thereby supporting children's readiness for primary education and enhancing their prospects for success and continued learning in subsequent stages.

5. Parent and Community Engagement:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that it places considerable emphasis on strengthening parental and community engagement in early childhood programs. This is supported through a range of national policies and priorities, as well as institutional practices that foster partnerships among families, educational institutions, and local communities. The UAE also identified the key frameworks, policies, and practices governing this area, as follows:

First: Policies and Frameworks for Parent Engagement:

The UAE has formal policies and guidelines that support parent engagement in early childhood programs, although implementation mechanisms vary between the public and private sectors. In the public education sector, the Ministry of Education provides national-level guidelines to strengthen family engagement in the educational process and has developed a parent guide for children aged 4–6 years. A dedicated guide for children from birth to age four is currently under development. In the private sector, local education authorities in each Emirate regulate and oversee parental and community engagement practices, allowing a degree of flexibility and diversity in implementation while maintaining alignment with overarching national priorities.

Second: Family Guidance and Home Learning Support Programs:

There are no unified national family guidance programs or parent training programs at the national level. However, responsibility for providing such programs and educational materials rests with local education authorities and educational institutions across the UAE. As a result, the nature of programs and initiatives offered to families varies according to local policies and educational needs in each Emirate, while efforts continue to support families in promoting children's learning and development within the home environment.

Third: Communication Between Early Childhood Institutions and Parents:

There is no unified national policy requiring all early childhood institutions to follow specific mechanisms for regular communication with parents about their children's progress. Instead, responsibility for establishing such mechanisms rests with local education authorities and schools across the UAE. This approach allows the relevant authorities to develop diverse communication and follow-up mechanisms suited to local contexts, while emphasizing the importance of an ongoing partnership between families and educational institutions in monitoring children's growth and development.

Fourth: Partnership Between Early Childhood Institutions and Local Communities:

National policies and strategies in the United Arab Emirates actively promote partnerships among early childhood institutions, families, and local communities. This is reflected in several national policies and initiatives, most notably the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood (2017–2021); the Early Childhood Care and Education Policies issued by the Ministry of Education (2020); the Early Childhood Quality Framework in Dubai; Abu Dhabi's Early Education Policies; the Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Development Strategy 2035; the Family-Friendly Workplace Program; and the "We the UAE 2031" Vision. Collectively, these policies affirm that child development is a shared responsibility among families, educational institutions, and communities. They also support an integrated, multisectoral approach that connects education, health, and social services and strengthens community engagement in early childhood development.

The data provided by the United Arab Emirates in response to the questionnaire indicate an institutional commitment to strengthening family and community engagement in early childhood development through frameworks and policies that support partnerships among the various entities involved in children's development. The findings also reflect a model that combines national guidance with decentralized implementation, with local education authorities playing a key role in designing and implementing initiatives and programs tailored to the needs of each Emirate. This approach allows flexibility in implementation while maintaining alignment with overarching national priorities, thereby strengthening collaboration among families, educational institutions, and local communities in supporting children's learning and development during early childhood.

6. National Initiatives on Access and Participation:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates identified several initiatives relating to access and participation, including:

- Early Childhood Access and Awareness Initiatives, including the UAE Government Accelerators.
- Year of the Family initiatives, which are among the UAE's key national initiatives aimed at expanding access to early childhood services and increasing family and community engagement in supporting children's learning and development. These initiatives form part of an integrated national approach that connects the education, health, and social development sectors to provide a supportive environment for children's development during their early years.

These initiatives are implemented by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Community Development, and the Ministry of Health and Prevention, in collaboration with local education authorities and relevant government and community entities. These efforts have been progressively implemented since 2017 and have continued in subsequent years, with their scope expanding and becoming increasingly integrated.

The initiatives aimed to increase children's enrollment in Pre-Primary Education and early education programs; raise families' awareness of the importance of the early years and their impact on children's development and future learning; support the family's role as a key partner in child development; strengthen integration across the education, health, and social development sectors; and expand access to services and programs that support children and their families.

These initiatives have yielded positive results, including improved enrollment rates in early childhood programs and increased public awareness of the importance of learning during the early years through national campaigns and awareness programs delivered across a range of public and community settings, including shopping malls and major national events. The initiatives also supported the expansion of family support and awareness programs, as well as specialized health campaigns addressing nutrition, maternal and child health, and early care.

The indicators made available point to notable progress in raising public awareness, strengthening family engagement, and increasing uptake of early childhood services. Ongoing efforts further focus to develop these programs and expand their geographical reach and coverage across different population groups, thereby ensuring the sustainability of their impact and the achievement of their long-term objectives.

These initiatives are implemented across the United Arab Emirates and target children, their families, and caregivers. They also draw on multisectoral partnerships among government entities, the private sector, and community organizations. The impact of these initiatives is monitored and evaluated using indicators that include enrollment rates in early childhood programs, levels of family engagement, and the extent to which target groups are reached, thereby supporting the continued development of early childhood policies and programs.

These initiatives reflect the United Arab Emirates' commitment to providing equitable learning and developmental opportunities for children in their early years and strengthening the role of families and communities in supporting children's development and well-being, thereby contributing to better educational and developmental outcomes for children in the future.

Theme Three: Curricula and Activities

This theme examines the curriculum and activities ecosystem in early childhood, including the curriculum philosophy and pedagogical approaches, the areas of educational content, and the extent to which the curriculum is comprehensive and integrated. It also examines the educational documents and guidelines that support curriculum implementation and their role in guiding classroom practices and enhancing the quality of education. The theme also addresses the educational values embedded in the curriculum and how they are integrated into learning activities, as well as activities that support children's development across different domains and the mechanisms used for developmental assessment and monitoring. Of good note, the theme aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how the various elements of the curriculum and activities are integrated and the extent to which they align with the objectives of early childhood.

1. Curriculum Philosophy and Orientation:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that early childhood curricula are grounded in a clear and comprehensive educational philosophy that focuses on children's holistic development and addresses their cognitive, linguistic, social, physical, and emotional development. The UAE further explained that this philosophy forms part of the officially approved educational frameworks and policies, is documented in detail, and is mandatory for educational institutions providing early childhood education.

The UAE also indicated that the curriculum clearly adopts learning through play and active exploration as a primary approach to children's learning in the early years. Official curriculum documents provide practical guidance that supports learning through direct experience and interaction with the surrounding environment and emphasize the integration of play- and inquiry-based activities into daily educational practices.

Regarding the use of international curricula and global educational models, the UAE indicated that it adopts an approach that takes into account the characteristics of the different education sectors. Most nurseries serving children from birth to age four use approved international curricula and are subject to the oversight of local education authorities or the Ministry of Education's licensing departments. The UAE also reported that private and international schools serving children aged 4–6 years implement a range of international curricula in accordance with approved regulatory frameworks, while public schools follow the national curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education.

The data reflect the UAE's adoption of a framework grounded in contemporary pedagogical principles of early childhood education, with an emphasis on children's holistic development and on play- and exploration-based learning as contemporary pedagogical practices that support children's learning during the early years. The findings also reflect a balance between maintaining the national curriculum in public education and allowing private and international educational institutions to implement international curricula within approved regulatory frameworks. This provides a diverse range of educational options while maintaining alignment with the UAE's overarching regulatory framework.

2. Areas of Harmonization and Integration:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that the early childhood curriculum provides comprehensive and balanced coverage of the core learning domains. The United Arab Emirates indicated that the curriculum encompasses all major areas related to children's development and learning, including language, early mathematics, science, the arts, social skills, health and physical development, as well as other domains of development and learning, reflecting an approach centered on children's holistic development during the early years.

The UAE also indicated that the curriculum sets out clear developmental and learning

objectives that reflect the developmental characteristics of children across different age groups. These objectives are defined in detail for three or more age groups within early childhood, helping to align learning experiences with children's needs and abilities while supporting progression and continuity in learning and development.

Regarding educational content, the UAE indicated that the curriculum includes a diverse and integrated range of learning activities and experiences designed to connect different learning domains by integrating language, early mathematics, science, the arts, social skills, health, and physical development within interconnected learning experiences. The UAE reported that this approach promotes learning through direct experience and interaction with the surrounding environment and contributes to developing children's thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

The UAE also indicated that early childhood is underpinned by an integrated national curriculum grounded in a contemporary educational vision, providing a clear framework to guide children's learning and development across the various developmental and learning domains throughout this stage.

A national curriculum is in place, grounded in an educational vision that emphasizes integration across different learning domains while taking children's developmental progression into account in the design of learning objectives and educational content. The findings also reflect an emphasis on providing balanced learning experiences that integrate cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development, in line with contemporary approaches to early childhood curricula that emphasize the importance of integrated, experiential learning in supporting children's development and preparing them for subsequent stages of education.

3. Curriculum Document and Educational Guidelines:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that national early learning frameworks and guidelines are in place for public educational institutions, particularly for children aged 4–6 years. These frameworks provide a pedagogical reference that guides teaching and learning and sets out the overarching approaches, objectives, and skills expected of children at this stage.

Regarding practical guidance for teachers, the approved educational resources used in public institutions include a range of practical guidance incorporated into teacher guides,

providing detailed direction on planning learning experiences, implementing activities, and assessing children's learning. These guides also include practical examples and models that support teachers in planning and implementing learning activities. The curriculum documents and accompanying guidelines also outline a range of learning approaches appropriate for early childhood and provide practical explanations and guidance on how to apply these approaches within the learning environment. These approaches include play-based learning, collaborative learning, and project-based learning. The documents support these approaches with practical examples and guidance that help teachers apply them systematically and in alignment with the curriculum objectives.

4. Curriculum Document Values:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that values development is a key component of early childhood curricula in public educational institutions, particularly for children aged 4 - 6 years. Values are explicitly embedded in educational objectives, curriculum content, and daily educational practices. This reflects an educational approach aimed at supporting children's balanced development by fostering their moral and social development alongside their cognitive development and skills.

Defining Curriculum Core Values:

The curriculum clearly identifies a set of core values appropriate for Pre-Primary Education, aligned with the developmental characteristics of children at this stage. The Ministry of Education also provides guidance documents for children aged 4–6 years in the Arabic Language, Islamic Education, and Social Studies, with these values integrated into the educational content and learning activities. These documents also serve as a reference for private educational institutions, helping to promote consistency in values development across the UAE.

Integrating Values Across Learning Domains:

Values are explicitly and comprehensively integrated across the different learning domains, including language, early mathematics, science, the arts, social activities, health, and physical development. This integration is evidently reflected in daily educational practices and in the design of learning experiences and activities, with values not taught as a separate subject but rather fostered through a range of learning experiences and interactions within the learning environment. The guidance documents provided by the Ministry of Education also support this integration by embedding values within the educational content of the Arabic Language, Islamic Education, and Social Studies.

Integrating Values into Learning Activities:

The data indicate that learning activities include a variety of practical experiences that reinforce values in children's daily lives, translating the target values into behaviors and practices that children experience in authentic learning and social contexts. This approach supports children's gradual development of values through direct experience and interaction with teachers, peers, and the surrounding environment. The approved guidance documents also support this approach by providing examples and learning activities linked to the targeted values and helping children apply them in everyday situations.

Guidelines for Teachers:

The Teacher Guide used in public institutions provides clear guidance that supports the development of most core values in children and helps teachers integrate these values effectively into learning activities and a range of classroom situations. The Ministry of Education also provides specialized guidance documents for children aged 4-6 years in the Arabic Language, Islamic Education, and Social Studies. These documents include guidance and practices that support values education and help integrate it systematically into the learning environment.

An integrated approach to values development is in place in early childhood, based on clearly identifying the targeted values, integrating them across different learning domains, and translating them into practical activities and practices, while providing teachers with the necessary professional support through approved guides and guidance documents.

5. Activities Supporting Child Development:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that early childhood programs offer an integrated range of learning and educational activities that support children's holistic development. These activities reflect an educational approach that addresses the various dimensions of children's physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional development and provides rich and diverse learning environments responsive to their needs and developmental characteristics.

In the area of physical development and health, daily physical activities are regularly provided to support children's physical development and develop their gross and fine

motor skills. The programs also regularly incorporate a variety of artistic and creative activities. In the area of language development, they provide rich learning experiences that include stories, conversations, songs, and interactive language activities, supporting the development of children's listening, speaking, and communication skills and strengthening their readiness for subsequent learning. The programs also provide opportunities for learning across diverse indoor and outdoor environments, enriching children's experiences, broadening their interaction with the surrounding environment, and promoting learning through direct experience and exploration.

The data indicate that educational programs take children's interests and individual initiatives into account when planning and implementing activities, in line with contemporary approaches to early childhood education that place the child at the center of the learning process and promote active participation, independence, curiosity, and a desire to explore.

6. Developmental Assessment and Monitoring:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that it implements an integrated ecosystem for assessing children's learning and development across different developmental and learning domains. The United Arab Emirates indicated that this ecosystem relies on systematic observation as the primary tool for the continued assessment of children's performance within the learning environment. Children's behavior, interactions, and participation in learning activities are observed and documented systematically, providing a comprehensive picture of their progress and development across different developmental domains. The United Arab Emirates also indicated that assessment processes use monitoring records and portfolios to document children's learning and track their development over time, providing an ongoing record of each child's learning journey and individual progress. These tools provide information that helps teachers and educational institutions identify children's needs and plan learning experiences aligned with their developmental levels and individual characteristics.

The United Arab Emirates also indicated that assessment results are shared regularly with parents through feedback on their child's progress and development. This strengthens communication and partnership between families and educational institutions, supports the continued monitoring of children's learning at home, and enables parents to

contribute more effectively to the development of various aspects of their child's development. The United Arab Emirates also reported that assessment results are used not only to measure children's learning but also to refine learning activities and improve pedagogical practices. Information gathered through ongoing monitoring and assessment is used to tailor learning experiences to children's needs and interests while taking individual differences into account.

An assessment approach is in place based on continued developmental assessment, focusing on monitoring children's learning in their natural learning contexts, while using a range of tools to document their progress and engaging parents in monitoring their development. The findings also reflect the use of assessment outcomes as a tool for improving the educational process by informing the planning of learning experiences, enhancing pedagogical practices, and responding to children's developmental needs and individual differences. This is consistent with contemporary approaches to assessment of learning in early childhood.

7. National Initiatives and Policies on Curricula and Activities in Early Childhood:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that, in recent years, it has introduced several national initiatives and policies aimed at developing and enhancing the quality of early childhood curricula and activities, as part of ongoing efforts to improve learning outcomes and support children's holistic development. These initiatives have focused on developing the curriculum philosophy, learning domains, and content; developing educational guides and supporting materials; and strengthening alignment between the curriculum, classroom practices, and different learning environments.

In 2025, the Ministry of Education launched the Early Childhood Curriculum Development Initiative (KG1–KG2) to update the curriculum philosophy and learning domains and strengthen their alignment with classroom practices. The initiative resulted in the development of an updated curriculum document, the formulation of clear learning outcomes, and the development of guidance materials for teachers to support effective curriculum implementation. This has contributed to greater clarity in pedagogical approaches and improved the quality of curriculum implementation across educational institutions, helping to provide more consistent learning experiences that are better suited

to children's needs at this stage.

During 2025–2026, the Ministry of Education implemented the Systematic Reading and Writing Methodology Initiative to develop children's early reading and writing skills based on contemporary scientific principles and evidence-based educational practices. The initiative's outputs included the development of specialized teaching guides, structured lesson plans, and teacher training programs designed to strengthen teachers' competencies in teaching early language skills. These efforts contributed to improving children's language fluency and phonological awareness and strengthening their readiness for learning in subsequent stages of education.

As part of efforts to strengthen national identity, the Ministry of Education continues to implement the National Identity Integration in the Curriculum Initiative, which aims to embed Emirati national and cultural values in the educational content and learning activities provided to children. The initiative has resulted in the development of learning units and activities connected to the UAE's environment, heritage, and culture, providing children with practical opportunities to learn about their national identity from the earliest years of education. The initiative has contributed to fostering a sense of belonging and pride in national identity and strengthening children's cultural awareness in a manner aligned with the objectives of the curriculum.

In 2026, the Ministry of Education also launched the Seamless Transition Pathways in Early Childhood Initiative to support children's transition between early childhood and basic education and enhance their readiness for Grade One. The initiative's key outputs included the development of a national transition framework, school readiness indicators, teacher guides, awareness materials for parents, and model transition plans for educational institutions. Preliminary findings indicate that the initiative has contributed to improving children's adjustment to school, reducing learning gaps, and strengthening their psychological and academic readiness for the transition to primary education.

Among the initiatives with a direct impact on children's development and learning is the Early Detection and Response to Developmental Delays Initiative, implemented by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Prevention since 2019. The initiative aims to strengthen the early identification of developmental delays and ensure that children receive appropriate and timely interventions. The initiative's outputs included the development of standardized screening tools, the establishment of clear referral pathways, the creation of a national database, and the implementation of training programs for teachers and caregivers. These efforts have contributed to improving the effectiveness of early detection processes, accelerating access to interven-

tion and support, and improving children's developmental outcomes, thereby enhancing their opportunities for learning and holistic development.

These initiatives are implemented across the United Arab Emirates and encompass public institutions involved in early childhood, with some components also extending to private institutions through relevant guides and regulatory and guidance frameworks. All initiatives are subject to ongoing monitoring and evaluation based on educational and developmental performance indicators and the results of field implementation, ensuring their continued improvement and sustainable impact.

Taken together, the five initiatives reflect a national approach to advancing the early childhood ecosystem, focusing on curriculum modernization, strengthening early reading and writing skills, fostering national identity, supporting seamless transitions between educational stages, and the early detection of and response to developmental challenges. Through the integration of these efforts, the United Arab Emirates contributes to providing a high-quality learning environment that supports children's holistic development, strengthens their readiness for future learning, and aligns with international best practices in early childhood.

Theme Four: Early Childhood Workforce:

This theme examines the early childhood workforce in terms of its size and distribution, professional characteristics, and academic qualifications, in addition to analyzing recruitment and hiring practices and suitability for the specific requirements of this stage. The theme also examines the professional development and professional licensing ecosystem as a key means of enhancing teacher competencies and ensuring the quality of educational performance. It also reviews regulations governing child–teacher ratios, reflecting standards for balancing workload with the requirements of care and education. The theme concludes by reviewing key national initiatives and policies aimed at developing the early childhood workforce and addressing teacher shortages, thereby strengthening the sector's readiness and enhancing the quality of its outcomes.

1. Workforce Statistics:

Based on the data provided by the United Arab Emirates in response to the questionnaire, Table (3) presents the early childhood workforce in the UAE, disaggregated by gender (male and female), school type, and geographical area:

Table (3)3.

Variable	Type		School Type			Geography	
	Males	Females	Public	Private*	Global	City	Rural or Remote
Number of Teachers	--	1284	Public	--	--	1094	190
Number of Support Staff (e.g., Psychologists, Speech and Language Specialists, and Special Education Specialists)	--	63	Public	--	--	57	6
Special Education	--	22	Public	--	--	15	7
Number of Administrative Staff	--	972	Public	--	--	821	151

Table (3) presents statistics on the early childhood workforce in the United Arab Emirates, by staff category and geographical area.

The data indicate that there were 1,284 teachers, the majority of whom were based in urban areas (1,094), compared with 190 in rural or remote areas. The number of specialized support staff, including psychologists, speech and language specialists, and special education specialists, was (63), of whom (57) were based in urban areas and (6) in rural or remote areas.

The special education workforce comprised (22) staff members, with (15) based in urban areas and (7) in rural or remote areas. The data also show that there were (972) administrative staff, of whom (821) were based in urban areas and (151) in rural or remote areas.

These data reflect a concentration of the early childhood workforce in urban areas compared with rural or remote areas, which may be associated with population density and the greater availability of educational institutions and support services in urban centers. The data also reflect an emphasis on providing specialized and administrative staff to support the quality of educational services provided to children during this early stage.

Based on the data provided by the United Arab Emirates in response to the questionnaire, Table (4) presents the number of early childhood teachers in the **United Arab Emirates** by academic qualification:

4Early Childhood Workforce in the United Arab Emirates by Academic Qualification.

Type of Qualification	Number	%
High School Certificate or Equivalent	0	0
Diploma in Education with a Specialization in Early Childhood Education	13	0.39
Diploma in Education without a Specialization in Early Childhood Education	4	0.12
Bachelor's degree in education with a Specialization in Early Childhood Education	977	29.46
Postgraduate Qualification in Education with a Specialization in Early Childhood Education	47	1.42
Bachelor's Degree or Higher without a Specialization in Early Childhood Education	2276	68.62
Total	3317	100

Table (4) presents the number of early childhood teachers in the United Arab Emirates by academic qualification. The data indicate that there were 3,317 male and female teachers in total. The largest group comprised teachers holding a bachelor's degree or higher without a specialization in early childhood education, totaling (2,276) male and female teachers, or (68.62%) of the total.

The number of teachers holding a bachelor's degree in education with a specialization in early childhood education was (977), accounting for (29.46%) of the total, making this the second-largest group. The number of male and female teachers holding postgraduate qualifications in education with a specialization in early childhood education was (47), representing (1.42%) of the total.

The number of male and female teachers holding a diploma in education with a specialization in early childhood education was (13), representing (0.39%) of the total, while those holding a diploma in education without a specialization in early childhood education numbered (4), representing (0.12%). The data also indicate that there were no teachers holding a High School Certificate or equivalent at this educational stage.

The data indicate a high level of academic qualification among the early childhood teaching workforce in the United Arab Emirates, with almost all teachers holding university-level qualifications or higher. The findings further indicate a substantial proportion of teachers without a specialization in early childhood education, which may reflect the engagement of teachers from diverse educational and academic backgrounds in teaching at this stage, while highlighting the continued need to strengthen specialized qualifications in early childhood education.

2. Recruitment and Hiring:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported the following regarding recruitment and hiring:

- A clear and structured regulatory framework is in place for the recruitment and hiring of the early childhood teaching workforce, ensuring the availability of qualified staff capable of providing high-quality educational services to children during this critical stage of development.
- Early childhood teaching staff are appointed according to clear and transparent criteria that consider the specific characteristics of the age group and the type of educational institution. In nurseries serving children from birth to age four, the relevant local authorities set the minimum requirements for teaching staff, including academic qualifications, professional competencies, and suitability requirements for working with children, within the framework of the guidelines and policies issued by the Ministry of Education.
- These requirements also apply to Pre-Primary Education, where the Ministry of Education plays a key role in setting recruitment requirements and professional expectations for teachers. It also provides private schools with guides and guidelines specifying the qualifications required to teach different subjects, including the Arabic Language, Islamic Education, and Social Studies. In public educational institutions, the Ministry is responsible for recruiting teachers and ensuring that they meet the approved professional and academic standards.
- The United Arab Emirates has adopted effective, target strategies to attract qualified professionals to the early childhood workforce. Early childhood teachers are selected based on their academic qualifications and professional experience directly relevant to the field.
- Academic qualifications are a mandatory prerequisite for working in early childhood, with teachers required to hold at least the minimum academic qualifications prescribed for teaching, such as a diploma in education or a bachelor's degree in a field related to education or early childhood education. Academic qualification requirements for male and female principals of early childhood schools are also mandatory in more than (90%) of educational institutions. School principals are required to hold at least the minimum academic qualifications prescribed for managing early childhood education institutions, such as a diploma in education or a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field.

The indicators point to an integrated recruitment and hiring ecosystem for early childhood in the United Arab Emirates, underpinned by clear appointment criteria, defined academic and professional requirements, and effective mechanisms for attracting specialized talent, thereby contributing to the quality of educational services provided to children during their early years.

3. Professional Development and Professional Licensing:

Based on the data provided by the United Arab Emirates in response to the questionnaire, an integrated continued professional development ecosystem is in place for the early childhood workforce, with regular training opportunities tailored to the professional needs of staff working at this stage. Participation in continued professional development programs is also mandatory for all female and male teachers, with minimum participation requirements specified in terms of training hours or duration. The necessary support is also provided for participation in these programs, including access to training opportunities and coverage of associated requirements, with these provisions applying to more than (90%) of the teaching workforce.

The data indicate that the continued professional development system is widely implemented across early childhood institutions, with female and male teachers required to complete periodic training and professional development requirements aimed at updating their knowledge and developing their skills in teaching and working with children, in accordance with the policies and regulations adopted in the UAE.

The data also indicate that a professional licensing system applies to female and male teachers working in early childhood, with the Ministry of Education responsible for issuing professional licenses to teachers in public and private schools. The professional license is granted upon successful completion of the assessments specific to early childhood and is valid for four years. Teachers who have not yet met all the requirements for the approved professional license are granted a two-year transitional license. Local education authorities also oversee licensing procedures and issue appointment notices, with additional requirements applied where necessary in accordance with the regulations and procedures of each authority.

Regarding managing the workload of staff in early childhood institutions, the data indicate that the number of children assigned to each staff member is determined based

on several factors, including class size, the number of assistant teachers, and the nature of the curriculum being implemented. Child–teacher ratios are also determined by age group: one teacher for every four children from birth to under one year of age; one teacher for every five children from one to under two years; one teacher for every eight children from two to under three years; and one teacher for every ten children from three to four years. In Pre-Primary Education, however, the ratios vary according to class size and the regulatory requirements applicable to educational institutions.

These data indicate that the United Arab Emirates has adopted a defined framework for managing and developing the early childhood workforce, combining continued professional development, professional licensing, and the regulation of child–teacher ratios. This framework enhances the quality of educational practices, strengthens workforce competencies, and supports the provision of learning environments that respond to children's developmental needs in accordance with clear professional and regulatory standards.

4. National Initiatives and Policies for Early Childhood Workforce Development:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that, in recent years, it has implemented several initiatives and policies aimed at developing the early childhood workforce, thereby enhancing the quality of education and strengthening the competencies of teachers and other staff working in the sector. Among the key initiatives is the Teacher Professional Development Framework (TPD Framework), launched by the Ministry of Education in 2024 and currently being implemented. The framework aims to establish an integrated national ecosystem for continued professional learning that aligns training programs with the actual professional competencies required of the teaching workforce, enhances the quality of educational practices, and ensures that professional development programs are aligned with assessment and performance outcomes. The implementation of the framework has resulted in the development of clearly defined training pathways, continued training programs, and tools for assessing professional performance. It has contributed to improving teaching quality and strengthening alignment between training outcomes and the needs of educational practice, with its objectives achieved to a high degree through phased implementation and continued feedback.

In 2023, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with specialized academic institutions, including the Emirates College for Advanced Education, also launched the Early Childhood Teacher Preparation and Qualification Program to enhance the academic and professional preparation of Pre-Primary Education teachers and ensure their readiness to teach in accordance with best educational practices. The program provides a pre-service higher diploma, alongside practical field training and the development of recruitment standards. The program has contributed to improving the quality of recruitment and strengthening the professional competencies of newly recruited teachers, resulting in a pool of qualified and specialized staff equipped to work in early childhood. The program has achieved its objectives to a high degree.

As part of efforts to strengthen core teaching skills, the Ministry of Education launched the Systematic Reading and Writing Methodology Training Initiative in 2025 to equip teachers with the skills needed to apply reading and writing instructional approaches grounded in contemporary scientific principles. The initiative included specialized training workshops and the development of teaching guides and practical lesson plans, contributing to improved teaching practices and stronger foundational skills among children. The initiative has achieved positive results, with ongoing monitoring and periodic assessment of its impact on learning.

The Early Childhood Workforce Training Initiative (female teachers and teaching assistants) has also been implemented since 2023 through a partnership between the Ministry of Education and the Sharjah Education Academy. The initiative aims to build the capacities of female teachers and teaching assistants and strengthen pedagogical practices in line with contemporary standards. The initiative resulted in the development of specialized training programs, qualification pathways, professional certifications, and practice-based training modules, contributing to improved educational practices and stronger competencies among staff working in early childhood settings. It has achieved a high level of progress, alongside the continued expansion of its training programs.

These efforts are complemented by ongoing professional development programs for early childhood teachers working with children aged (4–6) years, which the Ministry of Education delivers regularly throughout the academic year. These programs aim to develop teachers' pedagogical skills in response to the needs of educational practice and ensure the implementation of best educational practices. The outputs include specialized training weeks, workshops, and training plans based on teachers' actual needs. These have contributed to improving teaching quality and enhancing classroom practices, with a high level of achievement against the intended objectives.

In the private education sector, local education authorities across the Emirates, including private education regulatory authorities, oversee the professional development and licensing ecosystem for the early childhood workforce. This ecosystem aims to ensure that teachers meet the required qualifications, comply with professional licensing requirements, and engage in continued professional development. This has resulted in the implementation of teacher licensing systems, mandatory training hours, and regulatory and inspection frameworks that support performance quality. These measures have strengthened compliance with professional qualification standards, with a high level of achievement against the intended objectives, supported by effective regulatory oversight.

Private schools and education groups also implement in-house professional development programs aimed at building teachers' capacities in line with the curricula they deliver and their respective school models. These programs include in-house training, professional supervision, coaching, mentoring programs, and specialized workshops. They have helped improve teaching practices and strengthen teachers' competencies in implementing different curricula, although levels of achievement vary according to schools' capacities and resources.

Many private schools also provide training programs aligned with international curricula through partnerships with specialized international organizations and experts, with the aim of preparing teachers to meet the requirements and pedagogical approaches of international curricula. These programs include accredited courses and training workshops, external consultancy services, and programs linked to accreditation requirements. They have contributed to improving teaching quality in schools that implement international curricula, with high levels of achievement in high-performing schools and varying results in some other institutions depending on the resources and capacities available.

Theme Five: School Environment and Facilities:

This theme examines the school environment and physical facilities in early childhood institutions in the United Arab Emirates, addressing a range of aspects related to the quality of the learning environment and its readiness to support children's learning and holistic development. This includes the overall school environment, the physical environment of nursery and Pre-Primary Education classrooms, educational facilities and classroom equipment, the organization of learning areas within classrooms, as well as health and medical facilities and the applicable safety and security standards. The theme also reviews key national efforts and initiatives aimed at developing and improving school environments and facilities in early childhood.

1. School Environment:

Based on the data provided by the United Arab Emirates in response to the questionnaire, early childhood institutions provide safe and suitable learning environments for learning and daily activities to a high degree, with the data indicating that this standard is met in all schools or in more than (90%) of them. This includes preparing educational facilities and child-designated spaces to support learning and provide an appropriate environment for daily activities while meeting safety and security requirements.

The data also indicate that safe and well-equipped play areas that provide children with opportunities for free play and physical activities are available in most early childhood institutions, representing more than (75%) and up to (90%) of schools. This reflects an emphasis on providing learning environments with spaces dedicated for play and physical activity as essential components that support children's learning and development at this stage.

These findings indicate that safety and security measures are in place, educational facilities are appropriately equipped, and dedicated spaces are provided for play and physical activities. The data also reflect an emphasis on providing learning environments that support children's holistic development by integrating learning and well-being considerations, thereby enhancing the quality of learning experiences provided in early childhood.

2. Physical Environment of Nursery and Pre-Primary Education Classrooms:

Based on the data provided by the United Arab Emirates in response to the questionnaire, the approved standards for the physical environment of early childhood institutions include requirements for classroom space that consider the developmental needs of children across different age groups. The data indicate that the space allocated per child in nursery classrooms for children under the age of three ranges from (3) to less than (3.8) square meters. The same standard applies to classrooms for children aged (3–6) years, providing a learning environment that supports children's movement and interaction and helps create appropriate conditions for classroom learning.

Regarding the number of children per classroom, the data indicate that no fixed class size is prescribed for either nurseries or Pre-Primary Education. Instead, the number of children is determined according to a range of regulatory criteria, most notably class-

room size and the children's age group, to ensure appropriate levels of care and supervision and maintain the quality of the learning environment.

The data also indicate that learning-support facilities are available in most early childhood institutions, with more than (75%) and up to (90%) of institutions providing libraries or reading areas with age-appropriate books, thereby supporting the development of children's early literacy, language, and cognitive skills. The data also indicate the availability of computers and age-appropriate digital learning resources, supporting the integration of educational technology into teaching and learning and the development of children's digital skills from the early years.

The data reflect the emphasis placed by early childhood institutions in the United Arab Emirates on providing a physical environment that supports learning through adherence to standards for classroom space and the regulation of class size according to children's age groups, alongside the provision of educational facilities and resources that support learning, literacy, and the use of digital technologies. The data also reflect an approach focused on creating integrated learning environments that address children's developmental and educational needs and support the quality of learning experiences provided in early childhood.

3. Educational Facilities:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that learning-support facilities are available in most early childhood institutions, with more than 75% and up to 90% of schools providing libraries or reading areas with age-appropriate books, thereby encouraging early reading and supporting the development of children's language and cognitive skills. These institutions also provide computers and age-appropriate digital learning resources, supporting the integration of modern technologies into teaching and learning and contributing to the development of children's digital and cognitive skills.

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that chairs and tables designed to suit children's ages and developmental needs are available in all early childhood schools or in more than 90% of them, contributing to children's comfort and their ability to participate in a range of learning activities. Appropriate tables and chairs are also provided for teachers to support the effective delivery of teaching and learning, along with cabinets and storage units for keeping educational tools and materials organized and secure, thereby contributing to a well-organized learning environment conducive to learning.

4. Organization of Classroom Learning Areas:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that early childhood classrooms are organized around integrated learning areas that support children's independent learning, with this approach serving as the approved standard for classroom organization. Learning areas are designed to provide children with opportunities to explore, experiment, and interact directly with learning materials and activities, thereby promoting their active participation in the learning process and developing their independence and initiative.

5. Health and Hygiene Facilities:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that health and hygiene facilities are available across early childhood institutions, with such facilities provided in all schools or in more than 90% of them. These include an adequate number of appropriately equipped, child-friendly toilets; handwashing facilities with running water and soap; access to safe and potable drinking water; and effective waste disposal systems. These findings reflect the emphasis placed by early childhood institutions on providing a healthy and safe environment for children by ensuring the availability of essential facilities and services related to public health and personal hygiene, thereby supporting children's safety and promoting healthy daily practices within the learning environment.

6. Medical Facilities and First Aid:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that medical facilities and first aid services are available across early childhood institutions, with these services provided in all schools or in more than 90% of them. These facilities include school clinics or dedicated first aid rooms equipped to respond to medical emergencies and minor injuries that children may experience during the school day. Educational institutions also have the equipment needed to regularly monitor children's physical growth, including weighing scales, height-measuring devices, and other measurement tools, supporting the monitoring of children's health and developmental indicators during the early years. This reflects the emphasis placed by early childhood institutions on providing an integrated school health care ecosystem that supports children's health and safety within the learning environment.

7. Safety and Security Standards:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that clear and approved safety and security standards are in place, issued by the authorities responsible

for licensing early childhood institutions and schools. The response also indicated that these standards are met in all schools or in more than 90% of them. These findings indicate that a clear regulatory framework is in place to guide early childhood institutions in implementing safety and security requirements and providing a safe learning environment for children. They also indicate a high level of compliance with approved standards and procedures, contributing to the safety of children and staff within educational institutions and supporting the provision of a learning environment that meets regulatory requirements for protection, prevention, and risk management in early childhood.

The findings indicate the availability of a range of educational, health, and regulatory provisions across early childhood institutions in the United Arab Emirates, including appropriate educational facilities and classroom equipment, learning areas that support independent learning, health and medical facilities, and approved safety and security standards. These provisions contribute to creating a learning environment that supports children's safety, learning, development, and well-being, in line with the requirements of early childhood.

8. National Initiatives and Policies for Developing and Improving Early Childhood School Environments and Facilities:

In response to the questionnaire, the United Arab Emirates reported that, in recent years, it has implemented several initiatives and policies aimed at developing and improving early childhood school environments and facilities, thereby enhancing the quality of learning environments and enriching children's educational experiences. Among the key initiatives was the Model Learning Environments Development in Early Childhood Initiative, implemented by the Ministry of Education during 2023–2024. It aimed to strengthen teachers' practices in designing effective learning environments and develop practical models for learning environments in Pre-Primary Education. The initiative resulted in the delivery of specialized training programs, the development of classroom models designed to support learning, and the enhanced use of learning areas within classrooms. These efforts contributed to improving the quality of classroom environments and strengthening teachers' practices in creating more stimulating learning environments for children. The initiative achieved strong results and established a practical model that can be scaled across other institutions.

Since 2024, the Ministry of Education has also been implementing the Early Childhood Educational Resources Review and Alignment Initiative to ensure the availability of appropriate educational resources aligned with the learning outcomes for children aged (4–6) years. The initiative included a comprehensive review of public Pre-Primary Education institutions, identification of schools' actual needs, and the selection and provision of appropriate educational resources. These efforts have improved the availability of educational resources and strengthened their alignment with the curriculum, with a high level of implementation achieved across public schools.

In the same vein, since 2024, the Ministry of Education has been implementing an initiative to develop guidelines for equipping indoor and outdoor learning environments, with the aim of establishing unified national standards for learning environment design and equipment that are appropriate to the developmental characteristics of children in early childhood. This initiative has resulted in the development of comprehensive guidelines for organizing and equipping classrooms and indoor and outdoor play and learning areas, incorporating safety standards and educational design requirements. These guidelines have contributed to standardizing the design standards for learning environments and improving the quality of learning and play spaces, with a high level of implementation and uptake among government entities and local education authorities.

The Ministry of Education also continues to apply the Pre-Primary Education Guide for the organization of learning environments and equipment, which serves as a regulatory reference for public schools serving children aged 4–6 years. The Guide aims to further explain the requirements for the learning environment and the essential and additional equipment needed to support learning, as well as to define mechanisms for equipping classrooms and providing educational resources. The implementation of the guide has contributed to improving the organization of learning environments, clarifying equipment requirements, and ensuring the continued upgrading of facilities and educational resources in public schools.

In the private education sector, local education authorities regulate and oversee learning environment requirements through a set of guidelines and standards that establish the minimum requirements for learning environments in accordance with the nature of the curricula implemented in private schools. These policies have contributed to maintaining an acceptable level of quality across learning environments while allowing a degree of flexibility that accommodates the diversity of approved educational models, within a framework of continued regulatory oversight that ensures compliance with core standards for the safety and quality of the learning environment.

2

Kingdom of Bahrain



Introduction:

Education in the Kingdom of Bahrain is one of the key strategic foundations underpinning the country's modern development, with the national leadership viewing it as the most effective investment in human development and a key driver of economic and social development. Education in the Kingdom of Bahrain is one of the key strategic foundations underpinning the country's modern development, with the national leadership viewing it as the most effective investment in human development and a key driver of economic and social development.

This commitment to education dates to an early period preceding the establishment of the modern state, when the national leadership sought to establish an organized education system capable of meeting the growing needs of Bahraini society and preparing qualified national talent to contribute across various areas of development. In this context, responsibility for the administration of education was transferred to the government in 1930, which assumed responsibility for organizing educational affairs and overseeing the development of education in line with national priorities and the requirements of economic and social development.

The year 1919 marked a pivotal turning point in the history of education in Bahrain with the opening of Al-Hidaya Al-Khalifia School in Muharraq, then the country's administrative capital. As Bahrain's first formal public school, it marked the beginning of the transition from traditional education to an organized institutional system based on formal curricula and modern educational administration. As basic education expanded and enrollment rates increased, the state turned its attention to developing subsequent stages of education. In 1940, the expansion of secondary education began with the establishment of the first secondary school for boys, aimed at accommodating high-achieving graduates of primary education and preparing them academically and professionally for government and administrative positions required by the country's development. This expansion represented an important step toward building an integrated education system capable of developing a qualified national workforce.

Bahrain also placed early emphasis on teacher preparation, recognizing that the quality of education is closely linked to the competence of the teaching workforce. In this context, the Higher Institute for Male Teachers was established in 1966, followed by the Higher Institute for Female Teachers in 1967, together forming the foundation of higher education in the country. Development continued over the following decades, with higher education institutions expanding significantly in number, range of specializations,

and quality of academic programs. This progress accelerated particularly following the enactment of the Higher Education Law in 2005, the launch of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Development Strategy, and the licensing of several private universities and academic institutions, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of the higher education sector and aligning its outcomes with national development needs.

Early childhood was also recognized as a priority from an early stage. Formal Pre-Primary Education began in 1942 with the opening of the first Pre-Primary Education classroom within a girls' school in Muharraq, followed by the establishment of the first independent Pre-Primary Education institution in 1955. This marked the beginning of the transition toward providing specialized educational services for children at the pre-primary stage. As the number of Pre-Primary Education institutions grew and their services expanded, the state moved to establish an institutional framework for overseeing the sector. In 1961, it established a dedicated department within the Ministry of Education, known as the Private Education Department, to regulate Pre-Primary Education institutions, monitor their performance, and oversee compliance with educational and administrative standards. This contributed to improving the quality of educational services provided to children and laid the foundations for institutional governance of the sector.

Alongside this institutional development, the legislative framework governing early education evolved progressively, reflecting growing official recognition of the importance of this stage. In 1977, Decree-Law No. (21) of 1977 concerning Private Schools and Pre-Primary Education was issued, establishing the legal foundation for regulating the sector. It was subsequently updated in 1985 to reflect changes in the education system. In 1998, Decree-Law No. (25) of 1998 concerning Private Educational and Training Institutions was issued, providing the legal framework for the regulation and oversight of the Pre-Primary Education sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Reflecting the growing emphasis on early education, a dedicated Pre-Primary Education Department was established in 2006.

The year 2021 marked a significant legislative development in the governance of the early education sector with the issuance of Decree-Law No. (23) of 2021 amending certain provisions of the Child Law promulgated by Law No. (37) of 2012. The amendment transferred oversight of nurseries to the Ministry of Education, making it responsible for overseeing all early childhood education and care institutions. As a result, the Kingdom of Bahrain became one of the first countries to place the early education sector across all age groups under the oversight of a single ministry, thereby promoting unified institutional governance and greater integration across care, development, and education.

The Kingdom of Bahrain continues to advance its early education ecosystem as a key pillar of national human capital development. Its efforts include modernizing legislation, strengthening quality and accreditation standards, enhancing the competencies of the teaching workforce, encouraging investment in early education institutions, and fostering public–private partnerships. Combined, these efforts aim to ensure safe and stimulating learning environments that respond to children's developmental characteristics and align with international standards and best practices in education and care during the early years.

Against this historical, institutional, and legislative backdrop, this report provides an integrated analysis of the status of early childhood education in the Kingdom of Bahrain through six interconnected themes covering the various dimensions of the ecosystem, including:

- Governance and Regulatory Frameworks, which define the policies and procedures that shape early childhood.
- Access and Participation, to ensure that all children have access to appropriate educational opportunities and supportive environments.
- Curricula and Educational Activities provided to children, and the extent to which they align with developmental needs and international standards.
- The Early Childhood Workforce, in terms of academic qualifications, continued professional development, and workforce stability.
- School Environments and Facilities that support children's development and learning, including learning spaces, equipment, and materials that support educational activities.
- The Role and Contribution of the Private Sector, alongside effective public–private partnership models for enhancing the quality of services provided to children.

Theme One: Governance and Regulatory Frameworks

This theme examines the governance system and regulatory frameworks for early childhood in the Kingdom of Bahrain, including the entities responsible for oversight, governing legislation and policies, oversight and monitoring mechanisms, quality indicators, and the education structure, as well as key national initiatives aimed at developing the sector and enhancing the quality of early childhood services.

1. Early Childhood Oversight Entities:

Based on the data provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire, oversight of early childhood rests with the Ministry of Education, through the Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department, which is responsible for regulating and overseeing early education institutions and monitoring their performance in accordance with the regulations and procedures in force in the Kingdom.

2. Legislative and Regulatory Framework:

Based on the data provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire, early childhood is governed by a legislative and regulatory framework that establishes the legal and regulatory basis for the operation of early education institutions and encompasses a range of relevant laws, frameworks, and regulatory guidelines. The response also indicated that these laws and regulations are periodically reviewed and updated to reflect emerging developments and the evolving needs of the sector. The key components of this framework are outlined below:

First: Legislation and Regulations Governing Early Childhood:

Early childhood in the Kingdom of Bahrain is governed by a range of laws, regulations, and regulatory frameworks. Key among these is Law No. (4) of 2026 Promulgating the Private Educational Institutions Law; Child Law No. (37) of 2012 and its Implementing Regulations; the Regulatory Framework for Independent Early Education Institutions; the Early Education Curriculum Framework; the National Framework for Vocational Training in Early Education Institutions; and the Pre-Primary Education Performance Review Guide. Together, these provide the legal and regulatory basis for the management of early education institutions and for ensuring the quality of their services.

Second: Updating Legislation and Regulations:

The laws and regulations governing early childhood in the Kingdom of Bahrain are periodically reviewed and updated to reflect legislative developments and the evolving needs of the early education sector. The Private Educational Institutions Law No. (4) of 2026 was issued on January 28, 2026. Regulatory frameworks are also updated every five years or as needed to respond to emerging developments, strengthen governance, and enhance the quality of the sector.

Bahrain's early childhood ecosystem is characterized by clear institutional governance, supported by a comprehensive legislative framework and mechanisms for periodic review and updating, thereby strengthening the quality of early education and supporting its continued and sustainable development.

3. Is there a national strategy specifically dedicated for regulating early childhood?

Based on the data provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire, early childhood is supported by several national strategies aimed at regulating and developing the sector, underpinned by a comprehensive vision for advancing children's rights and enhancing the quality of early education services. The response identified the following as key strategies:

First: The National Childhood Strategy, issued by the National Committee for Childhood, was developed through an extensive consultative process involving government entities, civil society organizations, parents, children, and staff from public and private schools. The strategy is structured around four key themes:

- The Right to Health and Survival.
- The Right to Education and Development of Capabilities.
- The Right to Protection.
- The Right to Participation and Non-Discrimination.

Second: The Ten-Year Strategic Plan for Early Education (2020–2030), issued by the Supreme Council for Education and Training, was developed in consultation with key stakeholders and informed by specialized studies examining the status of the early education sector. The plan covers five key areas:

- Regulatory Framework
- Curriculum Framework
- Training and Competency Development
- Quality in Early Education
- Access to Early Education

The data indicate that the Kingdom of Bahrain has adopted a strategic approach to advancing early childhood that combines the protection of children's rights with long-term planning through national strategies grounded in community participation and focused on the quality of early education, strengthening workforce competencies, and expanding access to early childhood services.

4. Oversight and Monitoring Mechanisms for Quality in Early Childhood:

Based on the data provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom has an integrated ecosystem for monitoring, overseeing, and assuring the quality of early education institutions. The system is implemented by specialized national entities with complementary roles encompassing assessment, regulatory oversight, and ongoing monitoring. This ecosystem is underpinned by institutional mechanisms designed to enhance the quality of educational services and ensure that institutions comply with the applicable laws and regulations, as follows:

A. Quality Monitoring and Assurance Mechanisms:

An institutional oversight and monitoring ecosystem is in place to ensure the quality of early education institutions. It is implemented by the Education and Training Quality Authority, an independent national body that reviews the performance of all early education institutions, including Pre-Primary Education institutions, against approved frameworks and standards. Review reports are published on the Authority's official website and identify areas of strength, opportunities for improvement, and measures to support institutions in enhancing their performance.

The Ministry of Education also employs a complementary oversight mechanism through the Early Education Institutions Inspection Committee, a ministerial committee responsible for overseeing and monitoring institutions to verify their compliance with the applicable laws and regulations. This is carried out through on-site inspections, the preparation of periodic and immediate reports, the documentation of observations and violations, and the implementation of necessary measures when required.

The Committee comprises (17) specialists from the Ministry of Education and reviews several key areas, including Safety and security and child protection; licensing procedures and related fees, activities, recruitment, and children's data; the educational process, care, and the supportive learning environment; special education and inclusive education; and buildings and facilities.

The monitoring process also draws on several performance indicators adopted by the Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department, including:

- Percentage of early education institutions complying with laws and regulations.
- Percentage of children enrolled in early education institutions.
- Percentage of early education institutions meeting quality standards.
- Percentage of qualified staff in the early education sector.

B. Frequency of Site Visits and Evaluations:

The data indicate that the Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department conducts regular on-site visits to early education institutions, with each institution visited twice a year. The frequency of visits may also be increased based on the findings of previous visits or the institution's need for additional support and follow-up, thereby ensuring continuity of oversight and enhance performance quality.

C. Areas of Oversight and Monitoring:

Oversight and monitoring mechanisms in early education institutions in the Kingdom of Bahrain cover all key aspects of educational and administrative operations, including teaching and administrative staff and support staff; curricula and learning activities; the learning environment and facilities within early education institutions; and safety, security, and child protection.

Oversight also extends to verifying institutions' compliance with the requirements and standards governing the sector and monitoring administrative and regulatory matters, such as fees, data, and operational procedures. It also includes monitoring the implementation of inclusive education in institutions providing special education services, thereby ensuring compliance with approved laws and regulations and the quality of services provided.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has adopted an integrated governance ecosystem for assuring the quality of early education, underpinned by multilevel institutional oversight, regular on-site visits, clear performance indicators, and comprehensive monitoring mechanisms. Together, these measures strengthen institutional quality, support continued improvement, and promote compliance with national standards.

C. Monitoring Indicators:

Based on the data provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire regarding monitoring indicators, the following findings are noted:

A. Indicators for Measuring Quality in Early Childhood:

The Kingdom of Bahrain has adopted a clear national framework for assessing the quality of early childhood, set out in the Pre-Primary Education Performance Review Guide issued by the Education and Training Quality Authority. The Guide establishes review requirements based on approved standards for assessing the quality of Pre-Primary Education performance across the Kingdom. The Guide also helps identify areas of strength and areas for improvement, leading to recommendations aimed at enhancing the quality of services and learning experiences provided to children.

The review framework follows a hierarchical structure comprising domains, standards, and indicators. The domains represent the main areas of performance assessment, the standards define the aspects to be assessed, and the indicators specify the detailed elements used to determine the level of performance.

The following table presents the key domains, standards, and indicators underpinning the Pre-Primary Education Performance Review Framework in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Table5 Pre-Primary Education Performance Review Framework in the Kingdom of Bahrain

Area	Standard	Indicator
Children Growth and Development	Children Social and Emotional Development	– Social Skills – Behavior and Care – Communications skills
	Children Physical Development	– Motor Skills – Health and Personal Care
	Meeting Special Needs	– Individualized Support
Child-Initiated Learning	Learning Domains	– Age-Appropriate Learning Experiences – Learning Environment Management
Leadership and Management	Curriculum Experiences	– Skills Acquisition – Progress Monitoring
	Leadership Effectiveness	– Planning and Development – Resource Management
	Family and Community Engagement	– Family Engagement – Community Partnership

The Kingdom of Bahrain has adopted a national institutional framework for assessing the quality of early childhood, built around clearly defined domains, standards, and performance indicators. This provides a consistent framework for assessing Pre-Primary Education institutions, identifying opportunities for improvement, and supporting the continued enhancement of early education services.

B. Using Monitoring and Assessment Results for Improvement and Development

Based on the data provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom adopts a continued improvement approach, using monitoring and assessment results to enhance performance and programs and strengthen the effectiveness of the quality assurance ecosystem in early childhood.

B. Education Structure for Early Childhood:

Based on the data provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire, Table (6) presents the early childhood education structure in accordance with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011), including the education levels, target age groups, availability and compulsory status of each level, and the official terminology used in the Kingdom. Table (6) presents the early childhood education structure in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

Table (6) presents the early childhood education structure in the Kingdom of Bahrain

International Level (ISCED)*	International Designation	Typical Age	Specified Age Range in the Kingdom of Bahrain	Level Availability (Available–Not Available)	Stage Compulsory Status (Compulsory–Non-Compulsory)	Level
ISCED 010	(ECEC 0–3)	Under 3 Years	Under 3 Years	Available	Non-Compulsory	Nursery
ISCED 020 – Year 1	(Pre-Primary 1)	3–4	3–4	Available	Non-Compulsory	Pre-Kg
ISCED 020 – Year 2	(Pre-Primary 2)	4–5	4–5	Available	Non-Compulsory	Kg1
ISCED 20 – Year 3	Advanced Pre-Primary Education	5–6	5–6	Available	Non-Compulsory	Kg2

* Note: This classification is based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) issued by UNESCO and is intended to assess the alignment of national education systems with the international standard in terms of age, the compulsory status of each stage, and the sequencing of pre-primary education stages.

Table (6) presents the early childhood education structure in the Kingdom of Bahrain in accordance with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011), showing how the national education stages align with international levels in terms of age, compulsory status, and educational progression.

The data indicate that all early childhood levels recognized under the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) are available in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The early childhood education structure begins with Early Childhood Education and Care (Nursery) for children under the age of three, followed by Pre-Primary Education, which comprises three levels: Pre-KG for children aged (3–4) years, KG1 for children aged (4–5) years, and KG2 for children aged (5–6) years.

The findings also show that the age ranges adopted in the Kingdom of Bahrain align with the typical ages specified in the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011), reflecting the alignment of the national education structure with international standards for the organization of early childhood education.

The data also indicate that all early childhood education levels in the Kingdom of Bahrain are non-compulsory, despite being available within the formal education structure. This provides children with opportunities to participate in early education without a legal requirement to do so before entering primary education.

C. National Initiatives and Policies on Governance and Regulatory Frameworks in Early Childhood:

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain reported that, alongside its legislative and regulatory frameworks and governance and oversight mechanisms, it has introduced several national initiatives aimed at advancing the early education sector, improving service quality, enhancing the efficiency of regulatory processes, and strengthening institutional governance. The following paragraphs highlight the key initiatives, objectives and outputs, and the extent to which they have contributed to advancing the early education ecosystem.

Initiative One: Development of Early Education Sector Services

The data indicate that, in 2024, the Ministry of Education, represented by the Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department, participated in the Kingdom of Bahrain's project to develop (500) government services. The project focused on reengineering business processes, improving the quality-of-service delivery, and streamlining proce-

dures for investors and early education institutions, thereby enhancing institutional efficiency.

This participation resulted in the development of (11) services for the early education sector, including the issuance, renewal, and cancellation of licenses; inclusion services for children with special needs; evening care; recruitment; and other related services, thereby accelerating the processing of transactions and streamlining procedures for beneficiaries.

The findings indicate that the initiative achieved its objectives of improving the quality of government services provided to the sector, making these services more accessible to beneficiaries, and enhancing the efficiency of administrative and regulatory procedures for early education institutions.

Initiative Two: Development of Regulatory Policies for the Early Education Sector

The data indicate that, in 2025, the Ministry of Education, represented by the Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department, implemented an initiative to develop regulatory policies for the early education sector. The initiative aimed to standardize procedures, strengthen governance, enhance institutional performance, and ensure that early education institutions operate within clear and approved regulatory frameworks.

The initiative resulted in the development of six regulatory policies covering the issuance and renewal of licenses, license transfers, inspection and oversight, recruitment, and events and activities. These policies helped clarify requirements and procedures and strengthen early education institutions' compliance with the regulations governing the sector.

The findings also indicate that the initiative contributed to strengthening institutional governance, enhancing regulatory effectiveness and transparency, and supporting the sustained quality of services provided across the early education sector.

Together, the two initiatives reflect the Kingdom of Bahrain's efforts to modernize the governance ecosystem for early education by advancing government services and regulatory policies in parallel, thereby improving procedural efficiency, enhancing institutional performance, and creating a more effective, transparent, and sustainable regulatory environment for the early education sector.

Theme Two: Access and Participation:

This theme examines the availability of early childhood services and equity in access across different population groups and geographical areas. It also highlights enrollment and retention rates in early childhood programs, reflecting the system's capacity to enroll and retain children. This theme provides a basis for understanding the level of inclusivity in early childhood and the extent to which it aligns with the principles of equal opportunity.

1. Enrollment Rates in Early Childhood:

Based on the data provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire, Table (7) presents the number of children enrolled in early childhood programs in the Kingdom of Bahrain during the 2024–2025 academic year, disaggregated by gender, school type, and geographical area:

Table (7) Number of Children Enrolled in Early Childhood Programs in the Kingdom of Bahrain During the 2025–2026 Academic Year, by Gender, School Type, and Geographical Area.

Variable		Type		School Type			Geography	
		Males	Females	Public	Private*	Global	City	Rural or Remote Areas (Villages, Outlying Areas, Small Settlements, etc.)
Children's Enrollment Rate*	Under 3 Years	40.8	40.8	-	-	-	✓	-
	3–6 Years							
Number of Schools	Under 3 Years	209		87	-	-	✓	-
	3–6 Years							
Number of Classes	Under 3 Years	1580		342	-	-	✓	-
	3–6 Years							

Table (7) presents early childhood data for the Kingdom of Bahrain for the 2025–2026 academic year across several key indicators: children's enrollment rate, number of schools, and number of classrooms, disaggregated by gender, school type, and geographical area.

The data indicate that the enrollment rate for children aged (3–6) years was (40.8%) for both males and females, indicating equal enrollment rates for both genders at this stage. The data also show that educational services for this age group are provided en-

tirely through private schools, which operate across all governorates of the Kingdom of Bahrain. Given the geographical characteristics of the Kingdom, which has no rural or remote areas, these schools serve all governorates, ensuring access to early education services across the country.

Based on the data provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire, Table (8) presents the number of children enrolled in early childhood programs during the 2024–2025 academic year:

Table (8) presents the number of children enrolled in early childhood programs during the 2024–2025 academic year.

International Level (ISCED)*	International Designation	Typical Age	Number of Students at Each Level for the 2024–2025 Academic Year	
			Males	Females
ISCED 010	(ECEC 0–3)	Under 3 Years	963	823
ISCED 020 – Year 1	(Pre-Primary 1)	3-4	3260	3055
ISCED 020 – Year 2	(Pre-Primary 2)	4-5	5510	5585
ISCED 20 – Year 3	Advanced Pre-Primary Education	5-6	7535	7183

* Note: This classification is based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) issued by UNESCO and is intended to assess the alignment of national education systems with the international standard in terms of age, the compulsory status of each stage, and the sequencing of pre-primary education stages.

Table (8) presents the number of children enrolled in early childhood programs in the Kingdom of Bahrain during the 2024–2025 academic year, by International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) level and gender.

The data show a progressive increase in enrollment as children advance in age and education level. At the Early Childhood Education and Care level (ISCED 010), serving children under the age of three, enrollment totaled (1,786) children, comprising (963) males and (823) females, making it the level with the lowest enrollment.

In the first year of Pre-Primary Education (3–4 years), enrollment increased to (6,315) children, comprising (3,260) males and (3,055) females, with a clear balance between male and female enrollment. This upward trend continued in the second year (4–5 years), with enrollment reaching (11,095) children, comprising (5,510) males and (5,585) females. This was the only level at which female enrollment slightly exceeded male enrollment.

Advanced Pre-Primary Education (5–6 years) recorded the highest enrollment, with a total of (14,718) children, comprising (7,535) males and (7,183) females. This reflects a high level of participation in early childhood programs during the stage immediately preceding entry into primary education.

The data show that enrollment in early childhood programs in the Kingdom of Bahrain increases progressively across education levels, reaching its highest level among children aged (5–6) years. The data also show close parity between the numbers of males and females across the different levels, reflecting similar enrollment patterns for both genders.

2. Program Retention and Continuity:

Based on the data provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire, more than (75%) of children remain enrolled in early childhood programs until they transition to primary education. This finding reflects the ability of early childhood programs to retain children throughout the early years, supporting continuity in learning and strengthening children's readiness for the transition to primary education. It also provides a positive indication of program effectiveness and sustained participation among children.

3. Inclusive Access (Equity in Admission):

The Kingdom of Bahrain reported in response to the questionnaire that it has no rural or remote areas in the conventional geographical sense, making early childhood education services accessible across all governorates. The data indicate that (296) early education institutions are distributed across the Kingdom, ensuring coverage of its various areas. This reflects equitable access to early childhood services and enables children to enroll without significant geographical disparities in provision. This finding is a positive indicator of the broad geographical coverage of early education institutions and their role in promoting equal opportunities for enrollment in early childhood programs across the Kingdom of Bahrain.

4. Mechanism for Children's Transition from Early Childhood to Grade One:

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain reported that it has a mechanism in place to support children's transition from early childhood to Grade One, cen-

tered on strengthening alignment between early education and primary education. This mechanism includes gradually increasing the amount of time children spend in early childhood programs and strengthening collaboration and coordination between the entities responsible for the two stages, thereby preparing children for a smooth transition to primary education.

The Ministry of Education also supports this transition by developing curricula and educational frameworks that respond to children's developmental characteristics and needs, and by adopting the Early Education Curriculum Framework to ensure continuity in learning and strengthen children's readiness for primary education. The framework was developed collaboratively by the Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department and primary education specialists from the Curriculum Policy and Development Department, helping to ensure curriculum alignment and continuity of learning experiences across the two stages.

Coordination also continues between the Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department and the education departments responsible for primary education to develop an integrated transition plan that facilitates children's progression between the two stages, supports continuity in learning, and promotes the best possible educational and developmental outcomes. These measures underscore the Kingdom of Bahrain's commitment to building a coherent educational pathway that begins in early childhood and prepares children to succeed in subsequent formal education.

5. Parent and Community Engagement:

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain reported that it places strong emphasis on strengthening parent and community engagement in early childhood programs through clear policies and regulatory frameworks that support partnerships with families and local communities, in line with early education quality requirements and best educational practices.

The data indicate that a formal policy and clear objectives are in place to encourage parent engagement in early childhood programs. The Pre-Primary Education Performance Review Guide issued by the Education and Training Quality Authority includes specific standards for assessing family engagement and community partnership by examining how effectively Pre-Primary Education institutions involve families in the educational process, strengthen engagement with the local community, and prepare children for life. Family engagement therefore constitutes one of the criteria used to assess the quality of early education institutions.

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain also reported that family guidance, awareness, and parent training programs are available. The Family Guidance Department at the Ministry of Social Development provides support to families through free awareness lectures and training workshops designed to equip and enable parents to support their children's learning and development at home. Policies are also in place requiring early education institutions to communicate regularly with parents to keep them informed of their children's progress. The Regulatory Framework for Early Education Institutions sets out communication mechanisms and requires parents to be informed of applicable regulations, procedures, and educational plans. It also emphasizes the establishment of parent councils and the inclusion of a clear communication policy in each institution's internal regulations, thereby ensuring clarity of roles and strengthening partnership among all parties.

The response also indicates that national policies promote partnerships between early education institutions and local communities by encouraging national initiatives, joint projects, workshops, and community programs, as well as institutional participation in health, social, and national initiatives in collaboration with various government entities.

The Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department further strengthened these efforts by organizing the First Early Childhood Care Forum in the Kingdom of Bahrain, bringing together representatives from the Ministry of Education, the National Committee for Childhood, international organizations, the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and early education institutions to exchange expertise and develop a shared vision for advancing the sector. The Forum helped reinforce the concept of effective partnership among early education institutions, families, and communities, supporting the quality of services provided to children and strengthening coordination among relevant stakeholders.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has adopted an institutional approach that strengthens partnerships among families, early education institutions, and communities through clear policies, family support programs, effective communication mechanisms, and community partnerships that contribute to improving the quality of early childhood services.

6. National Initiatives on Access and Participation:

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain reported a strong focus on increasing participation in early childhood programs through initiatives aimed at raising enrollment rates, particularly among children under the age of five. In 2020, the

Kingdom collaborated with a consulting firm to conduct a specialized study that assessed the current status of the sector and proposed several initiatives and policies to support increased enrollment. Awareness initiatives were also implemented in collaboration with the Family Guidance Department at the Ministry of Social Development, including workshops for parents aimed at raising awareness of the importance of early education and encouraging them to enroll their children in early childhood programs. These efforts reflect the Kingdom of Bahrain's commitment to expanding access to early childhood services by combining strategic planning with parent-focused awareness initiatives, thereby increasing awareness of the importance of early education and encouraging greater use of its services.

Theme Three: Curricula and Activities

This theme examines the curriculum and activities ecosystem in early childhood, including the curriculum philosophy and pedagogical approaches, the areas of educational content, and the extent to which the curriculum is comprehensive and integrated. It also examines the educational documents and guidelines that support curriculum implementation and their role in guiding classroom practices and enhancing the quality of education. The theme also addresses the educational values embedded in the curriculum and how they are integrated into learning activities, as well as activities that support children's development across different domains and the mechanisms used for developmental assessment and monitoring. Of good note, the theme aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how the various elements of the curriculum and activities are integrated and the extent to which they align with the objectives of early childhood.

1. Curriculum Philosophy and Orientation:

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain reported that its early childhood curriculum is grounded in a holistic educational vision that focuses on children's cognitive, linguistic, social, physical, and emotional development. This reflects a clearly defined educational philosophy that is formally adopted and documented in detail in the curriculum's governing documents. The findings also show that the curriculum adopts learning through play and active exploration as a core approach to learning. This approach is an integral part of the official curriculum and is detailed in its guidance documents. The findings also show that early childhood schools may adopt approved international curricula or internationally recognized educational models, provided they

comply with the applicable standards and regulations. This reflects the flexibility of the education system in drawing on international educational practices while maintaining the national regulatory framework.

2. Areas of harmonization and integration:

Based on the data provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire, the early childhood curriculum in the Kingdom adopts an integrated educational framework encompassing all key learning domains, including language, early mathematics, science, the arts, social skills, health, and physical development, supporting children's balanced development across all dimensions. The findings also show that the curriculum defines expected learning outcomes and developmental and educational objectives for each age group. It provides a detailed framework covering three age groups, ensuring that the content is aligned with children's developmental characteristics and needs at each stage. The findings also show that the curriculum incorporates diverse, integrated learning activities that connect different learning domains, promoting coherence across learning experiences and providing a holistic learning environment that supports children's balanced development and enables them to build knowledge and skills in an interconnected way.

The early childhood curriculum in the Kingdom of Bahrain is grounded in a holistic, child-centered educational philosophy that emphasizes learning through play and exploration within an approved and documented national framework. The curriculum also encompasses all key learning domains, defines developmentally appropriate learning outcomes and objectives for different age groups, and provides integrated learning activities that promote children's balanced development. It also reflects the flexibility of the education system by allowing the implementation of approved international curricula within national regulatory requirements, thereby balancing the preservation of the national educational identity with the adoption of international best practices in education.

3. Curriculum Document and Educational Guidelines:

Based on the data provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire, Bahrain has an officially approved national Pre-Primary Education curriculum document that applies to all early education institutions and sets out the learning content,

objectives, and expected skills for the different age groups at this stage. The findings also show that the curriculum document is supported by detailed teacher guides that provide clear, practical guidance for planning and implementing learning activities, together with examples and practical models that help ensure consistency in the quality of educational practices. The findings also show that the curriculum document presents a range of learning strategies and approaches, including learning through play, cooperative learning, and project-based learning, supported by practical guidance and examples that facilitate effective curriculum implementation within learning environments.

4. Curriculum Document Values:

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain reported that the Pre-Primary Education curriculum document identifies a set of core values appropriate to this age group, including respect, cooperation, responsibility, honesty, tolerance, empathy, and acceptance of others, taking into account children's developmental characteristics and needs at this stage. The response also indicated that these values are embedded across the different learning domains and reinforced through a range of learning experiences and daily activities. The findings also show that learning activities include structured, practical opportunities to reinforce these values in children's daily lives. A teacher guide also provides clear guidance on how to develop and embed these values in learning activities, thereby fostering positive values and behaviors in children.

> The early childhood curriculum in the Kingdom of Bahrain is underpinned by a national framework that brings together an official curriculum document, practical educational guidance, contemporary learning strategies, and an ecosystem of values embedded across all learning domains. This framework promotes consistency in the quality of curriculum implementation, supports teachers, and fosters children's balanced development and positive values.

5. Activities Supporting Child Development:

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain reported that early education institutions provide an integrated ecosystem of activities that support children's holistic development, with all key activities covered by the indicator available across these institutions. These include daily physical activities that support children's physical development

and health, alongside regular arts and creative activities that foster their creativity and skills.

The data also show that institutions place emphasis on developing children's language and communication skills through a range of language activities, including storytelling, conversations, and songs, thereby supporting their linguistic and cognitive development. Institutions also provide opportunities for learning in a variety of indoor and outdoor environments, enriching children's learning experiences and promoting learning through hands-on experience and exploration.

The data also indicate that activities are designed to reflect children's individual interests, abilities, and preferences, supporting child-centered learning and promoting balanced development across cognitive, physical, linguistic, social, and emotional domains.

6. Developmental Assessment and Monitoring:

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain reported that the early childhood assessment system uses developmentally appropriate assessment methods suited to children's characteristics at this stage, with systematic observation of children's performance serving as a primary tool for monitoring their development. The response also indicated that records and portfolios are used to monitor children's development and document their progress on an ongoing basis, providing accurate information on their development across different developmental domains. Equally important, the response also indicated that educational institutions provide parents with regular feedback on their children's progress and use assessment results to inform the planning of learning activities and improve educational practices, thereby enhancing the quality of learning and supporting children's holistic development.

> The data reflect the integrated nature of Bahrain's early childhood ecosystem, combining learning activities that support holistic development with an ongoing developmental assessment system based on observation, documentation, and feedback. Together, these elements support child-centered learning, enhance the quality of educational practices, and promote children's balanced development.

7. National Initiatives and Policies on Curricula and Activities in Early Childhood:

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain reported a strong focus on advancing early childhood curricula and activities through national initiatives and policies aimed at enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, strengthening integration across

curriculum components, and keeping pace with emerging educational and technological developments. In this context, the response highlighted the introduction of the Early Education Curriculum Framework, which serves as a national reference for guiding the curriculum's philosophy and components. It aims to promote consistency in educational practices, enhance the quality of learning, and support children's holistic development.

The response also demonstrated the capacity of early education institutions to adapt to changing circumstances and emergencies. During periods of crisis, the Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department helped activate distance learning arrangements, enabling early education institutions to continue delivering educational services in accordance with approved procedures and requirements.

The response also highlighted the emphasis early education institutions place on innovation and the use of modern technologies in teaching and learning through several innovative initiatives and educational pilots implemented in selected institutions. These include the use of holographic technology to deliver educational content interactively, as well as the creation of specialized sensory learning environments to support children, including those with special needs. These initiatives reflect an approach to integrating technology and innovation in ways that respond to children's developmental characteristics and needs, helping to enhance the quality of learning and promote opportunities for holistic development.

Theme Four: Early Childhood Workforce

This theme examines the early childhood workforce in terms of its size and distribution, professional characteristics, and academic qualifications, in addition to analyzing recruitment and hiring practices and suitability for the specific requirements of this stage. The theme also examines the professional development and professional licensing ecosystem as a key means of enhancing teacher competencies and ensuring the quality of educational performance. It also reviews regulations governing child–teacher ratios, reflecting standards for balancing workload with the requirements of care and education. The theme concludes by reviewing key national initiatives and policies aimed at developing the early childhood workforce and addressing teacher shortages, thereby strengthening the sector's readiness and enhancing the quality of its outcomes.

1. Workforce Statistics:

Based on the data provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire, Table (9) presents the distribution of the early childhood workforce by gender (male and female), school type, and geographical area:

Table 9Early Childhood Workforce Statistics in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Variable	Type		School Type			Geography	
	Males	Females	Public	Private*	Global	City	Rural or Remote
Number of Teachers	5	3052	-	Private	-	✓	
Number of Support Staff (e.g., Psychologists, Speech and Language Specialists, and Special Education Specialists)	-		-	Private	-		
Number of Administrative Staff	0	532		Private		✓	

The data in Table (9) indicate that the early childhood workforce is concentrated primarily in private schools and private early education institutions and comprises teachers, administrative staff, and support staff.

2. Recruitment and Hiring:

Based on the information provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire regarding recruitment and hiring in early childhood, the findings cover the standards and procedures governing the appointment of teaching staff, strategies for attracting qualified professionals, requirements for teacher selection, qualification, and professional development, as well as the qualifications required for principals of early childhood institutions, as follows:

First: Appointment of Teaching Staff Based on Clear and Transparent Criteria

Teaching staff in early education institutions in the Kingdom of Bahrain are appointed in accordance with the standards and requirements set out in Law No. (4) of 2026 Promulgating the Private Educational Institutions Law, thereby reinforcing compliance with the statutory requirements governing the appointment of teaching staff in these institutions.

Second: Senior Talent Acquisition Specialist

The relevant authorities have adopted policies and procedures aimed at attracting and retaining qualified professionals in early education institutions, thereby supporting the availability of a qualified workforce across the sector.

Third: Teacher Selection Based on Qualifications and Experience

Teachers are selected based on their academic qualifications and professional experience in early childhood, in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations. This helps ensure that they have the competencies needed to respond to children's developmental characteristics and meet the requirements of teaching and learning.

Fourth: Academic Qualifications and Professional Development of the Workforce

Specific academic qualification requirements apply to staff working in early childhood and vary by type of institution. Nursery staff are required to hold at least a General Secondary Education Certificate, while Pre-Primary Education staff must hold a Pre-Primary Education Training Program Certificate, a diploma in education, or a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. The Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department also implements a comprehensive annual training plan comprising training programs, workshops, and free awareness lectures delivered in partnership with national entities and the local community. The plan aims to strengthen staff competencies and update their professional knowledge in line with best educational practices. In addition, the Mohammed bin Jaber Al Ansari College of Teachers at the University of Bahrain offers a specialized training program for female early education teachers, supported by the Labour Fund (Tamkeen). Participants receive an accredited certificate upon completing the program requirements, further expanding opportunities for continued professional development in the sector.

Fifth: Qualifications of Early Childhood Institution Principals

The appointment of female principals of early education institutions is subject to specific academic and professional requirements that must be met at the time of appointment, ensuring that institutions are led by qualified professionals capable of effective management, leading improvement efforts, and meeting early education quality standards.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has an integrated ecosystem for managing the early childhood workforce, built on clear recruitment criteria, strategies for attracting qualified professionals, adherence to academic qualification requirements, and the provision of continued professional development programs. Together, these elements strengthen the quality and competencies of teaching staff and institutional leaders across early education institutions.

3. Professional Development and Professional Licensing:

Based on the information provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire regarding professional development and workforce regulation in early childhood, the findings cover opportunities for continued professional development, participation requirements, periodic professional development hours, professional licensing, and the regulation of teaching staff workloads, as follows:

First: Continued Professional Development Opportunities

Early education institutions in the Kingdom of Bahrain provide regular continued professional development opportunities through training programs designed to strengthen the competencies of teaching staff and develop their knowledge and skills in line with the requirements of early education and best educational practices.

Second: Mandatory Participation in Professional Development Programs

The findings indicate a clear emphasis on ensuring that staff in the early education sector obtain the required professional qualifications. The Ministry of Education requires staff to hold the qualifications necessary to work in the sector and has also established a recommended number of professional development training hours. This is supported by an annual training calendar featuring a range of programs and workshops designed to strengthen staff competencies and keep their professional knowledge and skills up to date.

Third: Periodic Professional Development Hours

No system is in place requiring female and male early childhood teachers to complete a specified number of professional development hours within a defined period, as there is no prescribed timeframe for the periodic renewal or completion of professional development hours.

Fourth: Implementation of the Professional Licensing System

A professional licensing system is in place to ensure the competency of female and male early childhood teachers, helping to enhance the quality of educational practices and ensure that teaching staff meet the professional standards required to practice the profession.

Fifth: Workload

The Kingdom of Bahrain applies clear regulatory standards for determining the workload of female teachers in early education institutions. The regulatory framework establishes specific child–teacher ratios based on children's age group and group size, thereby ensuring a safe learning environment that supports children's needs across different stages of development.

The data show that the permitted number of children per teacher varies by age, with lower child–teacher ratios for younger age groups that require more intensive care and supervision, increasing gradually as children grow older and their developmental needs change. For infants aged (2–15 months), the ratio ranges from one female teacher for

every 3–4 children. For subsequent age groups up to approximately three years, the ratio ranges from one female teacher for every 4–6 children, increasing to one female teacher for every 6–10 children for children aged two to under six years, depending on group size and age group.

These standards reflect consideration of children's developmental characteristics by aligning teacher workload with the level of care and supervision required at each age, thereby enhancing the quality of care and education and enables female teachers to provide each child with appropriate support and attention.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has a human resources management ecosystem for early childhood, built on clear and transparent recruitment criteria, strategies for attracting qualified professionals, and compliance with academic and professional qualification requirements. It also provides continued professional development programs, implements a professional licensing system, and regulates workloads according to children's age groups and child–teacher ratios. This ecosystem reflects a commitment to quality standards that strengthen workforce competencies and enhance the quality of care and education services in early childhood.

4. National Initiatives and Policies for Early Childhood Workforce Development:

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain reported that, as part of efforts to advance early childhood education, the Ministry of Education, through the Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department, has launched several initiatives aimed at developing the workforce and strengthening educational practices, in line with national legislation and Bahrain Economic Vision 2030. Key initiatives include the development of the National Professional Training Framework for Female Early Education Teachers, alongside the implementation of an annual training calendar in partnership with government, academic, and community entities, aimed at supporting the professional development of staff working in the sector. The following provides an overview of the key features of these two initiatives, including their objectives, the entities responsible for overseeing them, their key outputs, and the extent to which their objectives were achieved, as reported in the response.

Initiative One: Draft National Professional Training Framework for Female Teachers in the Early Education Sector

Implementing, Supervising, or Supporting Entity	**Ministry of Education – Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department**
Implementation Start Date	2025
Initiative Objectives	The National Professional Training Framework for Female Teachers in the Early Education Sector aims to regulate professional training requirements for female teachers in the sector, in line with the Ministry of Education's second strategic objective, (Empowering Human Resources and Enhancing Their Competencies), and to ensure high-quality education and care across the sector. The Framework also forms part of the Kingdom of Bahrain's efforts to achieve Bahrain Economic Vision 2030 by investing in early childhood and building sustainable human capital. It provides a structured approach to professional training requirements for female early education teachers in the Kingdom of Bahrain, ensuring alignment with Law No. (4) of 2026 Promulgating the Private Educational Institutions Law, the Child Law, and the related ministerial decisions.
Key Outputs and Outcomes:	The National Professional Training Framework for Female Teachers in the Early Education Sector has been finalized and published.
Objectives Achievement Level	Once implemented, the Framework will help ensure the quality of teaching staff and teaching and learning across early education institutions.

Initiative Two: Annual Training Calendar for Early Education Institutions

Implementing, Supervising, or Supporting Entity	**Ministry of Education – Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department, in collaboration with relevant government, academic, and community entities.**
Implementation Start Date	2025
Initiative Objectives	The Training Calendar aims to promote sustainable professional development for female staff in early education institutions through training programs and specialized workshops designed to strengthen the competencies of teaching and administrative staff, enhance educational practices, and keep pace with emerging developments and contemporary trends in early education, ultimately improving the quality of services provided to children and their families.
Key Outputs and Outcomes:	A comprehensive training calendar was developed and implemented in collaboration with several government, academic, and community entities, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, the Mohammed bin Jaber Al Ansari College of Teachers, the Education and Training Quality Authority, and several specialized entities. The training programs targeted female staff in early education institutions as well as parents, covering a range of educational, health, social, and professional development topics aimed at increasing awareness and knowledge and strengthening the professional competencies of the target groups.
Objectives Achievement Level	The Training Calendar supported efforts to strengthen the professional capacities of staff in early education institutions, foster partnerships with relevant entities, and raise awareness among parents, thereby enhancing the quality of early education and strengthening collaboration among educational institutions, families, and communities.

Theme Five: Learning Environments and Facilities

This theme examines the school environment and physical facilities in early childhood institutions in the Kingdom of Bahrain, focusing on several aspects related to the quality of the learning environment and its readiness to support children's learning and holistic development. This includes the overall school environment, the physical environment of nursery and Pre-Primary Education classrooms, educational facilities and classroom equipment, the organization of learning areas within classrooms, as well as health and medical facilities and the applicable safety and security standards. The theme also reviews key national efforts and initiatives aimed at developing and improving school environments and facilities in early childhood.

1. School Environment:

Based on the information provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire regarding the learning environment in early childhood institutions, the findings address the availability of safe and appropriate learning environments for children, the provision and equipment of play areas, and the regulatory frameworks and procedures for monitoring institutions' compliance with approved requirements and standards, as follows:

First: Provision of a Safe and Appropriate Learning Environment

The Regulatory Framework for Early Education Institutions requires all early education institutions in the Kingdom of Bahrain to provide a safe and appropriate learning environment for children, encompassing educational facilities, learning spaces, and daily activities, thereby creating an environment that supports children's development and learning. Regulatory measures are also being taken against institutions that fail to comply with these requirements.

Second: Availability of Safe and Well-Equipped Play Areas

The Regulatory Framework for Early Education Institutions requires the provision of safe and well-equipped play areas where children can engage safely in free play and physical activities. The provision of these play areas is a core requirement of the Regulatory Framework. Institutions are subject to ongoing monitoring and assessment, with regulatory action taken against those that fail to comply with the approved requirements and standards.

All early education institutions in the Kingdom of Bahrain are required to provide a safe learning environment and well-equipped play areas in accordance with the Regulatory Framework. Ongoing oversight and regulatory measures are in place to ensure full compliance with the prescribed requirements, thereby enhancing children's safety and the quality of the learning environment.

2. Physical Environment of Nursery and Pre-Primary Education Classrooms:

Based on the requirements for the physical environment set out in the Regulatory Framework for Independent Early Education Institutions (2024), several requirements are specified regarding the space allocated per child, the number of children per classroom, and the essential facilities and components of the learning environment in nurseries and Pre-Primary Education institutions, as follows:

First: Classroom Space per Child (Nursery – Under 3 Years)

The Regulatory Framework requires a minimum of 3 m² of classroom space per child in nurseries, allowing children sufficient freedom of movement and space, ensuring a safe environment suited to their needs at this age.

Second: Classroom Space per Child (Pre-Primary Education – 3 to Under 6 Years)

The Regulatory Framework sets a minimum classroom space of 1.5 m² per child in Pre-Primary Education, supporting the optimal use of the learning environment while maintaining safety and learning quality standards.

Third: Number of Children per Classroom (Nursery – Under 3 Years)

The Regulatory Framework indicates that nursery classroom capacity varies by age group, with group sizes ranging from 6 to 20 children and specific child–teacher ratios established for each age group to ensure high-quality care and supervision.

Fourth: Number of Children per Classroom (Pre-Primary Education – 3 to Under 6 Years)

The Regulatory Framework sets group sizes in Pre-Primary Education at between 12 and 30 children, depending on the age group, with specific child–teacher ratios applied to ensure an appropriate balance between class size and the quality of education and care.

Fifth: Learning Environment and Classroom Equipment

The Regulatory Framework makes clear that the physical environment of early education institutions extends beyond classroom space and the number of children to include

appropriate furniture and equipment, diverse learning areas, and educational play environments. It also addresses safety requirements, lighting, ventilation, and interior finishes, helping to create a stimulating environment that supports children's learning and holistic development. The Framework also includes dedicated sections on standards for buildings, equipment, and learning areas to ensure that these requirements are implemented across all institutions.

The Kingdom of Bahrain applies clear regulatory standards for the physical environment of early education institutions, including minimum space requirements per child, classroom group sizes linked to child–teacher ratios, and the provision of an integrated learning environment with appropriate furniture, learning areas, and play environments, in accordance with the safety and quality standards set out in the Regulatory Framework for Early Education Institutions.

3. Educational Facilities:

Based on the information provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire regarding educational facilities and equipment in early childhood institutions, the findings address the availability of educational facilities and learning resources, furniture and equipment appropriate for children and staff, and the related regulatory requirements, as follows:

The Regulatory Framework for Early Education Institutions requires all early education institutions in the Kingdom of Bahrain to provide comprehensive educational facilities, including a library equipped with age-appropriate books and stories that support the development of children's reading and language skills and enhance their cognitive development. Institutions also provide computers and appropriate digital learning resources to support teaching and learning and develop children's digital and technological skills within a learning environment that keeps pace with emerging educational developments. These requirements form part of the standards set out in the Regulatory Framework for Early Education Institutions and are subject to ongoing monitoring and oversight, with regulatory action taken against institutions that fail to comply.

The Regulatory Framework also requires all early education institutions to provide appropriate furniture and educational equipment, including chairs and tables suited to children's ages and developmental needs, as well as dedicated tables and chairs for female teachers and other staff to support the effective delivery of learning activities.

Institutions also provide cabinets and storage units for the safe and organized storage of educational materials and resources, in accordance with the requirements set out in the Regulatory Framework. Oversight measures are in place to ensure compliance with these standards across all institutions.

4. Organization of Classroom Learning Areas:

Based on the information provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire, drawing on the Regulatory Framework for Independent Early Education Institutions (2024), the Framework requires learning rooms to include several learning areas that support a diverse range of learning experiences and activities for children while addressing their developmental characteristics and educational needs. The Regulatory Framework includes a dedicated section setting out the learning areas required within learning rooms, recognizing them as a core component of the learning environment in early education institutions. The key learning areas include:

- Building and Blocks Area: To develop logical thinking, creativity, planning, problem-solving, and fine motor skills through building and construction activities.
- Home Corner (Role Play and Imaginative Play): To develop social, language, and communication skills and foster imagination and self-expression through role play.
- Computer Corner: To develop children's foundational digital skills and their ability to use educational technologies in age- and ability-appropriate ways.
- Reading Area and Children's Library: To encourage early reading, develop children's language and vocabulary, and foster a love of books.
- Cognitive Games Area: To develop perceptual skills, classification and matching skills, visual–motor coordination, and logical thinking.
- Art Area: To foster creativity and artistic expression through drawing, coloring, modeling, and working with a variety of materials.
- Writing Area: To develop writing readiness and strengthen the language and fine motor skills needed for written expression.
- Listening and Music Area: To develop listening skills, auditory discrimination, musical appreciation, and a sense of rhythm.
- Discovery Area: To foster curiosity, scientific thinking, and exploration through a variety of learning activities and hands-on experiences.

The Regulatory Framework for Early Education Institutions in the Kingdom of Bahrain emphasizes the importance of organizing integrated learning areas within classrooms, encompassing language, science, art, physical activity, and technology. Together, these areas create a rich learning environment that supports independent learning, fosters children's development across multiple domains, and promotes learning through play, exploration, and experimentation.

5. Health and Hygiene Facilities:

Based on the information provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire, drawing on the Regulatory Framework for Independent Early Education Institutions (2024), all independent early education institutions in the Kingdom are required to provide comprehensive, safe health and hygiene facilities. These requirements include providing toilets and handwashing facilities appropriate to children's ages and numbers, equipped with water, soap, and hand-drying facilities, as well as safe drinking water fit for consumption. They also require effective hygiene and waste management procedures to safeguard children's health and reduce the risk of infection transmission. The Framework also requires facilities to be kept clean at all times. Institutions are subject to regular monitoring, with regulatory action taken against those that fail to comply with the approved requirements and standards.

6. Medical Facilities and First Aid:

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain reported that the Regulatory Framework requires all early education institutions to provide health care and first aid facilities and services in accordance with the requirements set out. These requirements include a designated first aid room or area equipped with essential supplies, maintaining children's health records, and providing the necessary equipment to respond to emergencies and minor injuries. They also include monitoring children's health in collaboration with parents and the relevant health authorities. The Framework also emphasizes the importance of training staff in first aid and preventive procedures to ensure a prompt response to medical emergencies within the institution.

7. Safety and Security Standards:

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain reported that the Regulatory Framework requires all early education institutions in the Kingdom to comply with the

prescribed safety and security standards and requirements. These standards include providing a safe learning environment, implementing child protection policies, preventing unauthorized access to areas where children are present, installing surveillance cameras across institutional facilities, and establishing clear procedures for reporting and managing incidents. They also require evacuation and emergency plans, staff training in safety procedures and first aid, and ongoing monitoring and oversight by the Ministry of Education, with regulatory action taken against non-compliant institutions.

The Regulatory Framework for Early Education Institutions in the Kingdom of Bahrain establishes a comprehensive ecosystem for health and hygiene facilities, health care, and safety and security. It sets out detailed requirements for hygiene, health, first aid, child protection, risk management, and emergency preparedness. These requirements apply to all institutions, which are subject to ongoing oversight to ensure compliance with quality standards and safeguard children's safety.

8. National Initiatives and Policies for Developing and Improving Early Childhood School Environments and Facilities:

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain reported that 2024 marked a comprehensive advancement of the early childhood learning environment ecosystem through the adoption of two complementary national documents: the Regulatory Framework for Independent Early Education Institutions and the Early Education Curriculum Framework. Together, these documents serve as the national reference for developing learning environments and facilities across all early education institutions. Together, these frameworks have supported several national initiatives and policies, most notably:

- The development and adoption of the Regulatory Framework for Independent Early Education Institutions, which established unified national standards for buildings, facilities, and learning environments. It sets out detailed requirements for classroom space, play areas, health and hygiene facilities, furniture, lighting and ventilation, capacity, learning areas, toys and learning materials, as well as safety and security standards and mechanisms for monitoring, oversight, and compliance, thereby supporting the provision of safe and stimulating learning environments for all children.
- The development and adoption of the Early Education Curriculum Framework, which recognizes the learning environment as a core component of curriculum im-

plementation and calls for safe, flexible, and stimulating learning environments that respond to children's developmental characteristics and support learning through play and exploration. It also promotes the effective use of learning areas, educational media, digital technologies, and appropriate learning resources to support children's cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development.

- The standardization of learning environment quality standards across all early education institutions by linking the issuance and renewal of licenses to full compliance with requirements for buildings, facilities, safety and security, and learning environment quality, supported by regular inspection and oversight visits to ensure continued compliance with these standards.
- The promotion of active learning environments through dedicated learning areas within classrooms and the provision of educational toys, diverse learning materials, classroom libraries, educational media, and age-appropriate digital technologies, thereby supporting independent learning, creativity, and the development of twenty-first-century skills.

The development of safe, healthy, and sustainable learning environments through specific requirements for health and hygiene facilities, safe drinking water, first aid, child protection policies, surveillance cameras, emergency plans, and safety and security procedures, helping to create learning environments that provide children with the highest standards of care and protection.

Theme Six: Private Sector

This theme examines investment in early childhood in the Kingdom of Bahrain by analyzing the extent of private sector participation in the provision of early education services, the proportion of children enrolled in private provision compared with the public sector, and annual fee levels as an indicator of cost and accessibility. The theme also examines the institutional and regulatory framework governing the sector, including mechanisms for licensing, monitoring, oversight, and quality assurance across early education institutions. It also highlights partnerships between early education institutions and government and community entities and their role in supporting the quality of educational, health, and activity-based services provided to children. It also presents key national initiatives and policies aimed at strengthening investment in the sector, particularly awareness programs that contribute to raising public awareness of the importance of early education and encouraging private sector participation in its expansion.

1. Level of Private Sector Investment in Early Childhood:

The Kingdom of Bahrain's response to the questionnaire indicated the following:

- Annual investment in the nursery sector (under 3 years) is not defined by a fixed aggregate amount; rather, it varies according to the number of new investors entering the sector each year. Under the approved regulatory requirements, an investor seeking to establish a nursery must provide capital of at least (10,000) Bahraini dinars to obtain a license. This represents the minimum investment required to establish the institution.
- Similarly, the level of investment in Pre-Primary Education (3–6 years) depends on the number of new investors entering the sector each year. Under the applicable regulations, an investor seeking to establish a Pre-Primary Education institution must provide capital of at least (30,000) Bahraini dinars to obtain a license. This higher minimum capital requirement compared with nurseries reflects differences in operational requirements, facilities and equipment, and capacity.

2. Partnerships in Early Childhood:

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain reported that partnerships are in place between early education institutions and government, academic, and community entities. These partnerships encompass the development of educational and health programs and learning activities, support for the learning environment, and the implementation of joint initiatives addressing the needs of children in early childhood. According to the response, these partnerships are in place in more than (75%) of nurseries serving children under the age of (3) and cover several areas related to care and learning.

For Pre-Primary Education (3–6 years), the response indicated that institutional partnerships are in place across all Pre-Primary Education institutions (100%), covering several areas, including the development of educational and health programs and learning activities, as well as collaboration with relevant entities in delivering early education services.

The data reflect the broad reach of institutional partnerships across Bahrain's early education sector, encompassing most nurseries and all Pre-Primary Education institutions. These partnerships contribute to the development of educational and health programs and learning activities and enhance the quality of the learning environment through ongoing collaboration with government, academic, and community entities.

3. Student Enrollment in the Private Sector Compared with the Public Sector:

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain reported that early education services are provided through private sector institutions, with (100%) of children enrolled in these institutions. This reflects the central role of the private sector in providing early education services. All private institutions are subject to the applicable laws and regulations and to ongoing oversight and monitoring by the Ministry of Education, helping to ensure safe learning environments and uphold quality standards in the care and education services provided to children.

4. Average Annual Fees per Student in the Private Sector:

In response to the questionnaire, the Kingdom of Bahrain reported differences in average annual fees between nurseries and Pre-Primary Education institutions in the private early education sector. Average annual fees in nurseries (under 3 years) were approximately (1,607) Bahraini dinars per child, higher than the average for Pre-Primary Education, where annual fees for children aged (3–6) years averaged approximately (745) Bahraini dinars per child.

The data indicate that the authority responsible for overseeing early childhood in the Kingdom of Bahrain does not set a maximum limit on tuition fees.

5. Licensing, Monitoring, and Oversight Mechanisms for Early Childhood in Private and International Schools:

Based on the information provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire regarding the licensing and monitoring of early education institutions, the Kingdom has an integrated ecosystem for licensing and monitoring these institutions, overseen by the Ministry of Education through the Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department in accordance with the Regulatory Framework for Independent Early Education Institutions. This ecosystem is designed to ensure that institutions meet all legal, regulatory, and technical requirements before a license is issued and to monitor their continued compliance with quality and safety standards once they begin operating. The licensing and monitoring process comprises the following stages:

First: License Application Stage

The licensing process begins with the electronic submission of an application through the Commercial Registration System and completion of all regulatory requirements.

These include proof of financial capacity, legal documents, the institution's internal regulations, architectural plans for the premises, ownership or incorporation documents, and other documentation required by the Ministry to assess the institution's readiness and compliance with regulatory requirements.

Second: Technical Review and Approval Stage

The Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department reviews the application from both administrative and technical perspectives and either grants preliminary approval or rejects the application. It also reviews the proposed curriculum, inspects the premises, and prepares a technical report setting out any required observations and corrective actions. The institution's budget and capacity are also reviewed to ensure compliance with the approved standards before the licensing process can proceed.

Third: Issuance of the Ministerial Decision and Final License

Once all requirements have been met, the application file is submitted to the relevant authorities within the Ministry of Education for approval of the ministerial decision establishing the institution. The procedures for issuing the bank guarantee and registration certificate are then completed, after which the institution is granted its final license. Licenses are valid for two years for nurseries and three years for Pre-Primary Education institutions, after which they must be renewed in accordance with the applicable requirements.

Fourth: Ongoing Monitoring and Oversight:

The licensing ecosystem extends beyond the initial approval process to include ongoing monitoring and oversight through regular visits and technical inspections, monitoring compliance with regulatory, educational, health, and safety and security standards, documenting violations and issuing warnings where necessary, and verifying the implementation of corrective actions before license renewal. This helps maintain the quality of services provided to children and ensures sustained compliance with national requirements.

The Kingdom of Bahrain adopts an integrated ecosystem for licensing and monitoring early education institutions. The process begins with an assessment of each institution's legal, technical, and financial aspects, proceeds through technical approvals and the issuance of the ministerial decision, and culminates in ongoing oversight and inspection to ensure compliance with quality and safety and security standards and support the continued provision of high-quality educational services for children.

6. National Initiatives and Policies Supporting Private Sector Investment in Pre-Primary Education:

Based on the information provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire, the early education sector has seen several national initiatives and legislative developments aimed at strengthening governance, modernizing legal and regulatory frameworks, regulating education and care services, and supporting private sector participation in the provision of early education services. These initiatives have focused on unifying oversight and regulation across the sector, introducing updated legislation governing private educational institutions, and strengthening partnerships with the private sector to advance early education. The following highlights the key initiatives, their objectives and outputs, and the extent to which they have contributed to advancing the early education sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain:

Initiative One: Law No. (4) of 2026 Promulgating the Private Educational Institutions Law

Implementing, Supervising, or Supporting Entity	Ministry of Education – Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department
Implementation Start Date	2026
Initiative Objectives	Reflecting the Kingdom of Bahrain's strong commitment to the early education sector, existing legislation governing early education was reviewed and updated to keep pace with national and international developments in the field. Decree-Law No. (23) of 2021 was issued to amend certain provisions of the Child Law promulgated by Law No. (37) of 2012, thereby contributing to the unification and consolidation of oversight and regulation of the early education sector under a single authority. This, in turn, prompted the modernization of the legislative framework governing private educational institutions, culminating in the issuance of Law No. (4) of 2026 Promulgating the Private Educational Institutions Law, which supports the effective regulation of private educational institutions and the continued development of the educational services they provide.
Key Outputs and Outcomes	Issuance of Law No. (4) of 2026 Promulgating the Private Educational Institutions Law.
Objectives Achievement Level	– Increase in Investment in Early Education Institutions. – Reduction in the Rate of Violations in Early Education Institutions.

Initiative Two: Consolidation of Early Education Sector Oversight and Regulation under a Single Authority – the Ministry of Education

Implementing, Supervising, or Supporting Entity	**Ministry of Education – Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department**
Implementation Start Date	2021
Initiative Objectives	In light of the growing emphasis on early education and efforts to strengthen governance and oversight across its institutions, Decree-Law No. (23) of 2021 amending certain provisions of the Child Law promulgated by Law No. (37) of 2012 transferred responsibility for overseeing nurseries to the Ministry of Education. This was intended to consolidate oversight and regulation of the early education sector across all age groups under a single authority.
Key Outputs and Outcomes:	Consolidating oversight of the early education sector contributed to the development of unified legislative and regulatory frameworks, the alignment of regulatory and oversight arrangements, and greater integration in the delivery of education and care services to children. It also enabled the establishment of integrated early education institutions licensed to provide both nursery and Pre-Primary Education services.
Objectives Achievement Level	Today, at least (14) integrated institutions serve children from two months of age until school entry, supporting continuity and a smooth transition between nursery and Pre-Primary Education.

Initiative Three: Government Land Investment Platform

Implementing, Supervising, or Supporting Entity	**Ministry of Finance and National Economy**
Implementation Start Date	2022
Initiative Objectives	The Government Land Investment Platform initiative falls under the Economic Recovery Plan priority of streamlining commercial procedures and enhancing their effectiveness. It aims to strengthen public–private partnerships, stimulate investment in government-owned land, and accelerate the implementation of development projects for the benefit of citizens and residents of the Kingdom.
Key Outputs and Outcomes	Launch of the Government Land Investment Platform, which shows government-owned land available for investment and provides prospective investors with comprehensive information on these opportunities through a unified platform. The Platform provides an innovative means of streamlining investment procedures for government-owned land and strengthening the mechanisms and governance governing such investments. Through a single, transparent platform, it connects investors with government-owned properties and the entities responsible for them, provides prospective investors with equitable access to information on available government land, supports private sector participation in the delivery of government services, and helps attract high-quality investment.
Objectives Achievement Level	These initiatives have supported the Ministry of Education's efforts to advance early education, enhance the quality of learning environments, and promote investment in the sector, with the Platform offering at least four land plots for investment

Conclusion: Key National Initiatives for Advancing Early Childhood in the Kingdom of Bahrain

Based on the information provided by the Kingdom of Bahrain in response to the questionnaire, and in addition to the initiatives discussed under the preceding themes, the Kingdom has implemented several national initiatives aimed at advancing the early education ecosystem across multiple areas. These include curriculum development, enhancing the quality of institutional performance, supporting innovative educational practices, and expanding the participation of early education institutions in local and international initiatives. These initiatives support the Kingdom's efforts to adopt best educational practices, provide an integrated learning environment that promotes children's holistic development, and foster a culture of quality and continued improvement in line with Bahrain's national priorities. The following highlights the key initiatives, their objectives and outputs, and the extent to which they have contributed to advancing the early education sector:

Initiative One: General Framework for Pre-Primary Education Performance Review

Implementing, Supervising, or Supporting Entity	**Ministry of Education – Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department – Education and Training Quality Authority**
Implementation Start Date	2025
Initiative Objectives	The General Framework for Pre-Primary Education Performance Review was developed by the Education and Training Quality Authority in accordance with Decrees No. (83) of 2012 and No. (74) of 2016. It provides a comprehensive reference framework for assessing the performance of early education institutions and evaluating the quality of their educational services against clearly defined standards and indicators. The Framework provides a comprehensive basis for assessment, informed by international best practices in early education and centered on child-initiated learning through play. This approach supports children's holistic development within a safe, stimulating, and nurturing learning environment. The Framework also focuses on several key areas, including Children's Growth and Development, Child-Initiated Learning, and Leadership and Management, supporting improvements in institutional and educational quality across Pre-Primary Education institutions.
Key Outputs and Outcomes:	The implementation of the General Framework for Pre-Primary Education Performance Review has supported regular review visits to early education institutions and the publication of clear assessment reports, helping to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement and promote continued improvement across early education institutions.
Objectives Achievement Level	At least (22) institutions were reviewed during the first phase, with review reports issued and published on the official website of the Education and Training Quality Authority. This supports improvements in the performance of Pre-Primary Education institutions and enhances the quality of the educational services they provide.

Initiative Two: Early Education Curriculum Framework

Implementing, Supervising, or Supporting Entity	**Ministry of Education – Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department – Curriculum Policy and Development Department**
Implementation Start Date	2024
Initiative Objectives	The Early Education Curriculum Framework was issued as a national reference document designed to promote a consistent educational approach across early education institutions, enhance the quality of educational practices, and provide integrated learning experiences that support children's holistic development in line with local and international best practices. The Framework also enables educational institutions to develop curricula and educational programs that respond to children's developmental characteristics and needs, supporting effective and sustainable learning outcomes.
Key Outputs and Outcomes:	The Framework provides a unified national reference for early education institutions, supporting the development of curricula and educational practices and enhancing the quality of educational services provided to children in line with national and international trends in early education.
Objectives Achievement Level	The introduction of the Framework established a unified national reference for educational approaches across early education institutions, supporting the development of educational practices and promoting children's holistic development.

Initiative Three: Pre-Primary Education Initiatives

Implementing, Supervising, or Supporting Entity	**Ministry of Education – Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department**
Implementation Start Date	Throughout the Academic Year
Initiative Objectives	The Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department seeks to strengthen the participation of Pre-Primary Education institutions in local and international initiatives and programs aimed at enhancing the quality of early education and fostering a culture of innovation, sustainability, health, talent development, and scouting, thereby contributing to integrated learning environments that support children's holistic development. These initiatives include participation in the UNESCO Associated Schools Network, the Greening Education Partnership, the Technology-Incubating Pre-Primary Education Program, Health-Promoting Pre-Primary Education, a database for gifted children, and the Scouting Movement (Sparrows; romanized AL-ASAFEER). Together, they strengthen the participation of early education institutions in specialized programs and support the development of educational practices in line with leading local and international standards.
Key Outputs and Outcomes:	Key outputs included the participation of Pre-Primary Education institutions in a range of local and international programs and initiatives, as well as the activation of partnerships with relevant entities in the areas of sustainability, health, technology, talent development, and scouting, thereby supporting the development of educational services provided to children.
Objectives Achievement Level	These initiatives have supported the Ministry of Education's efforts to advance early education by expanding the participation of Pre-Primary Education institutions in relevant local and international initiatives and programs in the areas of sustainability, health, technology, talent development, and scouting.

3

State of Kuwait



Introduction:

Education in the State of Kuwait is a fundamental pillar of modern nation-building. Its development has been closely linked to the social, economic, and political transformations the country has undergone, particularly following the discovery of oil and the use of its revenues to develop national human capital. The State has placed strong emphasis on education as a key driver of sustainable human development and has worked to advance its education ecosystem in an integrated manner.

Education in Kuwait began in 1887 with the establishment of traditional kuttab schools (locally Romanized as AL-KATATIB), where children were taught reading, writing, and the Quran. Formal schooling was subsequently introduced, with Al-Mubarakiya School, established in 1911, becoming Kuwait's first formal school and laying the foundation for the country's education system. Education then developed significantly, with schools for boys and girls expanding across all areas of Kuwait. In 1936, education came under state oversight through the Council of Education. Following Kuwait's independence in 1961 and the subsequent establishment of government ministries, responsibility for education was transferred to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education oversees all matters and processes relating to public education in Kuwait through a centralized regulatory structure, establishing the regulations and decisions that govern the sector. The education departments under the Ministry across the six areas-Al Asimah, Hawalli, Farwaniya, Jahra, Ahmadi, and Mubarak Al-Kabeer-are responsible for implementing policies and monitoring performance (Kuwait, Ministry of Education, 2026c).

The educational philosophy of Kuwait's Ministry of Education is centered on addressing learners' physiological, cognitive, psychological, and social needs and responding to their individual characteristics and stage of development. It seeks to equip learners with essential skills and knowledge, as well as positive educational attitudes and values, while enriching their personal development and fostering their abilities and potential through the advancement of learning strategies. Within this framework, public education aims to provide appropriate opportunities for learners to achieve holistic and integrated spiritual, intellectual, social, psychological, and physical development to the fullest extent of their abilities and potential. It seeks to balance learners' self-fulfillment with their contribution to society, while responding to the demands of the contemporary world and the needs of social and economic development, and at the same time preserving the cultural identity of society.

Regarding Kuwait's education structure, the Ministry of Education oversees public education (pre-university education), which comprises twelve years of schooling in addition to Pre-Primary Education and includes the following stages: Pre-Primary Education – Primary Education – Intermediate Education – Secondary Education. Following its restructuring in the 2004–2005 academic year, Kuwait's education structure has followed the system outlined below: Two academic years of Pre-Primary Education, (5) years of Primary Education, (4) years of Intermediate Education, and (3) years of Secondary Education. Compulsory education spans nine years, covering Primary and Intermediate Education only. (Kuwait, Ministry of Education, 2025).

Early childhood holds particular importance in the State of Kuwait as the foundation for the development of an individual's personality, contributing to the formation of core values, attitudes, and skills. As a result, it has received increasing attention in Kuwait's contemporary education policies. Education at this stage has undergone significant development over several phases, which, together with their key characteristics, are outlined below:

1. The Foundation Phase, characterized primarily by: The establishment of a limited number of Pre-Primary Education institutions, reliance on traditional curricula, and a shortage of qualified staff.
2. The Expansion Phase, characterized by: An increase in the number of public Pre-Primary Education institutions, the introduction of more advanced educational curricula, and the training and qualification of female teachers.
3. The Quality Enhancement Phase, characterized primarily by: The restructuring and modernization of the stage's ecosystems, the introduction of active learning approaches, and the enhancement of learning environments in Pre-Primary Education institutions.
4. The Quality and Innovation Phase, characterized by the following: The development of child-centered curricula, the integration of technology into early learning, an emphasis on learning through exploration and play, and the adoption of international early childhood standards.

The early childhood ecosystem in the State of Kuwait is characterized by a distinct regulatory structure that separates provision into two categories: Nurseries and Pre-Primary Education, with the latter constituting the first stage of formal education. This structure is consistent with many advanced education systems that distinguish between Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education. This distinction may allow for the development of policies tailored to each category. Nurseries typically focus on care and

the holistic development of children under the age of four, while Pre-Primary Education focuses on developing school readiness, language, numeracy, social, and emotional skills, and laying the foundations for lifelong learning.

Building on the preceding discussion, the following section examines early childhood in the State of Kuwait across the report's six themes, providing a comprehensive analysis of its current status and development priorities.

- **Governance and Regulatory Frameworks**, which define the policies and procedures affecting early childhood.
- **Access and Participation**, to ensure that all children have access to appropriate educational opportunities and supportive environments.
- **Curricula and Educational Activities** provided to children, and the extent to which they align with developmental needs and international standards.
- **Early Childhood Workforce**, in terms of academic qualifications, continued professional development, and professional stability.
- **School Environment and Facilities** that support children's development and learning, including learning spaces, equipment, and materials that support educational activities.
- **Private Sector Role and Contribution**, alongside effective models of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in enhancing the quality of services provided to children.

Theme One: Governance and Regulatory Frameworks

1. Early Childhood Oversight Entities:

Based on the information provided by the State of Kuwait in response to the questionnaire regarding the authorities responsible for oversight and regulation in early childhood, supervisory and regulatory responsibilities are distributed among several government entities according to the two stages encompassed by early childhood-nurseries and Pre-Primary Education-as follows:

First: Early Childhood Care:

These are institutions that serve children before they reach the age of entry into Pre-Primary Education.

Oversight is provided by: The **Ministry of Social Affairs, Family Affairs and Childhood**, as the authority responsible for licensing, regulation, and administrative oversight,

with other regulatory and oversight entities involved within their respective areas of responsibility, as follows: These include the **Ministry of Health**, which oversees health and preventive requirements; municipal authorities, which oversee building requirements; and the **Kuwait Fire Force**, which approves safety and security requirements.

In recent years, the Kuwaiti government has strengthened oversight of nurseries by establishing joint inspection teams, intensifying inspection campaigns targeting unlicensed nurseries, and reorganizing licensing and oversight procedures to improve quality and enhance children's safety.

Second: Pre-Primary Education

Pre-Primary Education, by contrast, constitutes the first stage of formal education in the State of Kuwait and falls entirely under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, which is responsible for the following: Formulating education policies, developing curricula and educational programs, appointing teaching and administrative staff, providing technical supervision, monitoring and assessment, supporting professional development, planning the expansion of Pre-Primary Education provision, and providing educational data and statistics.

Pre-Primary Education is administered within the organizational structure of the Ministry of Education's Public Education Sector. The General Technical Supervision Department for Pre-Primary Education provides technical and educational oversight of public Pre-Primary Education institutions, while the relevant private education authorities monitor private Pre-Primary Education institutions in accordance with the applicable regulations.

Kuwait's early childhood education ecosystem is characterized by a multi-governance model, in which responsibility for this stage does not rest with a single government entity. Instead, regulatory, technical, and oversight responsibilities are distributed among several ministries and government institutions according to their respective mandates. This model reflects the distinctive nature of early childhood as a stage that encompasses educational, health, social, and psychological dimensions, requiring effective institutional coordination among the relevant entities to ensure the quality of services provided to children.

The General Technical Supervision Department for Pre-Primary Education serves as the technical arm responsible for ensuring the quality of teaching and learning in Pre-Primary Education, improving teaching practices, overseeing curriculum implementation, and assessing the professional performance of female teachers.

2. Legislative and Regulatory Framework:

Regarding legislative and regulatory frameworks, the State of Kuwait reported in response to the questionnaire that regulations governing early childhood education are in place and are periodically reviewed and updated. The response also indicated that a recent national strategy addressing the organization of early childhood was developed as part of the "Kuwaiti Curriculum Development Strategy 2025–2026," linking early childhood with the other stages of education. According to the response, this strategy provides a reference framework that aligns the objectives of the different education stages with Kuwait's national development priorities.

3. Oversight and Monitoring Mechanisms for Quality in Early Childhood:

Kuwait's responses under the Governance and Regulatory Frameworks theme indicate that formal, structured mechanisms are in place for monitoring and oversight to assess and ensure the quality of early childhood provision. These mechanisms include field visits, periodic reporting, and the use of performance indicators. Field visits and assessment activities are conducted more than five times a year. These mechanisms are used to monitor and assess all aspects related to the learning environment and educational processes, most notably the following: Teaching and administrative staff and assistants; curricula and learning activities; the learning environment and school facilities and equipment; and safety, security, and child protection.

4. Monitoring Indicators:

Regarding indicators for measuring the quality of early childhood, the State of Kuwait reported in response to the questionnaire that specific indicators are in place to monitor several aspects related to education quality, learning outcomes, and stakeholder satisfaction. The response also indicated that several mechanisms are used to monitor these indicators, most notably regular supervisory visits, classroom observation forms, analysis of teachers' plans, review of portfolios, supervisors' reports, professional development meetings, and analysis of children's developmental assessment results, alongside monitoring institutional performance indicators. The response also indicated that the Technical Supervision Department for Pre-Primary Education uses monitoring and assessment results to improve programs and practices related to educational performance.

> Monitoring indicators are used to assess the quality of processes and practices across Pre-Primary Education facilities and support their continued improvement.

5. Education Structure for Early Childhood:

Based on the information provided by the State of Kuwait in response to the questionnaire, Table (10) presents the early childhood education structure in the State of Kuwait:

Table (10) Early Childhood Education Structure in the State of Kuwait.

International Level (ISCED)*	International Designation	Typical Age	Specified Age Range for Each Level	Availability of the Level in the Country (Available / Not Available)	Stage Compulsory Status (Compulsory–Non-Compulsory)	Level
ISCED 010	(ECEC 0–3)	Under 3 Years	Under 3 Years	Available – Private Nurseries	Non-Mandatory	Nursery
ISCED 020 – Year 1	(Pre-Primary 1)	3–4	3–4	Public Pre-Primary Education Institution	Non-Mandatory	Level 1
ISCED 020 – Year 2	(Pre-Primary 2)	4–5	4–5	Public Pre-Primary Education Institution	Non-Mandatory	Level 2
ISCED 20 – Year 3	Advanced Pre-Primary Education	5–6	-----	-----	-----	No Third Level

* Note: This classification is based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) issued by UNESCO and is intended to assess the alignment of national education systems with the international standard in terms of age, the compulsory status of each stage, and the sequencing of pre-primary education stages.

Table (10) shows that Kuwait's early childhood education structure aligns with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). The first stage (ISCED 010) comprises Early Childhood Care for children under the age of three, followed by Pre-Primary Education (ISCED 020), of which two of the three levels are available. These two levels serve children aged 3–5 years and comprise Level One and Level Two, while Level Three is not available.

Early childhood is classified as non-compulsory across all available levels in the State of Kuwait, encompassing both Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education. This reflects an approach focused on expanding access to early childhood services without making participation legally compulsory, while providing structured educational pathways that serve the age groups covered by this stage. The education structure also demonstrates alignment between the national classification and the international classification, with the exception of the third year of Pre-Primary Education. This facilitates alignment with international standards governing early childhood and enables comparison with other education systems.

6. National Initiatives and Policies on Governance and Regulatory Frameworks in Early Childhood:

Based on the information provided by the State of Kuwait in response to the questionnaire, the Pre-Primary Education Curriculum Development Initiative is implemented under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, represented by the General Technical Supervision Department for Pre-Primary Education, in coordination with the Curriculum and Research Department and other relevant entities. The initiative forms part of broader efforts related to the governance and regulatory frameworks for early childhood and aims to develop the Pre-Primary Education curriculum in line with educational approaches centered on experiential learning and integration across learning domains, while also establishing consistent educational and regulatory reference frameworks for this stage.

Initiative Objective

- Developing learning outcomes and connecting them to children's everyday lives.
- Strengthening national identity and values.
- Keeping pace with digital transformation and integrating modern technologies into teaching and learning.
- Ensuring alignment between the Teacher Guide and the Child's Workbook.

Geographical Scope of Implementation: All public Pre-Primary Education institutions in the State of Kuwait.

Entities Covered: The General Technical Supervision Department for Pre-Primary Education, the Curriculum and Research Department, Education Area Departments, and educational supervisory bodies.

Theme Two: Access and Participation

This theme examines the availability of early childhood services and equitable access to them across different population groups and geographical areas in the State of Kuwait. It also examines enrollment and retention rates to assess the ecosystem's capacity to enroll and retain children in early childhood programs. This theme is important for understanding the level of inclusiveness in early childhood and the extent to which provision aligns with the principles of equal opportunity for children at this stage.

1. Enrollment Rates in Early Childhood

Based on the information provided by the State of Kuwait in response to the questionnaire, Table (11) presents the number of children enrolled in early childhood programs in the State of Kuwait during the 2025–2026 academic year, disaggregated by gender, school type, and geographical area:

Table (11) Number of Children Enrolled in Early Childhood Programs in the State of Kuwait During the 2025–2026 Academic Year, by Gender, School Type, and Geographical Area.

Variable		Type		School Type			Geography	
		Males	Females	Public	Private*	Global	City	Rural or Remote Areas (Villages, Outlying Areas, Small Settlements, etc.)
Children's Enrollment Rate*	Under 3 Years	----	----	----	----	----	----	----
	3–6 Years	----	----	✓	----	----	✓	----
Number of Schools	Under 3 Years	----	----	-----	----	----	-----	----
	3–6 Years	215 Mixed-Gender Pre-Primary Education Institution		✓	----	----	✓	----
Number of Classes	Under 3 Years	----	----	----	----	----	------	----
	3–6 Years	2,050 – Mixed-Gender		✓	----	----	✓	----

Table (11) shows the following:

In terms of the institutional structure of educational provision for early childhood (3–6 years), the State of Kuwait has (215) public Pre-Primary Education institutions distributed across the various education areas, with a total of (2,050) mixed-gender classrooms. This broad distribution reflects the education system's capacity to provide public educational facilities that meet demand for enrollment in Pre-Primary Education.

In terms of geographical distribution, the data presented in the table indicate that early childhood programs at the Pre-Primary Education stage in the State of Kuwait are concentrated in urban areas. No data are available on their distribution in rural or remote areas, which may indicate geographical disparities in the distribution of early education institutions and programs between urban and rural areas.

Data on early childhood enrollment rates in the State of Kuwait were not available. Such data would provide important insights into the extent to which the education system meets educational needs at this stage by comparing the total number of children within the official age range for early childhood-whether enrolled or not-with the number of children enrolled in early childhood programs.

Based on the information provided by the State of Kuwait in response to the questionnaire, Table (12) presents the number of children enrolled in early childhood programs in the State of Kuwait during the 2025–2026 academic year, disaggregated by gender, school type, and geographical area:

Table (12)12

International Level (ISCED)*	International Designation	Typical Age	Number of Students at Each Level for the 2025–2026 Academic Year	
			Males	Females
ISCED 010	Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) (0–3 Years)	Under 3 Years	Private Institutions Only	
ISCED 020 – Year 1	(Pre-Primary 1)	3–4	18.000	18.800
ISCED 20 – Year 2	(Pre-Primary 2)	4–5	19.300	18.200
ISCED 20 – Year 3	Advanced Pre-Primary Education	5–6	No Third Year	

* Note: This classification is based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) issued by UNESCO and is intended to assess the alignment of national education systems with the international standard in terms of age, the compulsory status of each stage, and the sequencing of pre-primary education stages.

Table (12) shows that a total of (74,300) children aged 3–5 years were enrolled in early childhood programs in the State of Kuwait during the 2025–2026 academic year, comprising (37,300) males and (37,000) females. These figures indicate close parity in enrollment between males and females, with a slightly higher number of males, reflecting broadly balanced enrollment patterns between the two genders at this stage.

At the Pre-Primary Education level (ISCED 020 – Year 1), serving children aged 3–4 years, enrollment totaled (36,800) children, comprising (18,000) males and (18,800) females. These figures indicate close parity in enrollment between males and females, with a slightly higher number of females than males.

At the Pre-Primary Education level (ISCED 020 – Year 2), serving children aged 4–5 years, enrollment totaled (37,500) children, comprising (19,300) males and (18,200)

females. These figures indicate close parity in enrollment between males and females, with a slightly higher number of males than females.

The data show that enrollment is concentrated in Pre-Primary Education Years (1) and (2), which together account for all children enrolled in Pre-Primary Education programs in the State of Kuwait. The data also show close parity between male and female enrollment across both education levels at this stage.

The available data do not provide details on the number of children enrolled in nurseries (Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), 0–3 years), serving children under the age of three, but indicate that these services are provided exclusively through private institutions. The table also indicates that Advanced Pre-Primary Education (ISCED 020 – Year 3) is not offered within Pre-Primary Education in the State of Kuwait.

2. Program Retention and Continuity

The data indicate a high level of retention in early childhood programs in Kuwait through the transition to Primary Education, with more than 75% of children remaining enrolled in these programs until they transition to Primary Education. This indicates a high level of retention at this stage, sustained participation in early childhood programs, and a smoother transition to Primary Education.

3. Inclusive Access (Equity in Admission)

Regarding inclusive and equitable access to enrollment, the State of Kuwait reported in response to the questionnaire that the proportion of children with access to early childhood programs in rural and remote areas ranges from 50% to less than 75%. This proportion indicates scope for expanding access to early childhood services in these areas, thereby promoting greater geographical equity and equal opportunities to participate in early childhood education.

4. Mechanism for Children's Transition from Early Childhood to Grade One

The State of Kuwait reported in response to the questionnaire that a mechanism is in place to support children's transition from early childhood to Grade One. It includes several structured transition practices, such as gradually increasing the amount of time children spend in early childhood programs and strengthening collaboration and coordination between early childhood and Primary Education. These practices help prepare children for the transition to Primary Education and support their adjustment to the new learning environment.

5. Parent and Community Engagement

The State of Kuwait reported in response to the questionnaire that regulatory frameworks are in place to support parent and community engagement in early childhood programs. The regulations governing nurseries and Pre-Primary Education include provisions aimed at strengthening parents' role and encouraging their participation in nursery and Pre-Primary Education activities. These practices indicate that family engagement is incorporated into the regulatory framework governing early childhood programs in the State of Kuwait.

Education policies in Kuwait place considerable emphasis on strengthening the role of families and communities in supporting children's learning in early childhood. This approach is embedded in the regulatory frameworks issued by the Ministry of Education, which emphasize the importance of engaging parents in educational activities. This engagement takes several forms, most notably: Engaging parents in school events and activities and maintaining clear policies for regular communication with families regarding children's progress. Regarding the availability of family guidance and awareness programs, the data indicate that programs are provided for families covering health, education, national awareness, and other areas, with the aim of supporting children's learning at home and strengthening the role of families in the educational process.

Regarding policies for communication with parents, the response confirmed that policies are in place requiring early childhood institutions to communicate regularly with parents about their children's progress, thereby sustaining the partnership and educational communication between families and educational institutions. Regarding partnerships with local communities, national policies generally encourage and strengthen collaboration between early childhood institutions and their local communities, helping to integrate efforts that support children's development and learning.

6. National Initiatives on Access and Participation

The State of Kuwait reported in response to the questionnaire that national initiatives are in place to enhance access and participation in early childhood, with a focus on expanding opportunities for enrollment in Pre-Primary Education and broadening children's access to its services. In this context, the "Enhancing Access to Pre-Primary Education and Increasing Enrollment Rates" initiative was identified as one of the key initiatives related to this theme. Its key features, objectives, and scope of implementation are outlined below.

Initiative Name: Enhancing Access to Pre-Primary Education and Increasing Enrollment Rates

The Ministry of Education, through the Technical Supervision Department for Pre-Primary Education, developed and oversaw the implementation of the (Enhancing Access to Pre-Primary Education and Increasing Enrollment Rates) initiative. The initiative aims to increase children's enrollment in Pre-Primary Education by expanding the number of institutions, streamlining enrollment procedures, and raising parents' awareness of the importance of early education. Key outcomes of the initiative include increased enrollment rates and improved access to early education. The initiative uses clear and well-defined monitoring mechanisms, including periodic statistical reports and field visits.

Kuwait's efforts under the Participation and Access theme, including the "Enhancing Access to Pre-Primary Education and Increasing Enrollment Rates" initiative, reflect the State's commitment to expanding children's opportunities to participate in early childhood education, recognizing the critical role of this stage in laying the foundations for their holistic development and future growth.

Theme Three: Curricula and Activities

Based on the information provided by the State of Kuwait in response to the questionnaire, the Curriculum and Activities theme examines several aspects of the early childhood curriculum, including its philosophy and educational approaches, learning domains and content, developmental and educational objectives and outcomes, as well as the nature of learning activities and how they are organized and integrated. The findings related to these aspects are presented below:

1. Curriculum Philosophy and Orientation

The response indicated that Kuwait's early childhood curriculum is grounded in an integrated educational framework centered on children's holistic development, extending beyond cognitive development to encompass linguistic, social, emotional, and physical development. This approach reflects a strong understanding of the distinctive nature of this developmental stage, which requires a holistic educational approach responsive to children's diverse needs. This philosophy is clearly and comprehensively documented in the national curriculum documents and has been formally adopted as mandatory across all public educational institutions, helping to establish a unified educational vision and ensure consistency in educational practices across different learning environments.

In terms of educational approaches, the curriculum explicitly adopts active learning strategies, particularly learning through play and exploration-based learning, in line with international best practices in early childhood education. These approaches are translated into classroom practices that enable children to interact with their environment and construct knowledge through direct experience, thereby fostering thinking skills, problem-solving, and intellectual curiosity.

The response also indicated variation in the extent to which international curricula or educational models may be implemented. Private and international schools are permitted to adopt international curricula or educational models, while public schools are required to implement the national curriculum. This reflects a balance between preserving national identity and drawing on international educational experience.

2. Areas of harmonization and integration

The response indicated that Kuwait's early childhood curriculum encompasses six learning domains: Language and Communication; Early Mathematics; Science and Exploration; Arts and Creative Expression; Social Skills; and Health and Physical Development, covering a range of areas related to children's learning and development at this stage.

Regarding developmental and educational objectives, the response indicated that the curriculum defines developmental and educational outcomes and objectives for two main age groups, providing a reference framework for organizing children's learning experiences according to their age group.

The response also indicated that learning activities are designed to connect different learning domains through themes or projects that integrate areas such as language, mathematics, the arts, and science within coherent learning contexts and activities.

3. Curriculum Document and Educational Guidelines

Regarding the curriculum document and educational guidance, the State of Kuwait reported in response to the questionnaire that an approved national early childhood curriculum document is implemented nationwide and includes components covering learning content, expected skills, and classroom practices related to curriculum implementation.

The response also indicated that teacher guides are available, providing practical guidance, examples, and models that help translate educational objectives into implementable learning activities. These guides also outline a range of learning and teaching strategies and approaches, including learning through play, cooperative learning, and project-based

learning, together with practical guidance on their implementation in the classroom. These findings indicate a clear alignment between the curriculum document and the teacher guides, providing a reference framework for organizing curriculum implementation and supporting educational practices in early childhood in the State of Kuwait.

4. Curriculum Document Values

Based on the information provided by the State of Kuwait in response to the questionnaire regarding the integration of values into the curriculum, the findings reflect an emphasis on incorporating core values appropriate to children at this stage and embedding them within the structure of the Pre-Primary Education curriculum. The curriculum clearly and comprehensively identifies core values appropriate to the children at this stage and aligned with the intended educational and developmental outcomes for their age group. This reflects a national educational approach that seeks to embed an integrated set of educational values, achieving a careful balance between developing knowledge, nurturing emotional development, and shaping positive behavior among children in early childhood.

The State of Kuwait also reported in response to the questionnaire that these values are not taught as standalone units or separate topics but are embedded across the various learning domains, making them an integral part of children's everyday learning experiences. They are embedded in language learning, early mathematics, and science exploration, reflected in arts and social activities, and extended across the domains of health and physical development. This curricular integration not only reinforces the presence of these values but also creates a rich learning environment in which children can experience them repeatedly in varied contexts, thereby helping to embed and instill them through meaningful, lived experiences rather than abstract instruction.

At the implementation level, the response indicated that the curriculum places particular emphasis on creating authentic, structured learning situations that bring values to life in contexts familiar to children. Learning activities are designed to provide regular opportunities for children to put these values into practice in meaningful, real-life situations. In this way, values move beyond theoretical knowledge to become part of children's everyday behavior. Children learn to apply these values in their daily interactions and draw on them when making decisions, thereby strengthening their capacity for positive social adjustment and for building balanced relationships with others.

In the same context, the State of Kuwait reported in response to the questionnaire that the Teacher Guide plays a central role in supporting this approach by providing a struc-

tured and integrated framework that explains how values can be developed and embedded within learning situations. The Guide equips teachers with effective educational tools and strategies that help standardize practices and reduce disparities across different learning environments, thereby promoting greater consistency and quality in curriculum implementation.

Based on the overall findings reported by the State of Kuwait in response to the questionnaire regarding the integration of values into the curriculum, it can be concluded that the curriculum adopts a holistic educational approach to values development, grounded in the integration of planning and implementation and in internal coherence across the various curriculum components, supported by a professional support system that strengthens teacher competencies. This integrated approach can contribute to the development of well-rounded children with a strong awareness of values that equips them for positive engagement in society from the early years of education.

5. Activities Supporting Child Development

The State of Kuwait reported in response to the questionnaire that children are provided with a diverse range of learning activities, including daily physical activities that promote physical health, arts and creative activities that foster self-expression, and rich language activities incorporating stories, conversations, and songs.

The response also indicated that educational programs provide opportunities for learning across diverse indoor and outdoor environments, promoting exploration-based learning and broadening children's experiences. This approach reflects the adoption of a child-centered educational model that supports children's holistic development, places them at the heart of the learning process, and promotes their active participation.

6. Developmental Assessment and Monitoring

The State of Kuwait reported in response to the questionnaire that the developmental assessment and monitoring ecosystem for children in early childhood uses developmentally appropriate assessment practices and focuses on continuously monitoring children's progress. Systematic observation is one of the primary assessment methods used, with children's performance observed and documented in natural learning contexts.

The response also indicated that portfolios are used to document children's development over time, enabling their progress across different developmental domains to be monitored. The response also indicated that parents receive regular feedback and that assessment results are used to inform educational planning and adapt activities to children's needs.

7. National Initiatives and Policies on Curricula and Activities in Early Childhood

Based on the information provided by the State of Kuwait in response to the questionnaire regarding the development of early childhood curricula and activities, the Ministry of Education, represented by the General Technical Supervision Department for Pre-Primary Education, launched the "Pre-Primary Education Curriculum Development Initiative (2025–2026)." The initiative aims to develop the philosophy and curriculum of Pre-Primary Education based on experiential learning and integration across learning domains.

The response also indicated that the initiative produced several key outputs, including a Teacher Guide, learning workbooks for children, and educational activities designed to support different aspects of children's development. The response also indicated that implementation of the initiative is monitored through several mechanisms, including field piloting, technical visits, and periodic reports, enabling implementation to be tracked and evaluated and the findings to inform further development. The findings reported in the response also included aspects related to the development of learning content and the promotion of interactive learning within learning environments.

The findings indicate that the curriculum and activities system for early childhood in the State of Kuwait is underpinned by a national framework, practical guidance, and educational approaches that structure learning domains, activities, and educational practices. The findings also highlight areas for further development, including drawing on international models and experiences and expanding the use of innovative practices in the design of learning activities, thereby enhancing the learning experiences provided to children.

Theme Four: Early Childhood Workforce

The Workforce theme represents a core pillar in assessing the quality of early childhood ecosystems, as the competencies of teachers and administrators are directly linked to the quality of learning experiences provided to children and the extent to which educational and developmental objectives are achieved. This theme examines the size and characteristics of the workforce, mechanisms for its recruitment, qualification, and professional development, as well as the regulatory frameworks governing its work.

1. Workforce Statistics

Based on the State of Kuwait's response to the questionnaire, Table (13) presents the early childhood workforce, disaggregated by gender (male and female), school type, and geographical area:

Table13 Early Childhood Workforce Statistics in the State of Kuwait.

Variable	Type		School Type			Geography	
	Males	Females	Public	Private*	Global	City	Rural or Remote
Number of Teachers	----	7.170	✓	----	----	----	----
Number of Support Staff (e.g., Psychologists, Speech and Language Specialists, and Special Education Specialists)	----	----	----	----	----	----	----
Number of Administrative Staff	----	----	----	----	----	----	----

The data presented in Table (13) indicate that (7,170) female teachers work in public Pre-Primary Education institutions in the State of Kuwait, reflecting the strong presence of women in the teaching workforce at this stage, in line with its nature and educational requirements.

The data also reveal gaps in information on the number of staff working in private Pre-Primary Education institutions, as well as detailed data on certain other workforce categories, including specialized support staff such as psychologists, speech and language specialists, and special education specialists, in addition to administrative staff. Data are unavailable on their numbers, geographical distribution, and distribution by school type. This indicates an information gap that may affect the accuracy of planning and decision-making in this area.

In terms of academic qualifications, female teachers include those holding a bachelor's degree in education with a specialization in early education, as well as those holding postgraduate degrees in the same field. This range of qualifications reflects a strong level of academic preparation and a specialized knowledge base that supports high-quality educational practices in the classroom.

2. Recruitment and Hiring

Based on the information provided by the State of Kuwait in response to the questionnaire regarding recruitment and hiring in early childhood, the findings address the standards governing the appointment of teaching staff, mechanisms for attracting qualified

professionals, academic and professional qualification requirements for staff working at this stage, and the qualifications required for leaders of educational institutions. **The key findings are presented below:**

The appointment of teaching staff in early childhood in Kuwait is governed by clear and well-defined criteria that take into account the distinctive characteristics of this stage and children's developmental needs. This reflects the existence of a regulatory framework that contributes to ensuring the selection of female teachers who possess the required professional and educational competencies, thereby positively contributing to the quality of educational practices and learning environments.

However, the data indicate that policies for attracting qualified professionals are generally applied across the different stages of education, without sufficient specialization for early childhood. This presents a challenge, given the specialized skills required at this stage in working with young children, facilitating learning through play, and providing developmentally appropriate guidance. The absence of targeted recruitment strategies may limit the ability to attract highly qualified professionals with the competencies required for this field.

On the other hand, specialized academic qualifications in early childhood are mandatory for teaching at this stage, reflecting an institutional approach that places strong emphasis on specialized professional preparation. School principals are also required to hold relevant educational qualifications, such as a diploma in education or a bachelor's degree in early childhood, with a compliance rate exceeding 90%. This helps strengthen the effectiveness of educational leadership within educational institutions.

3. Professional Development and Professional Licensing

Regarding the professional development of early childhood teachers, the State of Kuwait reported in response to the questionnaire that specialized training programs are provided regularly to develop the professional competencies required for this stage. The response also indicated that participation in professional development programs is mandatory, with a minimum number of required training hours and coverage exceeding 90% of female teachers.

Regarding the organization of professional development, the response indicated that there is no periodic system requiring female and male teachers to complete a specified number of professional development hours over defined multi-year cycles, such as completing a set number of hours within a period of several years.

Regarding professional licensing, the response indicated that no professional licensing system is currently applied to early childhood teachers in the State of Kuwait.
Regarding workload, the response indicated that there are no explicit standards setting a maximum number of children per female teacher. Instead, average class size is used as one of the indicators for regulating the number of children.

The early childhood workforce system in the State of Kuwait is built on clear regulatory foundations, particularly with regard to academic qualifications and mandatory professional development. However, several challenges remain to be addressed, most notably: The lack of specialized strategies for attracting professionals with specialized early childhood expertise; the need to enhance the effectiveness of professional licensing to support workforce development and motivation; and the need for more precise standards to regulate workload. Addressing these areas would help strengthen workforce quality and improve educational outcomes at this critical stage.

Theme Five: Learning Environments and Facilities

1. School Environment

Based on the information provided by the State of Kuwait in response to the questionnaire regarding the school environment in early childhood, the findings address several aspects related to the availability of safe and appropriate learning environments, designated spaces for play and physical activities, and the extent to which these are available across early childhood institutions.

The response indicated that safe and appropriate school environments, including play areas and open spaces, are available in all schools or in more than 90% of them, providing children with spaces for learning activities, physical activities, and play.

The response also indicated that safe and well-equipped play areas are available in all schools or in more than 90% of them, providing children with opportunities to engage in physical activities and free play within the school environment.

2. Physical Environment of Nursery and Pre-Primary Education Classrooms

Based on the information provided by the State of Kuwait in response to the questionnaire regarding the physical environment of early childhood classrooms, the data cover several regulatory requirements related to the design of classroom environments for

children aged 3–6 years. The response indicated that regulatory standards are in place governing the classroom space allocated per child and the number of children per classroom, as follows:

- Classroom Space per Child (3–6 Years)
- The data show that the space allocated per child ranges from 3.8 m² to less than 4 m², indicating a level of classroom space that is consistent with the educational and physical activity requirements of this age group.
- Acceptable Number of Children per Classroom (3–6 Years)

The response indicated that the number of children per classroom ranges from 20 to 25. This indicates a generally acceptable level of regulation, although ongoing monitoring is needed to maintain the quality of individual teacher–child interactions.

3. Educational Facilities

Based on the information provided by the State of Kuwait in response to the questionnaire regarding educational facilities and equipment in early childhood, the findings address the availability of facilities, resources, and equipment that support teaching and learning, including libraries, digital learning resources, classroom furniture and equipment, and storage units for learning materials. The response indicated that these facilities and resources are available in all schools or in more than 90% of them, as follows:

- **Availability of Libraries and Digital Learning Resources:** The response indicated that all schools, or more than 90% of them, provide small classroom libraries with age-appropriate books, alongside digital learning resources and computers. The availability of these resources enables the use of a diverse range of learning materials and resources in the activities provided to children.
- **Availability of Appropriate Furniture and Equipment:** The response indicated that appropriate classroom furniture and equipment are available in all schools or in more than 90% of them, including chairs and tables designed to suit children's characteristics, dedicated furniture and equipment for teachers, and storage units for the safe and organized storage of learning materials and resources.

Overall, these findings indicate the availability of a range of facilities, equipment, and learning resources associated with early childhood classroom environments in the State of Kuwait, including print and digital learning resources, classroom furniture and equipment, and dedicated storage units for learning materials and resources.

4. Organization of Classroom Learning Areas

Based on the information provided by the State of Kuwait in response to the questionnaire regarding the organization of the classroom environment in early childhood, classrooms include learning areas organized to provide children with opportunities to engage in a variety of learning activities and experiences. The response indicated that schools are required to provide these learning areas as an integral component of the classroom environment that supports independent learning. Learning areas also provide children with opportunities to interact with learning materials and resources and engage in exploration and learning through hands-on experience and active participation.

5. Health and Hygiene Facilities:

The State of Kuwait reported in response to the questionnaire that, with regard to health and hygiene facilities in early childhood schools, a range of facilities and services supporting children's health and the cleanliness of the school environment are available in all schools or in more than 90% of them. These facilities and services include clean, child-appropriate toilets; handwashing facilities supplied with water and soap; safe, potable drinking water; and appropriate waste disposal facilities.

These findings indicate that essential health and hygiene facilities and services are available in early childhood schools, providing children with a school environment that supports personal hygiene and public health requirements and promotes healthy daily practices within the learning environment.

6. Health Care and First Aid Facilities

The State of Kuwait reported in response to the questionnaire that a range of health care services and facilities are available in all early childhood schools or in more than 90% of them. These services include clinics or first aid rooms equipped to manage illnesses and minor injuries, as well as equipment for monitoring children's physical growth, such as weighing scales, height-measuring devices, and measuring tapes.

These findings indicate the availability of health care and first aid services and facilities, as well as equipment for monitoring children's physical growth, in early childhood schools. This supports the monitoring of children's health and enables schools to respond to cases requiring initial care within the school environment.

7. Safety and Security Standards

The findings indicate that clear safety and security standards are in place and approved by the authority responsible for licensing Pre-Primary Education institutions in the State

of Kuwait. The responses confirmed a very high level of compliance with safety and security standards in early childhood schools. Schools follow clear standards issued by the competent licensing authorities, which are implemented in all schools or in the vast majority of them (more than 90%). This confirms the existence of an effective regulatory framework that ensures the implementation of preventive measures, enhances children's safety, and strengthens confidence in the learning environment.

The findings indicate the availability of a range of facilities and resources associated with the school environment in early childhood in the State of Kuwait, including educational and health facilities, spaces designated for learning and play, classroom equipment, and safety and security requirements. The findings also highlight areas for further development, including the adoption of national initiatives focused on upgrading facilities and equipment and the greater integration of innovation and sustainability into the design and development of learning environments to meet the needs of children at this stage.

Theme Six: Private Sector

1. Level of Private Sector Investment in Early Childhood

The responses provided by the State of Kuwait in this area indicate that private sector investment in early childhood is focused on Pre-Primary Education (3–6 years). It covers more than 75% of the required needs, amounting to approximately more than one million Kuwaiti dinars. This reflects considerable reliance on the private sector to meet demand and highlights its importance as a key partner in the early education ecosystem for children aged 3–6 years.

2. Early Childhood Partnerships Between Private Schools and Pre-Primary Education Institutions and Government or Community Entities

Based on the information provided by the State of Kuwait in response to the questionnaire regarding partnerships between early childhood institutions and government and community entities, the findings indicate variation in the extent to which such partnerships are in place across Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education, as follows:

– Partnerships in Early Childhood Care (Under 3 Years): The response indicated that partnerships with government or community entities are in place in fewer than 50% of insti-

tutions and encompass several initiatives and areas related to early childhood services.

– Partnerships in Pre-Primary Education (3–6 Years): The response indicated that these partnerships are in place in more than 75% of institutions and cover several key areas, including learning activities, health services, and community support.

These findings indicate differences in the prevalence of institutional partnerships between the two stages, with such partnerships in place in fewer than 50% of Early Childhood Care institutions, compared with more than 75% of Pre-Primary Education institutions. These data highlight opportunities to expand the scope of partnerships, particularly in Early Childhood Care, and to strengthen collaboration between early childhood institutions and relevant government and community entities.

3. Student Enrollment in the Private Sector Compared with the Public Sector

The available data for the State of Kuwait do not provide information on the proportion of children enrolled in the private sector compared with the public sector in early childhood. This may indicate an information gap that highlights the need to strengthen data and statistical systems, given their importance in supporting planning and decision-making.

4. Average Annual Fees per Student in the Private Sector

No specific data and information on average annual fees in private sector early childhood institutions are available within the information provided in this area.

5. Licensing, Monitoring, and Oversight Mechanisms for Early Childhood in Private and International Schools

The responses provided by the State of Kuwait in this area did not specify the licensing, monitoring, and oversight mechanisms applicable to private and international schools at the early childhood stage. This may indicate a need for greater integration of information on regulatory and financial aspects to support effective governance of the private sector and enhance the quality of private sector provision in early childhood education.

The private sector plays a significant role in supporting Pre-Primary Education in the State of Kuwait, particularly in terms of investment levels and meeting sector needs. However, this role could be further strengthened by expanding partnerships, improving data systems, and adopting national policies that support investment. The importance of private sector participation in national early childhood initiatives, including through corporate social responsibility programs, is also evident, as such engagement can contribute to children's holistic and balanced development at this critical stage.

A General National Initiative Related to Early Childhood in Kuwait:

The State of Kuwait reported in response to the questionnaire that several national initiatives related to early childhood are in place, including initiatives aimed at strengthening national values and providing children with opportunities for participation and self-expression. In this context, the "From the Hearts of Our Children to the Nation's Heroes" initiative (100,000 Messages) was identified as one of the initiatives related to this area. The key information on the initiative, its objectives, and its outputs is presented below:

- Initiative Name: "From the Hearts of Our Children to the Nation's Heroes" Campaign (100,000 Messages)
- Implementing Entity Ministry of Education – State of Kuwait
- Initiative Overview: A national initiative supporting values development in early childhood.

According to the response, the Ministry of Education in the State of Kuwait launched the "From the Hearts of Our Children to the Nation's Heroes" initiative from 21 March to 1 April 2026 as part of national initiatives aimed at promoting values among children.

The initiative aimed to strengthen national values and children's sense of belonging, boost morale, and develop their expressive skills by engaging them in creating messages and expressive drawings. The response indicated that the initiative resulted in the creation of more than (100,000) messages, reflecting the scale of participation in its activities.

The outputs reported in the response indicate that the initiative provided children with opportunities to participate in activities centered on national values and creative expression through the messages and drawings they produced as part of the initiative.

4

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Introduction:

Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia constitutes an integrated ecosystem that has developed progressively over time since its inception, grounded in clear regulatory foundations aimed at establishing a unified and interconnected education system that meets the needs of the State and society. The institutional foundations of public education began to take shape with the establishment of the Directorate of Education in 1344 AH (1926), which laid the groundwork for an organized education structure. Subsequent developments included the establishment of the Council of Education and the expansion of oversight across the various regions of the Kingdom, reflecting an early move toward centralized education and unified education policies (Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2026).

As the State expanded and developed, the Ministry of Education was established in 1373 AH (1953) to oversee public education for boys across its various stages. King Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al Saud-may he rest in peace-served as its first Minister, contributing to the establishment of a more structured and specialized education system. Public education also underwent a significant development with the establishment of the General Presidency for Girls' Education in 1379 AH (1959), followed by the subsequent consolidation of education provision through the integration of education authorities under a single umbrella, culminating in the establishment of the Ministry of Education in its modern form. This strengthened integration across public education (Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2026).

In parallel, higher education underwent institutional development following the establishment of the Ministry of Higher Education in 1395 AH (1975), which contributed to the expansion of universities and academic disciplines and their broader geographical distribution across the Kingdom, in response to development priorities and labor market needs. This expansion contributed to building a strong academic and research base that supports national development pathways (Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2026).

The historic merger of the ministries responsible for public and higher education in 2015, during the reign of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, marked an important turning point toward unifying and consolidating education efforts under a single umbrella. The merger aimed to strengthen alignment between educational outcomes, the needs of higher education, and labor market requirements, while achieving strategic integration that enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system (Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2026a).

Building on this institutional development, the Ministry of Education works toward a set of overarching goals and objectives aimed at improving the learning environment, educational institutions, and educational outcomes, thereby enhancing the global competitiveness of the education sector. Key objectives include: Strengthening family engagement in preparing children for their future; building an integrated learning journey; improving equity in access to education; enhancing the quality of core educational outcomes; improving the standing of educational institutions; providing high-quality, specialized learning opportunities for high-achieving students in priority fields; and ensuring alignment between educational outcomes and labor market needs (Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2026b).

The education system in the Kingdom follows a progressive and interconnected structure that begins with Early Childhood, followed by Primary Education (from Grade One to Grade Six), Intermediate Education (Grade One, Grade Two, Grade Three), Secondary Education with its various pathways (Grade One, Grade Two, Grade Three), and ultimately Higher Education. This structure ensures continuity and progression in learning, supporting learners' cumulative cognitive and skills development across the various stages.

Within this integrated educational continuum, Early Childhood represents the first foundational stage in shaping children's development and nurturing their abilities during the early years. It marks the starting point for the development of linguistic, social, cognitive, and emotional skills and has a direct influence on children's subsequent learning trajectories. This stage is also receiving increasing attention within the Ministry of Education's strategic priorities, given its pivotal role in improving educational outcomes over the long term and establishing a strong educational foundation that supports students' success in subsequent stages of education.

Building on the preceding discussion, this section examines the Status of Early Childhood in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia across the report's six themes, providing a comprehensive analysis of its current landscape and development priorities.

- **Governance and Regulatory Frameworks**, which define the policies and procedures affecting early childhood.
- **Access and Participation**, to ensure that all children have access to appropriate educational opportunities and supportive environments.
- **Curricula and Educational Activities** provided to children, and the extent to which they align with developmental needs and international standards.

- **Early Childhood Workforce**, in terms of academic qualifications, continued professional development, and professional stability.
- **School Environment and Facilities** that support children's development and learning, including learning spaces, equipment, and materials that support educational activities.
- **Private Sector Role and Contribution**, alongside effective models of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in enhancing the quality of services provided to children.

Theme One: Governance and Regulatory Frameworks

This theme examines the governance and regulatory frameworks for Early Childhood in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including the responsible authorities, governing legislation and policies, monitoring and oversight mechanisms, quality indicators, the education structure, and key national initiatives aimed at advancing the sector and enhancing the quality of early childhood services.

1. Early Childhood Oversight Entities

Based on the information provided by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in response to the questionnaire regarding the authorities responsible for overseeing Early Childhood, the Ministry of Education serves as the primary authority responsible for overseeing this stage and providing educational services, alongside several relevant government entities that provide complementary support services. These entities include the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, the Family Affairs Council, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Dawah and Guidance. Each operates within its respective mandate to support the social, health, family, and religious dimensions of Early Childhood. Accordingly, oversight of Early Childhood operates within a multi-agency framework led by the Ministry of Education, with complementary roles performed by other sectoral entities.

2. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

Regarding the existence of legislation and regulations governing Early Childhood, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that a comprehensive legislative and regulatory framework is in place. It comprises a range of national laws, policies, regulations, and regulatory guidelines that have evolved through successive stages over time. This framework is grounded in overarching foundations such as

the Kingdom's education system, the Basic Law of Governance, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, alongside national legislation related to child protection, including the Protection from Abuse Law and its Implementing Regulations, the Child Protection Law and its Implementing Regulations, and the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The framework is further reinforced by regulatory and policy decisions that define roles and responsibilities. Key instruments include the Council of Ministers Resolution affirming the Ministry of Education's responsibility for Pre-Primary Education for children aged 3–6 years; the Early Childhood Development Policy; the Supervisory Model in the Context of School Empowerment; the Organizational Guide for Public Education Schools; the Regulatory Requirements for Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education; and the National Child Protection Policy in Educational Institutions. In addition, the draft Public Education Law is currently pending approval.

Regarding the updating of these laws and regulations, the response indicated that they are periodically reviewed and updated in line with regulatory and operational developments and by the relevant authority, with the frequency of review varying according to the nature of the legislation or regulation and the authority responsible for its update.

The regulation of Early Childhood in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is underpinned by a multi-level legislative framework that brings together the State's overarching laws, specialized legislation on child protection and rights, and educational and regulatory policies that directly govern service delivery and oversight. These laws and regulations are periodically updated to reflect regulatory and operational developments, with the frequency and scope of updates determined by the nature of each instrument and the authority responsible for it.

3. National Strategy for Early Childhood

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that a national strategic approach is in place for Early Childhood, with this stage incorporated into the broader framework of the Ministry of Education's Education and Training Strategy, which includes specific components dedicated to Early Childhood. This strategy is also

aligned with the Kingdom's broader national priorities, foremost among them Saudi Vision 2030 and the Human Capability Development Program, reflecting the strategic importance of Early Childhood within the Kingdom's human capital development ecosystem. In this context, the National Curriculum Center contributes to the development of the National Curriculum Strategy, with Early Childhood identified as one of the key target groups within this development agenda.

Early Childhood is governed within a framework that brings together the Ministry of Education's sectoral strategies and the Kingdom's broader national priorities, ensuring policy alignment and integration across different levels.

4. Oversight and Monitoring Mechanisms for Quality in Early Childhood

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that formal and structured mechanisms are in place to monitor and ensure the quality of Early Childhood. These mechanisms are implemented through complementary roles between the Ministry of Education and the Education and Training Evaluation Commission, supporting performance evaluation and enhancing the quality of services provided. One of the key tools is the **School Evaluation Standards for Early Childhood Schools and Pre-Primary Education**, which provide a reference framework for evaluating and rating the quality of school performance against defined standards and indicators, supporting continued improvement, and enhancing the quality of educational outcomes.

Regarding the foundations of the evaluation ecosystem and its monitoring and oversight mechanisms, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that the ecosystem is guided by several key principles. These include empowering schools to build their capacity and improve performance, optimizing the use of resources, supporting teaching and learning processes to meet the needs of diverse groups of learners, improving learning outcomes, strengthening values and national identity, and developing both foundational and future skills. The evaluation standards encompass four key domains: School Management; Teaching and Learning; Learning Outcomes; and the School Environment, encompassing (11) standards and (52) evaluation indicators.

Regarding field visits and monitoring mechanisms, the Kingdom's response to the

questionnaire indicated that Education Departments monitor Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education institutions through planned field visits and targeted support programs incorporated into their implementation plans, in coordination with the School Evaluation Program implemented by the Education and Training Evaluation Commission. No fixed number of annual visits is specified; instead, visits are conducted based on identified needs and approved plans.

The response further indicated that the scope of monitoring and oversight encompasses all key aspects related to the quality of the learning environment, including teaching and administrative staff and assistants, curricula and learning activities, the learning environment and school facilities and equipment, as well as safety, security, and child protection, within a comprehensive evaluation framework overseen by the relevant authorities. These mechanisms are further supported by quality standards, including the Early Childhood Environment Standard (SASO-3055) and the Educational Curriculum Quality Standard (SASO-3001), which promote consistency in quality standards and support the continued development of educational practices in Early Childhood.

The monitoring and oversight system for Early Childhood is based on an integrated national framework that combines institutional evaluation, field visits, and compliance with national standards and specifications, ensuring comprehensive evaluation and sustained quality improvement.

5. Monitoring Indicators:

Regarding indicators for measuring the quality of Early Childhood, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that the Education and Training Evaluation Commission has established and approved specific indicators based on a comprehensive evaluation framework. This framework includes standards and performance indicators set out in the School Evaluation Standards for Early Childhood Schools and Pre-Primary Education. This framework comprises (11) standards and (52) evaluation indicators that serve as a key reference for measuring the quality of school performance. They cover School Management, Teaching and Learning, Learning Outcomes, and the

School Environment, enabling a comprehensive assessment of the various dimensions of quality at this stage.

In the same, vein, the response also indicated that these indicators are aligned with a set of development priorities focused on school empowerment, continued performance improvement, more efficient use of resources, and supporting the learning of diverse groups of learners, alongside improving learning outcomes, strengthening values and national identity, and developing future skills. These indicators are integrated with monitoring mechanisms, evaluation standards, and national standards and specifications, supporting a comprehensive ecosystem for measuring and continuously monitoring the quality of Early Childhood.

Regarding the use of monitoring and evaluation results to improve performance and develop programs, the Kingdom's response to the questionnaire indicated that the Education and Training Evaluation Commission uses evaluation results to enhance School Excellence Support Services. Plans for supervisory visits by service providers are developed based on schools' performance classifications across the following levels: (Preparation, Launch, Progress, and Excellence)-according to defined performance standards and indicators. The quality of School Excellence Support Services is also assessed periodically based on evaluation results, using key indicators that include average overall performance across the domains of School Management, Teaching and Learning, and Learning Outcomes, as well as the proportion of schools achieving the Progress and Excellence levels.

The monitoring indicator ecosystem extends beyond measurement to using the results to drive continued improvement and development in performance and educational programs in Early Childhood.

6. Education Structure for Early Childhood:

Table (14) presents the education structure for Early Childhood in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia:

Table14 presents the education structure for Early Childhood in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

International Level (ISCED)*	International Designation	Typical Age	Specified Age Range for Each Level	Availability of the Level in the Country (Available / Not Available)	Stage Compulsory Status (Compulsory–Non-Compulsory)	Level
ISCED 010	(ECEC 0–3)	Under 3 Years	From Birth to Under One Year	Available	Non-Mandatory	Infants
			From One Year to Under Two Years		Non-Mandatory	Toddlers
			From Two Years to Under Three Years		Non-Mandatory	Weaned Children
ISCED 020 – Year 1	(Pre-Primary 1)	3–4	3–4	Available	Non-Mandatory	KG1
ISCED 020 – Year 2	(Pre-Primary 2)	4–5	4–5	Available	Non-Mandatory	KG2
ISCED 20 – Year 3	Advanced Pre-Primary Education	5–6	5–6	Available	Non-Mandatory	KG3

* Note: This classification is based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) issued by UNESCO and is intended to assess the alignment of national education systems with the international standard in terms of age, the compulsory status of each stage, and the sequencing of pre-primary education stages.

Regarding the education structure for Early Childhood, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that the organization of this stage broadly aligns with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) in terms of age progression, as shown in Table (14). ISCED 010, which covers Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for children under the age of three, comprises three age groups in the Kingdom: Infants, from birth to under one year; Toddlers, from one year to under two years; Weaned Children, from two years to under three years. These age groups all fall within the same level, and participation is non-compulsory across all three.

The response also indicated that Pre-Primary Education (ISCED 020) extends from ages three to six and is organized into three consecutive levels: KG1 for children aged 3–4 years, KG2 for children aged 4–5 years, and KG3 for children aged 5–6 years. The data indicate that all three levels are available in the Kingdom and that enrollment is non-compulsory.

Overall, the data provided by the Kingdom in response to the questionnaire indicate that the Early Childhood education structure progressively covers children from birth to six years of age, comprising three age groups within Early Childhood Education and Care (ISCED 010), followed by three levels of Pre-Primary Education (ISCED 020). The specified age ranges for these levels also align with the typical ages defined in ISCED, while all Early Childhood levels in the Kingdom remain non-compulsory.

7. National Initiatives and Policies on Governance and Regulatory Frameworks in Early Childhood:

Regarding the governance and regulation of Early Childhood, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that a range of national initiatives and policies are in place to support the regulation and development of this stage, reflecting an emphasis on strengthening the legislative and regulatory environment and enhancing the quality of services provided.

The response identified the Pre-Primary Education Requirements and Standards Development Initiative as one of the key initiatives in this area. It aims to update regulations and policies in alignment with international standards, supporting the provision of a safe, high-quality learning environment. The response also highlighted the Early Childhood Expansion Initiative, which focuses on expanding infrastructure through the construction and refurbishment of buildings and classrooms, while strengthening private and non-profit sector participation. These efforts contribute to increasing enrollment in Pre-Primary Education and supporting the sustainable expansion of services.

Regarding the frameworks governing educational provision, the response indicated that the Study Plans Guide serves as an operational reference for organizing school-based educational provision. The National Curriculum Center is responsible for developing curricula, curriculum frameworks, and educational documents, while the Ministry of Education is responsible for implementation and monitoring compliance, with these frameworks subject to continued development. The National Curriculum Framework also underscores the importance of Early Childhood as a foundational stage within the national education structure.

Regarding data governance, the response also indicated that the Ministry of Education has issued a set of policies covering Early Childhood data, including the Personal Data Protection Policy, Data Classification Policy, and Data Sharing Policy. These policies support effective data governance and protection and enhance the efficiency of data management.

Theme Two: Access and Participation

This theme examines the availability of early childhood services and equity in access across different population groups and geographical areas. It also highlights enrollment and retention rates in early childhood programs, reflecting the system's capacity to enroll and retain children. This theme provides a basis for understanding the level of inclusivity in early childhood and the extent to which it aligns with the principles of equal opportunity.

1. Enrollment Rates in Early Childhood:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire data on the number of children enrolled in Early Childhood programs during the 2025–2026 academic year, disaggregated by gender, school type, and geographical area. Table (15) presents these data in detail.

Table (15) Number of Children Enrolled in Early Childhood Programs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia During the 2025–2026 Academic Year, by Gender and School Type

Variable		Type		School Type			Geography	
		Males	Females	Public	Private*	International and Foreign	City	Rural or Remote Areas (Villages, Outlying Areas, Small Settlements, etc.)
Children's Enrollment Rate*	Under 3 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Ages 3–6 Years (Levels One, Two, Three)	200.750	205.293	256.048	88.708	61.287	-	-
Number of Schools	Under 3 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	3–6 Years	0	5.638	3.730	1.203	705	-	-
Number of Classes	Under 3 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	3–6 Years	0	21.955	11.630	6.058	4.267	-	-

Regarding the number of children enrolled in Early Childhood programs, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that total enrollment among children aged 3–6 years reached 406,043, comprising 200,750 males and 205,293 females. These figures indicate close parity in enrollment between males and females, with a slightly higher number of females.

Regarding enrollment by school type, the response indicated that public schools enroll the largest number of children, with 256,048 children, compared with 88,708 in private schools and 61,287 in international and foreign schools. This indicates that the public sector is the primary provider of Early Childhood education services in the Kingdom.

Regarding the number of educational institutions offering these programs, the response indicated that 5,638 schools provide Early Childhood programs for children aged 3–6 years, comprising 3,730 public schools, 1,203 private schools, and 705 international and foreign schools. These figures show that public schools account for the largest share of educational institutions providing programs at this stage.

Regarding the number of classrooms, the questionnaire data indicate that a total of 21,955 classrooms are allocated to Early Childhood programs, including 11,630 in public schools, 6,058 in private schools, and 4,267 in international and foreign schools, reflecting the distribution of classroom capacity across the different school types.

Table16 Number of Children Enrolled in Early Childhood Programs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia During the 2025–2026 Academic Year

International Level (ISCED)*	International Designation	Typical Age	Number of Students at Each Level for the 2025–2026 Academic Year	
			Males	Females
ISCED 010	(ECEC 0–3)	Under 3 Years	Data for Early Childhood Care (0–3 years) are currently being developed.	Data for Early Childhood Care (0–3 years) are currently being developed.
ISCED 020 – Year 1	(Pre-Primary 1)	Ages 3–4 (Level One)	11,970	14,039
ISCED 020 – Year 2	(Pre-Primary 2)	Ages 4–5 (Level Two)	63,117	68,945
ISCED 20 – Year 3	Advanced Pre-Primary Education	Ages 5–6 (Level Three)	147,538	150,905

Regarding Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programs (ISCED 010) for children under the age of three, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that the nursery database for children aged 0–3 years is still under development. Accordingly, enrollment figures for these programs were not included in the statistics for the 2025–2026 academic year.

Regarding Pre-Primary Education (ISCED 020), the questionnaire data show a progressive increase in enrollment across successive levels. Enrollment in Level One (Pre-Primary 1), for children aged 3–4 years, totaled 26,009, comprising 11,970 males and 14,039 females.

In Level Two (Pre-Primary 2), for children aged 4–5 years, the response indicated that enrollment increased to 132,062 children, comprising 63,117 males and 68,945 females, representing a substantial increase compared with Level One.

The questionnaire response data also show that Level Three (Pre-Primary 3), for children aged 5–6 years, recorded the highest enrollment, with a total of 298,443 children, comprising 147,538 males and 150,905 females. This represents the largest group of children enrolled in Early Childhood programs.

Overall, analysis of the data provided by the Kingdom in response to the questionnaire reveals an upward trend in enrollment as children progress in age and through successive education levels, with close parity between male and female enrollment across the different levels and slightly higher numbers of females. The largest proportion of enrolled children is also concentrated in Level Three, which immediately precedes the transition to Primary Education.

2. **Program Retention and Continuity:**

Regarding children's retention in Early Childhood programs through the transition to Primary Education, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that the retention rate falls within the moderate range, with between 50% and less than 75% of enrolled children remaining in the programs through the transition to Primary Education.

3. **Inclusive Access (Equity in Admission):**

Regarding inclusive and equitable access to Early Childhood, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that access opportunities for children in rural and remote areas remain limited, with fewer than 50% of children in these areas having access to Early Childhood programs. This finding indicates geographical disparities in access, highlighting the importance of expanding the geographical coverage of Early Childhood services and increasing access to programs in rural and remote areas to promote equal educational opportunities.

The ecosystem features a clear and structured transition mechanism between Early Childhood and Primary Education, based on gradual transition practices and institutional coordination that support a smooth and well-planned transition for children.

4. Mechanism for Children's Transition from Early Childhood to Grade One:

Regarding children's transition from Early Childhood to Grade One, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that a clear and comprehensive mechanism is in place to manage the transition between the two stages. It includes several practices that support a gradual transition, such as increasing the time children spend in Early Childhood programs and strengthening collaboration and coordination between Early Childhood and Primary Education, thereby helping prepare children for a smooth and structured transition to Grade One.

5. Parent and Community Engagement:

Regarding parent and community engagement in Early Childhood programs, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that clear policies and a national framework are in place to support such engagement. This is reflected in the Regulatory Requirements for Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education issued by the Ministry of Education, which emphasize the importance of strengthening parents' role and engaging them in nursery and Pre-Primary Education activities. This is further supported by the guides and activities associated with the National Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education, as well as the Family Guide, reflecting an official commitment to strengthening partnerships between Early Childhood institutions and families.

Regarding family guidance and awareness programs, the response indicated that programs are provided for families covering health, education, national awareness, and other areas. These programs are implemented through operational plans organized by Pre-Primary Education institutions, nurseries, and regional Education Departments in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, with the aim of supporting children's learning at home and strengthening the role of families in the educational process.

Regarding communication with parents, the response also indicated that policies are in place requiring Early Childhood institutions to communicate regularly with parents about their children's progress, in accordance with the Regulatory Requirements for

Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education. This supports sustained communication and educational coordination between families and educational institutions.

Regarding partnerships with local communities, the Kingdom's response to the questionnaire indicated that national policies encourage stronger partnerships between Early Childhood institutions and local communities, helping to integrate the roles of families, educational institutions, and communities in supporting children's development and learning.

A clear national framework and supportive policies are in place for parent and community engagement, underpinned by regulatory requirements, curriculum guidance, and awareness and guidance programs that strengthen the role of families in supporting children's learning, alongside policies requiring regular communication between Early Childhood institutions and parents. Public policies also reflect a positive direction toward strengthening partnerships with local communities, supporting complementary roles in fostering children's development.

6. National Initiatives on Access and Participation:

Regarding the Access and Participation theme in Early Childhood, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that the Ministry of Education places strong emphasis on promoting children's right to education, enabling children aged 3–6 years to enroll in Early Childhood programs, and preparing them for the transition to subsequent stages of public education. This is supported by Minister of Education Resolution No. (24936), dated 6/6/1440 AH, which provided for the expansion of Early Childhood Schools to include Pre-Primary Education and the Early Grades of Primary Education, thereby supporting broader access to early education.

The response also indicated that this approach is supported through virtual learning platforms aligned with distance learning standards, namely the Madrasati and Rawdati platforms. These platforms have helped sustain the continuity of education during periods of distance learning, in line with the Kingdom's efforts to advance digital education and self-directed learning.

Regarding the measurement of access and participation, the response indicated that this theme is linked to several strategic indicators under the objective of accelerating the

growth of the Pre-Primary Education sector. One of the key indicators is the Pre-Primary Education Enrollment Rate, which measures the proportion of children aged 3 to under 6 years enrolled in Pre-Primary Education across different education authorities, including the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development. This indicator reflects the extent of access to enrollment opportunities at this stage and is aligned with the Human Capability Development Program.

The response also referred to the Pre-Primary Education Enrollment Rate, which measures the proportion of children enrolled in Pre-Primary Education Levels 1, 2, and 3 relative to the total number of children aged 3–5 years. This is one of the key indicators included in the National Education and Training Strategy and is used to monitor participation in early education and track progress in policies aimed at expanding access to Pre-Primary Education services.

Several target national initiatives reflect a strategic approach to expanding access and enhancing the quality of participation, including the expansion of Pre-Primary Education and the integration of the Early Grades of Primary Education, as well as the launch of digital learning platforms such as Madrasati and Rawdati, which supported continuity of education during distance learning. In addition, clearly defined national indicators are in place to measure access and enrollment rates in Pre-Primary Education, reflecting advances in planning and monitoring and efforts to enhance sector efficiency in alignment with national development targets and Saudi Vision 2030.

Theme Three: Curricula and Activities

This theme examines the curriculum and activities ecosystem in early childhood, including the curriculum philosophy and pedagogical approaches, the areas of educational content, and the extent to which the curriculum is comprehensive and integrated. It also examines the educational documents and guidelines that support curriculum implementation and their role in guiding classroom practices and enhancing the quality of education. The theme also addresses the educational values embedded in the curriculum and how they are integrated into learning activities, as well as activities that support children's development across different domains and the mechanisms used for developmental assessment and monitoring. Of good note, the theme aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how the various elements of the curriculum and activities are integrated and the extent to which they align with the objectives of early childhood.

1. Curriculum Philosophy and Orientation:

Regarding the philosophy of the Early Childhood curriculum, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that it is grounded in comprehensive and integrated educational principles that support children's holistic development across the cognitive, linguistic, social, physical, and emotional domains. The response also indicated that this philosophy is formally approved and mandatory and is documented in detail in the curriculum documents, providing a structured framework that guides educational practices at this stage.

Regarding the curriculum's educational approaches and learning strategies, the response indicated that the curriculum is based on learning through play and active exploration, with this approach formally approved, mandatory, and detailed in the curriculum documents. This reflects an emphasis on interactive educational practices that enable children to learn through experience, participation, and exploration, while fostering their thinking and learning skills.

Regarding the implementation of international curricula or global educational models, the Kingdom's response to the questionnaire indicated that their availability varies by school type. Non-government schools, including private and international schools, are permitted to implement such curricula or models, whereas public schools are not. The response also indicated that the implementation of these curricula is governed by a regulatory framework under which curriculum licenses are issued by the National Curriculum Center, thereby regulating the adoption of international curricula and educational models in educational institutions.

The curriculum content demonstrates a high degree of comprehensiveness, integration, and coherence, supported by clear developmental objectives and diverse learning activities that promote balanced and interconnected learning in Early Childhood.

2. Curriculum Domains and Content:

Regarding Early Childhood curriculum content, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that the curriculum is comprehensive and integrated, covering all key learning domains, including language, early mathematics, science, the arts, social skills, and health and physical development, alongside the various domains of development and learning. This reflects the breadth and diversity of the curriculum content in addressing the various dimensions of children's development and learning.

Regarding developmental and educational objectives, the response indicated that the curriculum sets out detailed objectives for each age group, taking into account children's developmental characteristics and their differing needs across age groups. This provides a structured basis for guiding educational practices in ways that are appropriate to children's developmental levels and learning needs.

Regarding the integration of learning activities, the response also indicated that the curriculum includes a diverse and integrated range of activities that connect all learning domains, thereby promoting the integration of children's learning experiences and linking knowledge and skills across multiple domains, while supporting the various dimensions of children's development and learning in an interconnected and integrated manner..

Early Childhood has a clearly defined curriculum structure, grounded in a holistic educational philosophy and incorporating contemporary educational practices. At the same time, the degree of flexibility in implementing international curricula varies across education sectors. different.

3. Curriculum Document and Educational Guidelines:

Regarding the curriculum document and educational guidance, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that an approved and mandatory national curriculum is implemented in all schools across the Kingdom. The response also indicated that the curriculum document is supported by detailed teacher guides that provide practical guidance, examples, and models to support the planning and implementation of educational practices in Early Childhood.

Regarding learning approaches, the response indicated that the curriculum document incorporates a range of approaches, including learning through play, cooperative learning, and project-based learning, accompanied by guidance on their implementation. Overall, these findings indicate the existence of a structured curriculum framework that brings together the national curriculum, supporting teacher guides, and a diverse range of learning approaches used in Early Childhood.

A comprehensive, high-quality curriculum ecosystem is in place, bringing together a mandatory national framework, practical support for teachers, and contemporary approaches to learning, thereby enhancing the quality of educational outcomes in Early Childhood.

4. Curriculum Document Values:

Regarding the integration of educational values into the Pre-Primary Education curriculum, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that the curriculum clearly and comprehensively defines the core values to be fostered, in ways appropriate to children's developmental and social characteristics at this stage. The response also indicated that these values are not taught in isolation but are embedded across the various learning domains, including language, early mathematics, science, the arts, social activities, and health and physical development, making values development an integral part of children's everyday learning experiences.

Regarding the translation of values into educational practice, the response indicated that learning activities incorporate clear and structured opportunities to reinforce values in contexts closely connected to children's lives, enabling them to practice and apply these values in their everyday interactions and experiences. The response also indicated that the Teacher Guide supports this approach by providing clear and structured guidance for developing most of the targeted values, thereby enabling female and male teachers to employ appropriate educational practices to foster these values within learning environments.

Overall, the findings from the Kingdom's response to the questionnaire indicate that values development in Pre-Primary Education is based on an integrated approach that combines the identification of target values, integration across learning domains, and translation into practical activities and real-life situations, alongside guidance for teachers. This strengthens the presence of values throughout children's learning experiences and everyday practices.

The data reveal an advanced, integrated approach to embedding educational values in the curriculum. These values are clearly defined, integrated across all learning domains, and reinforced through daily practical activities and experiences supported by implementation guidance for teachers, thereby promoting their development as part of children's everyday behavior.

5. Activities Supporting Child Development:

Regarding activities that support children's development, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that a diverse and integrated range of learning activities is available across different developmental domains. These include daily phys-

ical activities that support physical development and health; regular arts and creative activities that foster self-expression and aesthetic development; and language activities incorporating stories, conversations, and songs, which support children's language development and communication skills.

Regarding learning environments and children's participation, the response also indicated that educational programs provide diverse learning opportunities in both indoor and outdoor environments, broadening children's learning experiences and enabling learning through exploration and interaction. The response also indicated that activities take children's interests and initiatives into account, promoting their active participation and placing them at the center of the learning process.

6. Developmental Assessment and Monitoring:

Regarding developmental assessment and monitoring in Early Childhood programs, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that developmentally appropriate assessment methods are used, taking into account children's ages and developmental characteristics at this stage. The response also indicated that assessment is primarily based on systematic observation of children's performance within learning environments, enabling their progress to be monitored continuously in the context of everyday learning activities and practices.

Regarding the monitoring of each child's individual development, the response indicated that records or portfolios are used to document and track children's development cumulatively over time. Parents also receive regular feedback on their children's progress, supporting communication and partnership between families and educational institutions.

The response also indicated that assessment results are used to inform the planning and development of learning activities in ways that respond to children's needs and levels of progress. Overall, the findings indicate a clear link between assessment, monitoring, and the planning of learning experiences, supporting responsiveness to children's developmental and learning needs and the continued improvement of educational practices.

7. National Initiatives and Policies on Curricula and Activities in Early Childhood:

Regarding initiatives and policies supporting the development of Early Childhood curricula and activities, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that a range of national efforts are underway to develop curricula and enhance the quality of learning experiences provided to children. Key efforts include the development of the National Early Childhood Curriculum Document and the Early Learning

Developmental Standards, which define learning domains and outcomes for different age groups, providing a structured reference framework for the educational process. The response also indicated that the National Curriculum Center is developing inquiry-based units that support play- and inquiry-based learning and foster children's cognitive, linguistic, social, physical, and emotional development.

The response also indicated that integrated learning activities are being developed to connect different learning domains and support classroom practices and interactive learning environments in ways that respond to children's needs and developmental characteristics. In this context, the response highlighted the Extracurricular Activities Initiative, launched by the National Curriculum Center in partnership with education authorities during the 1447 AH academic year. The initiative aims to support learning outcomes through a diverse range of student activities available via the IEN Portal and covers all stages of education, including Early Childhood. The initiative is still in progress.

Regarding values and national identity, the response indicated the implementation of the Values Promotion During the School Day Initiative as part of the Values Development and National Identity Enhancement Project, through a partnership between the Ministry of Education, the National Curriculum Center, and education authorities. The initiative aims to integrate values into extracurricular activities and provide supporting content for extracurricular periods across all stages of education, including Early Childhood. The initiative is also still in progress.

Overall, the findings from the Kingdom's response to the questionnaire indicate a range of complementary initiatives and policies aimed at developing Early Childhood curricula and activities. These span curriculum development, Early Learning Developmental Standards, inquiry-based units, extracurricular activities, and the promotion of values and national identity, collectively supporting the enhancement of children's learning experiences and their development across multiple domains.

Comprehensive learning environments are in place to support children's physical, linguistic, artistic, and social development through diverse indoor and outdoor activities that respond to children's interests and promote their active participation. Advanced developmental assessment practices are also employed, drawing on systematic observation, developmental records, and portfolios, alongside regular feedback to parents and the continued use of assessment results to improve educational planning. Together, these practices reflect effective integration between learning, monitoring, and continued improvement.

Theme Four: Early Childhood Workforce:

This theme examines the early childhood workforce in terms of its size and distribution, professional characteristics, and academic qualifications, in addition to analyzing recruitment and hiring practices and suitability for the specific requirements of this stage. The theme also examines the professional development and professional licensing ecosystem as a key means of enhancing teacher competencies and ensuring the quality of educational performance. It also reviews regulations governing child–teacher ratios, reflecting standards for balancing workload with the requirements of care and education. The theme concludes by reviewing key national initiatives and policies aimed at developing the early childhood workforce and addressing teacher shortages, thereby strengthening the sector's readiness and enhancing the quality of its outcomes.

1. Workforce Statistics:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire data on the Early Childhood workforce, disaggregated by gender (male and female), school type, and geographical area. Table (17) presents these data in detail:

Table 17Early Childhood Workforce Statistics in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Variable	Type		School Type			Geography	
	Males	Females	Public	Private*	Global	City	Rural or Remote
Number of Teachers	0	28.834	16.727	7.055	5.052	-	-
Number of Support Staff (e.g., Psychologists, Speech and Language Specialists, and Special Education Specialists)	0	587	444	115	28	-	-
Number of Administrative Staff	0	12.129	9.744	1.542	843	-	-

Regarding the workforce in Early Childhood, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that all staff recorded within the categories covered by the questionnaire were female. The workforce comprised 28,834 teachers; 587 specialized support staff, including psychologists, speech and language specialists, and special education specialists; and 12,129 administrative staff. No male staff were reported within these categories.

Regarding the distribution of teachers by school type, the response indicated that the largest number work in public schools, with 16,727 teachers, representing approximate-

ly 58.0% of the total teaching workforce. This is followed by private schools with 7,055 teachers (24.5%) and international schools with 5,052 teachers (17.5%).

Regarding support staff, the response indicated that their total number was 587, with the majority working in public schools-444 staff members, representing approximately 75.6% of the total-followed by private schools with 115 (19.6%) and international schools with 28 (4.8%).

Regarding administrative staff, the response indicated that there were 12,129 female administrators, of whom 9,744 worked in public schools, representing approximately 80.3% of the total, compared with 1,542 in private schools (12.7%) and 843 in international schools (7.0%).

Overall, analysis of the data provided by the Kingdom in response to the questionnaire indicates that the Early Childhood workforce recorded across the specified categories is entirely female, with the largest proportions of teachers, support staff, and administrative staff concentrated in public schools and smaller proportions in private and international schools. This is consistent with the larger role of the public sector in providing Early Childhood programs.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire data on the number of Early Childhood teachers by academic qualification. Table (18) presents the distribution of teachers by qualification level.

Table 18Early Childhood Workforce in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by Academic Qualification.

Type of Qualification	Number	%
High School Certificate or Equivalent	42	0.14
Diploma in Education with a Specialization in Early Childhood Education	1349	4.41
Bachelor's Degree in Education with a Specialization in Early Childhood Education	28668	93.63
Postgraduate Qualification in Education with a Specialization in Early Childhood Education	557	1.82
Other Qualification (Optimal Utilization of Teaching Staff)	2	0.01
Total	30,618	100.0

Regarding the academic qualifications of the Early Childhood workforce, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that the vast majority hold a bachelor's degree in education with a specialization in early education, totaling 28,668 individuals, or 93.63% of the total workforce. Those holding a specialized diploma in

Early Childhood Education ranked second, totaling 1,349 individuals (4.41%), followed by those with postgraduate qualifications in education specializing in early education, totaling 557 individuals (1.82%). Those holding a Secondary Education Certificate or equivalent totaled 42 individuals (0.14%), while only two individuals (0.01%) were classified under Other Qualifications, represented by the Optimal Utilization of Teaching Staff category.

Overall, analysis of the data provided by the Kingdom in response to the questionnaire shows that the Early Childhood workforce is predominantly composed of individuals holding a bachelor's degree in education with a specialization in early education, who account for more than nine-tenths of the total workforce. Smaller proportions hold specialized educational diplomas or postgraduate qualifications, while only a very small proportion hold a Secondary Education Certificate or other qualifications.

2. Recruitment and Hiring:

Regarding the criteria for appointing teaching staff in Early Childhood, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that clear and transparent criteria specific to this stage are in place, providing a structured framework for the appointment of teaching staff that takes into account the professional and educational requirements of working in Early Childhood.

Regarding strategies for attracting and recruiting qualified professionals, the response indicated that these are applied broadly across all stages of education, with no recruitment strategies specifically tailored to Early Childhood. This indicates a general approach to recruiting teaching staff across the different stages of education, with scope for greater consideration of the specific requirements and competencies associated with working in Early Childhood.

Regarding the academic qualifications of teachers, the response indicated that an academic qualification in Early Childhood is an essential and mandatory requirement, applied in most cases with a limited number of exceptions. This reflects the inclusion of specialized academic preparation in Early Childhood among the requirements for teaching positions at this stage.

Regarding the qualifications of school leaders, the response also indicated that minimum relevant academic qualifications are required for principals of Early Childhood schools in most cases, with a compliance rate ranging from 75% to 90%. This finding indicates a high level of compliance with academic qualification requirements for school leaders, with only a limited proportion of cases in which these requirements do not apply.

3. Professional Development and Professional Licensing:

Regarding professional development opportunities for teaching staff in Early Childhood, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that two professional development pathways are available: the first comprises programs specifically designed for Early Childhood, while the second consists of general programs available to teachers across all stages of education. This enables teaching staff to benefit from professional development opportunities that combine programs tailored to the requirements of Early Childhood with broader professional development programs.

Regarding continued professional development requirements, the response indicated that teachers are required to complete a minimum number of professional development hours or credits, as stipulated in the Guide for Calculating Professional Development Points for Promotion, thereby linking participation in professional development activities to teachers' career progression.

Regarding periodic professional development requirements, the response indicated that, although professional development programs and recommendations are in place to update teaching staff's knowledge and skills in education and working with children, there is no requirement for teachers to complete a specified 50 -100 hours over a period of up to seven years as part of a periodic professional renewal cycle comparable to those used in some international models.

Regarding professional licensing, the response also indicated that the professional licensing system applies to more than 90% of Early Childhood teachers. The Education and Training Evaluation Commission is responsible for the procedures and requirements governing professional licensing, including setting the relevant standards and overseeing their implementation.

Regarding the regulation of teachers' workload, the response indicated that the Regulatory Requirements for Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education (1447 AH) establish clear child-to-caregiver or child-to-teacher ratios according to age group, with children with disabilities included within the overall regulatory framework.

For Early Childhood Care, the prescribed child-to-caregiver ratios are as follows:

- (5) children per caregiver for children aged from one month to under one year.
- (6) children per caregiver for children aged from one year to under two years. .
- (7) children per caregiver for children aged from two years to under three years
- For Pre-Primary Education, the prescribed child-to-teacher ratios are as follows:

- (10) children per teacher for children aged three to under four years.
- (13) children per teacher for children aged four to under five years.
- (15) children per teacher for children aged five to under six years.

Overall, the data provided by the Kingdom in response to the questionnaire indicate that the regulation of the Early Childhood workforce encompasses several interrelated areas, including professional development, professional licensing, and child-to-teacher or child-to-caregiver ratios by age group, providing a structured framework for professional practice at this stage.

4. National Initiatives and Policies for Early Childhood Workforce Development:

Regarding national initiatives and policies supporting the development of the Early Childhood workforce, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that several initiatives are in place to meet the workforce needs of this stage and address challenges related to the availability of qualified teaching staff. Key initiatives include:

- Initiative to Explore Potential Solutions to the Shortage of Pre-Primary Education Teachers (In Progress): The initiative focuses on exploring potential solutions and alternatives to address the shortage of Pre-Primary Education teachers, thereby supporting the availability of the teaching workforce needed to deliver services at this stage.
- Initiative to Address the Shortage of Pre-Primary Education Teachers (In Progress): The initiative aims to address the actual demand for Pre-Primary Education teachers and support the provision of the required teaching workforce, thereby contributing to meeting the workforce requirements associated with the expansion of Early Childhood services.

National efforts to develop the Early Childhood workforce include two key initiatives that are still in progress: The **Initiative to Explore Potential Solutions to the Shortage of Pre-Primary Education Teachers**, which aims to examine and analyze appropriate options and solutions for addressing the shortage of specialized teaching staff in this field; and the **Initiative to Meet the Demand for Pre-Primary Education Teachers**, which focuses on providing qualified teaching staff to help meet growing demand and ensure the continuity of educational provision with efficiency and quality.

Theme Five: Learning Environments and Facilities

This theme examines the current state of the school environment and physical facilities in Early Childhood institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, addressing several aspects related to the quality of the learning environment and its readiness to support children's learning and holistic development. This includes the overall school environment, the physical environment of nursery and Pre-Primary Education classrooms, educational facilities and classroom equipment, the organization of learning areas within classrooms, as well as health and medical facilities and the applicable safety and security standards. The theme also highlights key national efforts and initiatives aimed at developing and improving school environments, facilities, and equipment in Early Childhood, reflecting the emphasis placed on providing safe and stimulating learning environments aligned with contemporary educational best practices and the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030.

1. School Environment:

The data indicate a high level of readiness in Early Childhood school environments in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, particularly in terms of safety and the provision of spaces that support active learning and play. The data also indicate the availability of educational infrastructure that supports contemporary approaches to Early Childhood education, with an emphasis on learning through play and interactive activities. Regarding the availability of a safe and appropriate environment for learning and daily activities: The data indicate that appropriate school environments, including play areas and open spaces, are available in all schools or the vast majority of them (more than 90%), reflecting a high level of commitment to providing comprehensive learning environments that support children's learning and development.

Regarding the availability of safe and well-equipped play areas: The response indicated that schools provide safe and well-equipped play areas where children can engage in free play and physical activity. These facilities are available in all or nearly all schools (more than 90%), representing a positive indicator of support for children's physical and social development in Early Childhood.

2. Physical Environment of Nursery and Pre-Primary Education Classrooms:

Regarding the standards governing Early Childhood learning environments, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in its response to the questionnaire that specific standards are in place regulating the classroom space allocated per child and the number of children per classroom across different age groups, as follows:

- **Classroom Space per Child (Nursery – Under 3 Years)**
- The data indicate that the space allocated per child ranges from 3 m² to less than 3.8 m², providing an appropriate amount of space for safe movement and participation in classroom activities.
- Classroom Space per Child (Pre-Primary Education – 3 to 6 Years)
- The response indicated that the space allocated per child also ranges from 3 m² to less than 3.8 m², in line with the educational and physical activity requirements of this age group.
- Number of Children per Classroom (Nursery – Under 3 Years)
- The data indicate that the number of children per classroom ranges from 21 to 25, reflecting the existence of defined standards governing class size.
- Number of Children per Classroom (Pre-Primary Education – 3 to 6 Years)

The response indicated that the number of children per classroom ranges from 20 to 25, reflecting similar class sizes across the two stages.

3. Educational Facilities:

Regarding the availability of educational facilities that support children's learning in Early Childhood, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that these facilities are widely available across Early Childhood institutions, as follows:

- **Availability of Libraries and Digital Learning Resources:** The data indicate that schools have small libraries stocked with age-appropriate books, as well as computers and digital learning resources that support the development of children's cognitive and digital skills. **These resources are available in all or the vast majority of Early Childhood schools (more than 90%).** This finding reflects a strong emphasis on creating resource-rich learning environments in Early Childhood, combining the development of early literacy skills through access to age-appropriate books with the development of digital skills through the integration of technology into learning. This reflects an integrated approach to equipping children with the cognitive and digital skills needed to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving world.
- **Availability of Appropriate Furniture and Equipment:** The data indicate that appropriately sized chairs and tables are available for children, ensuring their comfort and facilitating learning. Appropriate furniture is also provided for teachers to support effective instruction, alongside cabinets and storage units for the safe and organized storage of learning materials and resources. **These facilities are available in all or**

the vast majority of Early Childhood schools (more than 90%). This finding highlights the strong emphasis placed on the quality of the classroom environment in terms of physical facilities and organization, helping to create a comfortable and safe learning environment for both children and teachers. The availability of organized storage solutions also supports the efficient management of learning materials, enhancing the effectiveness of teaching and learning and creating a well-organized classroom environment conducive to learning.

4. Organization of Classroom Learning Areas:

Regarding the organization of learning areas within Early Childhood classrooms, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in its response to the questionnaire that classrooms are required to provide integrated learning areas that support self-directed learning, alongside multiple clearly defined and well-organized areas that offer children a diverse range of learning experiences and activities.

This finding indicates that the classroom environment is organized around diverse learning areas that provide children with opportunities for self-directed learning, exploration, interaction, and participation in a range of activities. These areas are clearly structured within the classroom, enabling the learning environment to effectively support learning and developmental objectives in Early Childhood.

The data reflect a high degree of integration across Early Childhood learning environments in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with safe and well-equipped infrastructure, clear standards for space and class size, rich educational and technological resources, and well-organized classroom learning areas. Together, these elements point to an educational ecosystem that supports active learning and the balanced development of children's skills in line with contemporary educational practices.

5. Health and Hygiene Facilities:

Regarding health and hygiene facilities in Early Childhood schools, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that these facilities are widely available. Adequate and clean toilets, handwashing facilities equipped with water and soap, safe drinking water, and appropriate waste disposal facilities are available in all or the vast majority of Early Childhood schools (more than 90%).

This finding indicates a high level of availability of essential health and hygiene provisions in Early Childhood environments, helping to provide children with a healthy and safe learning environment and supporting healthy daily practices, particularly personal hygiene and the maintenance of public health.

6. Health Care and First Aid Facilities:

Regarding basic health care services in Early Childhood schools, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that these services are widely available. Clinics or first aid rooms equipped to manage illnesses and minor injuries, as well as equipment for monitoring children's physical growth, such as weighing scales, height-measuring devices, and measuring tapes, are available in all or the vast majority of Early Childhood schools (more than 90%).

This finding indicates a high level of availability of essential health care provisions and resources for monitoring children's physical growth within the learning environment, supporting responses to urgent health needs and the monitoring of physical growth indicators, while contributing to a learning environment that promotes children's health and safety.

7. Safety and Security Standards:

Regarding safety and security standards in Early Childhood schools, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that compliance with these standards is high. The response indicated that clear and approved safety and security standards issued by the relevant licensing authority are applied in all or the vast majority of Early Childhood schools (more than 90%).

This finding indicates the existence of a clear regulatory framework governing the implementation of safety and security requirements in Early Childhood institutions, with a high level of compliance. This supports the provision of a safe learning environment for children and the implementation of preventive measures and practices in accordance with approved standards.

8. National Efforts and Initiatives to Develop and Improve School Environments, Facilities, and Equipment

Regarding national initiatives supporting the development of Early Childhood institutional environments, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the question-

naire that the Ministry of Education is leading a range of initiatives within the framework of Saudi Vision 2030. These initiatives aim to develop infrastructure and facilities and enhance the quality of Early Childhood learning environments through several programs and projects, as follows:

First: Early Childhood Expansion Initiative:

This initiative is one of the key pillars of Pre-Primary Education sector development. Led by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with Tatweer Buildings Company, it aims to expand access to Early Childhood services and increase enrollment rates.

- **Objectives:** Increasing enrollment in Pre-Primary Education, promoting equal educational opportunities, providing safe, healthy, and stimulating learning environments, and enhancing children's readiness for Primary Education.
- **Key Outcomes :** Constructing new, fully equipped Pre-Primary Education facilities in accordance with modern standards, including appropriate furniture, learning resources, and technology, alongside the provision of indoor and outdoor play environments and compliance with safety standards and the Saudi Building Code.
- **Impact:** The initiative is at an advanced stage of implementation, with clearly defined performance indicators linked to performance scorecards, reflecting progressive and sustained improvement in the quality of the learning environment.

Second: Early Childhood Facilities Construction and Equipping Project:

This project aims to increase capacity and expand access to Early Childhood services through the construction of modern educational facilities.

- **Scope of Project:** Construction and equipping of (15) Early Childhood facilities, each comprising (20) classrooms.
- **Objectives:** Increasing capacity, enhancing the quality of the school environment in terms of safety and comfort, and supporting the expansion of Early Childhood services.
- **Deliverables:** Providing fully equipped educational facilities comprising modern classrooms, learning facilities, and comprehensive equipment in accordance with contemporary design standards.
- **Impact:** Increasing the number of available student places and enhancing the quality of learning environments across the Kingdom.

Third: Learning Environments and Educational Facilities Development Program:

This program complements infrastructure projects and focuses on enhancing the quality of the learning environment within classrooms.

- **Objectives:** Enhancing learning environments in terms of safety, health, and comfort; equipping classrooms with learning resources and modern technologies; and developing facilities for play and experiential learning.
- **Deliverables:** Equipping classrooms with appropriate educational furniture, creating safe play areas, providing interactive learning environments, and upgrading supporting facilities such as toilets and activity areas.
- Impact: Achieving continued improvement in operational quality and sustainability through the implementation of approved operational and handover models aligned with expansion projects.

These national initiatives reflect clear strategic integration in the development of Early Childhood environments in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with the expansion of infrastructure capacity progressing in parallel with improvements in the quality of facilities and equipment and in safety and operational standards. Together, these efforts support the provision of modern, safe, and stimulating learning environments aligned with the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030 and contribute to building a sustainable education system grounded in quality and efficiency.

Theme Six: Private Sector:

This theme examines investment in early childhood in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by analyzing the extent of private sector participation in the provision of early education services, the proportion of children enrolled in private provision compared with the public sector, and annual fee levels as an indicator of cost and accessibility. The theme also examines the institutional and regulatory framework governing the sector, including mechanisms for licensing, monitoring, oversight, and quality assurance across early education institutions. It also highlights partnerships between early education institutions and government and community entities and their role in supporting the quality of educational, health, and activity-based services provided to children. It also presents key national initiatives and policies aimed at strengthening investment in the sector, particularly awareness programs that contribute to raising public awareness of the importance of early education and encouraging private sector participation in its expansion.

1. Level of Private Sector Investment in Early Childhood:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's response to the questionnaire indicates that the private sector makes a moderate to high contribution to the financing and development of Early Childhood services, including Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education, relative to the level of investment required, as follows:

- **Investment in Early Childhood Care (Under 3 Years)** The data indicate that private sector investment covers between 50% and 75% of the required needs, reflecting a significant contribution to supporting this stage and meeting a substantial share of its educational and infrastructure requirements.
- **Investment in Pre-Primary Education (3–6 Years)** The response indicated that private sector investment also covers between 50% and 75% of the required needs, reflecting an active role for the private sector in supporting the expansion of Pre-Primary Education and enhancing the quality of the learning environment.

These data indicate that the private sector is a key partner in the development of the Early Childhood sector, making a significant contribution to meeting a substantial share of investment needs in both Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education.

2. Partnerships in Early Childhood:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's response to the questionnaire indicates that partnerships between private schools and Pre-Primary Education institutions and government or community entities in supporting the quality of Early Childhood remain limited, as follows:

- **Partnerships in Early Childhood Care (Under 3 Years)** The data indicate that such partnerships are in place in a limited number of Early Childhood schools (less than 50%) and are concentrated in a small number of initiatives that have yet to be widely implemented, reflecting emerging efforts that require further expansion.
- **Partnerships in Pre-Primary Education (3–6 Years)** The response indicated a similar level of partnership at this stage, with such partnerships in place in a limited number of schools (less than 50%) and comprising a small number of initiatives in the areas of educational support, health services, and extracurricular activities.

These data indicate that partnerships between the education sector and government or community entities in Early Childhood remain at an early stage of development, largely limited to a small number of initiatives that have yet to be implemented more broadly.

This highlights a clear opportunity to strengthen and expand these partnerships to enhance the quality of educational, health, and extracurricular services provided to children and improve coordination across the various supporting sectors.

3. Student Enrollment in the Private Sector Compared with the Public Sector:

Regarding private sector participation in the provision of Early Childhood education services, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in its response to the questionnaire that the proportion of children enrolled in private Early Childhood institutions is relatively high compared with some other stages of education, as follows:

- **Enrollment Rate in Early Childhood Care (Under 3 Years)** Enrollment in the private sector stands at approximately 60%, reflecting a moderate to high level of private sector participation in the provision of Early Childhood Care services compared with the public sector.
- **Enrollment Rate in Pre-Primary Education (3–6 Years)** Private sector enrollment at this stage rises to approximately 80%, indicating greater reliance on the private sector to accommodate children within Early Childhood services.

These data highlight the pivotal role of the private sector in accommodating large numbers of children in Early Childhood, particularly those aged 3–6 years, for whom private provision accounts for the largest share of enrollment. The data also underscore the importance of the private sector in supporting the overall capacity of the Early Childhood ecosystem, with a clear difference between Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education, with the latter accounting for the higher share.

4. Average Annual Fees per Student in the Private Sector:

Regarding tuition fees in private Early Childhood institutions, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that average annual fees per child vary according to the stage and type of educational program offered, as follows:

- **Early Childhood Care (Under 3 Years)** Average annual tuition fees are approximately SAR 11,000, reflecting a relatively moderate cost for this stage compared with other stages.
- **Pre-Primary Education (3–6 Years)** The data show variation across programs, with annual tuition fees as follows:
  - **Private Programs:** Approximately SAR 14,419.73
  - International Programs: Approximately SAR 21,685.14

The data also indicate that the authority responsible for overseeing Early Childhood does not impose a specified cap on tuition fees.

These data reveal clear differences in annual tuition fees between Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education, as well as between private and international programs within Pre-Primary Education, with international programs carrying substantially higher fees. This indicates a diverse range of private education options offering different levels of quality and services, alongside variations in families' financial capacity.

The private sector represents a key pillar of the Early Childhood ecosystem in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, making a significant contribution to financing, expanding capacity, and providing educational services, particularly in Pre-Primary Education. The data reveal variation in tuition fee levels across stages and programs, alongside the absence of a specified fee cap imposed by the overseeing authority, reflecting flexibility in the sector's fee structures. By contrast, institutional partnerships remain limited, highlighting the need for stronger coordination and integration among relevant entities to ensure the continued improvement and sustainability of service quality.

5. Licensing, Monitoring, and Oversight Mechanisms for Early Childhood in Private and International Schools:

Regarding the mechanisms for licensing, monitoring, and operating private and international Early Childhood schools, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that a regulatory framework is in place governing licensing, monitoring, and operational procedures under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, as follows:

- **Scope of Licensing Requirements:** Licensing and monitoring mechanisms for private and international schools apply across all stages of education, including Early Childhood, with specific requirements for facilities, equipment, and other conditions appropriate to this age group.
- **Role of the Ministry of Education in Licensing:** The Ministry of Education issues the initial and operating licenses required to provide Pre-Tertiary Education. No material changes-such as opening a school, transferring ownership, or changing the school's name, location, curriculum, or education stage-may be made without prior approval.

Licensing Requirements: The licensing requirements encompass a comprehensive set of standards, most including:

- Requirements for educational facilities, including a suitable location and compliance with safety, security, and health standards.
- Compliance of architectural and engineering plans with the requirements of each education stage.
- Provision of educational equipment and resources appropriate to the licensed curriculum or educational service.
- Compliance with educational, technical, administrative, and health requirements.
- Implementation of safety and security requirements throughout all school facilities.

These data reflect an integrated governance and oversight system for Early Childhood in private and international schools, underpinned by rigorous standards for licensing, operation, and monitoring, thereby ensuring the quality of the learning environment and the safety of children. This framework also reflects a high level of institutional organization that balances the expansion of educational provision with ensuring compliance with approved standards.

6. National Initiatives and Policies Supporting Private Sector Investment in Pre-Primary Education:

Regarding national initiatives and policies supporting private sector investment in Pre-Primary Education, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reported in response to the questionnaire that a range of initiatives and policies are in place to strengthen private sector participation by developing the regulatory and legislative environment, providing investment incentives, and expanding opportunities for the private sector to participate in the provision of educational services, as follows:

1. Private Schools Regulations and the Investment-Enabling Regulatory Framework:

- **Supervising Entity:** Ministry of Education
- **Objectives:** Regulating private sector participation in the provision of education services across the stages of public education, while enabling greater diversity in educational options, curricula, and operating models within private schools.
- Key Outputs and Data:
  - Approving enabling and incentive measures for private schools.
  - Providing in-kind, financial, or technical assistance.
  - Allowing private schools to benefit from government land, buildings, and schools through investment or usufruct agreements.

- Providing support and financing programs for private schools.
- Providing facilitative measures in emergency situations, such as the pandemic, to ensure continuity of education.
- Facilitating foreign investment in the education sector.

2. Education Vouchers for Students with Disabilities and Students Affected by the Clearance of Informal Settlements (Jeddah)

- **Supervising Entity:** Ministry of Education
- **Objectives** Providing school places for the target groups and ensuring continuity of enrollment in education.
- **Key Outputs and Data:**
  - More than 30,000 students have benefited from the program.
  - Expanding access to education for groups with the greatest needs through an education voucher scheme.

3. Annual Financial Subsidy:

- Supervising Entity: Ministry of Education
- Implementation Start Date 15/09/1410 AH
- **Objectives** Supporting newly established Pre-Primary Education institutions and private schools and enhancing their operational sustainability.
- **Key Outputs and Data:**
  - Providing annual financial support to newly established Pre-Primary Education institutions and schools.
  - Contributing to the operational stability and sustainability of newly established educational institutions.
- **Objectives Achievement Level** Achieved

These policies reflect a national framework for supporting private sector investment in Pre-Primary Education that combines legislative regulation, financial and technical incentives, and direct support mechanisms for target groups. This integrated approach helps make the sector more attractive to private investment and expands private sector participation in the provision of early childhood services, while supporting operational sustainability and improving the quality of educational services.

5

Sultanate of Oman



Introduction:

Early childhood is one of the most formative stages in human development and learning, as the early years play a critical role in building cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical capacities and in shaping children's earliest attitudes toward learning, school, and society. Accordingly, assessing the current Status of Early Childhood should not be limited to the scale of access or the number of institutions. Rather, it requires viewing Early Childhood as an integrated ecosystem in which governance and legislation, access and participation, curricula and educational practices, the workforce, the learning environment, and investment and partnership with the private sector interact.

In the Sultanate of Oman, the education ecosystem has evolved through a long-term national development trajectory, transforming from traditional forms of education with limited reach before 1970 into a modern education system with an expanded institutional and geographical footprint. Its curricula, infrastructure, and workforce have developed considerably, while the system has become increasingly aligned with national development objectives and Oman Vision 2040. This development has gradually extended to Early Childhood services, which today form part of a more structured and diverse education and care ecosystem, characterized by a growing range of service providers and increasingly developed regulatory frameworks.

Early Childhood in the Sultanate has a distinct institutional structure, with oversight responsibilities shared between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development according to the age group and nature of the service provided. The Ministry of Education oversees Pre-Primary Education for children aged three years and two months to six years, while the Ministry of Social Development oversees nurseries providing care services for children aged three months to three and a half years. This division of responsibilities reflects clear progress in recognizing the multidimensional nature of Early Childhood, while underscoring the continued importance of strengthening integration across care, development, and education, particularly during the earliest years of a child's life.

The regulatory framework for this stage has been further strengthened by the Education Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. (31/2023), the National Education Strategy 2040, and a range of circulars and guidelines governing admissions, curricula, the learning environment, and the relationship between families and educational institutions. The Ministry of Education is also working to further develop the Early Childhood educa-

tion ecosystem across school leadership and administration, the teaching workforce, and children's learning, alongside efforts to establish frameworks for evaluating performance at this stage.

Despite this institutional and regulatory progress, the current landscape indicates that the Sultanate is seeking to complete the transition from establishing frameworks and regulating service provision toward a more integrated national ecosystem for measuring quality, ensuring equitable access, and strengthening professional specialization. This is particularly evident in the ongoing development of the quality indicator framework, geographical disparities in access, the high proportion of staff without direct specialization in early education, and variation in certain aspects of the learning environment.

Building on the preceding discussion, this section examines the Status of Early Childhood in the Sultanate of Oman across the report's six themes, providing a comprehensive analysis of its current landscape and development priorities. The six themes are as follows:

- **Governance and Regulatory Frameworks**, which define the policies and procedures affecting early childhood.
- **Access and Participation**, to ensure that all children have access to appropriate educational opportunities and supportive environments.
- **Curricula and Educational Activities** provided to children, and the extent to which they align with developmental needs and international standards.
- **Early Childhood Workforce**, in terms of academic qualifications, continued professional development, and professional stability.
- **School Environment and Facilities** that support children's development and learning, including learning spaces, equipment, and materials that support educational activities.
- **Private Sector Role and Contribution**, alongside effective models of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in enhancing the quality of services provided to children.

Theme One: Governance and Regulatory Frameworks

This theme examines the governance and regulatory frameworks for Early Childhood in the Sultanate of Oman, including the responsible authorities, governing legislation and policies, monitoring and oversight mechanisms, quality indicators, the education structure, and key national initiatives aimed at advancing the sector and enhancing the quality of early childhood services.

1. Early Childhood Oversight Entities:

The Sultanate of Oman reported in its response to the questionnaire that Early Childhood is overseen by two principal government authorities according to the age groups served. The Ministry of Education is responsible for overseeing Pre-Primary Education for children aged 3 years and two months to 6 years, while the Ministry of Social Development oversees nurseries providing care services for children aged three months to three and a half years. This institutional division of responsibilities reflects a collaborative governance framework that ensures coverage across the different stages of Early Childhood, supporting the integrated provision of care, development, and education in accordance with the developmental characteristics of each age group.

2. Legislative and Regulatory Framework:

The Sultanate of Oman reported in response to the questionnaire that Early Childhood is governed by a legislative and regulatory framework comprising a range of legal instruments and education policies, most notably: The Education Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. (31/2023); the National Education Strategy 2040; and legislation governing the age of admission to Early Childhood institutions. The regulatory framework also includes provisions governing curricula and educational programs, such as the Guidance Circular on Learning Resources and Parameters for the Daily Program, alongside guides and circulars governing oversight of this stage, including the Safe Learning Environments Guide, the Kindergarten–Home Partnership Guide, and the Guidance Circular on Citizenship Education. As part of ongoing development efforts, the Early Childhood Education Department is implementing the Early Childhood Education Ecosystem Development Project, which focuses on three key areas: administration, the teaching workforce, and students. In parallel, regulations for evaluating performance at this stage are being developed, thereby contributing to enhancing the quality of educational and developmental services provided to children.

The data also indicate that the legislation and regulations governing Early Childhood are subject to periodic review and updating. Admission-age requirements are updated at the beginning of each academic year, while the circulars governing educational programs and curricula are also updated annually. This reflects the commitment of the relevant authorities to continuously developing the regulatory and educational frameworks, ensuring that they remain responsive to emerging developments in education, the needs of this stage, and quality improvement requirements.

The Sultanate of Oman has a legislative and regulatory framework for Early Childhood, underpinned by the Education Law and the National Education Strategy 2040 and covering admissions, curricula, and educational supervision. Efforts are ongoing to further develop the Early Childhood education ecosystem and complete the regulatory framework for evaluating performance at this stage.

3. Is there a national strategy specifically dedicated for regulating early childhood?

The Sultanate of Oman does not have a standalone national strategy specifically for Early Childhood; rather, this stage is incorporated within the broader directions of the National Education Strategy 2040. This means that a national framework for Early Childhood already exists within the broader education policy, while there remains scope to develop a more specialized and integrated national framework that directly connects care, education, health, protection, and development during the early years.

4. Oversight and Monitoring Mechanisms for Quality in Early Childhood:

The Sultanate of Oman reported in response to the questionnaire that a range of oversight and monitoring mechanisms are in place to ensure the quality of Early Childhood services. Key among these are periodic technical and administrative supervisory visits, conducted between two and five times per year. These mechanisms cover the various components of educational provision, including teaching, administrative, and support staff; curricula and learning activities; the learning environment and school facilities and equipment; as well as safety, security, and child protection. The competent authorities are also currently developing a modern ecosystem designed to support and reinforce oversight and monitoring mechanisms, thereby improving the efficiency of evaluation processes and ensuring the continued enhancement of the quality of education and care services delivered to children in early childhood.

The Sultanate of Oman adopts a comprehensive oversight approach to Early Childhood, based on regular supervisory visits and encompassing all aspects of the educational environment, while continuously working to develop a more modern and efficient ecosystem to ensure quality.

5. Monitoring Indicators:

The Sultanate of Oman's response to the questionnaire indicated that there are currently no specific indicators in place for measuring the quality of Early Childhood. However, the Ministry of Education is developing an integrated ecosystem for evaluating Early Education, aimed at establishing a comprehensive framework for monitoring performance and measuring quality across several key areas, including administration, teaching staff, and students. The ecosystem is planned to be implemented gradually over a three-year period, guided by a clear action plan, a review of relevant specialized studies, and insights drawn from experiences and practices in several Arab and Western countries. This direction reflects an institutional commitment to developing an indicator- and evidence-based system to support monitoring and evaluation and improve the quality of services provided in Early Childhood.

The Sultanate of Oman is moving towards developing an integrated national ecosystem for indicators and quality evaluation in Early Education, drawing on international practices and comparative experience to strengthen the effectiveness of monitoring and data-driven decision-making.

6. Education Structure for Early Childhood:

Based on the Sultanate of Oman's response to the questionnaire, Table (19) presents the educational structure for Early Childhood in the Sultanate of Oman:

Table (19) Educational Structure for Early Childhood in the Sultanate of Oman

International Level (ISCED)*	International Designation	Typical Age	Specified Age Range for Each Level	Availability of the Level in the Country (Available / Not Available)	Stage Compulsory Status (Compulsory–Non-Compulsory)	Level
ISCED 010	Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC 0–3)	Under 3 Years	From two months to 3.5 years	This stage is provided through care centers and Early Childhood Care settings under the Ministry of Social Development.	Non-Mandatory	Nursery

ISCED 020 – Year 1	(Pre-Primary 1)	3–4	From 3 years and 2 months to 4 years and 11 months	Private schools under the Ministry of Education	Non-Mandatory	Al Rawdah
ISCED 020 – Year 2	(Pre-Primary 2)	4–5	From 4 years and 2 months to 5 years and 11 months	Private schools under the Ministry of Education	Non-Mandatory	Kick-off
ISCED 20 – Year 3	Advanced Pre-Primary Education	5–6	5-6	Preparatory classes in public schools under the Ministry of Education	Non-Mandatory	Preparatory Class

* Note: This classification is based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) issued by UNESCO and is intended to assess the alignment of national education systems with the international standard in terms of age, the compulsory status of each stage, and the sequencing of pre-primary education stages.

Analysis of the educational structure for Early Childhood in the Sultanate of Oman indicates that it is broadly aligned with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). The structure begins with Early Childhood Education and Care (ISCED 010), which serves children from 2 months to 3.5 years of age and is provided through care centers and Early Childhood Care settings under the Ministry of Social Development. This is followed by Pre-Primary Education (ISCED 020), which serves children from three to six years of age and comprises three progressive levels: Kindergarten, Preparatory, and Preparatory Class.

The data indicate that Early Childhood services are delivered under the supervision of different authorities. Private schools under the Ministry of Education provide the Kindergarten and Preparatory levels for children from three years and two months to five years and eleven months of age, while public schools under the Ministry of Education provide the Preparatory Class level for children aged (5–6) years. This structure reflects an institutional division of roles between care and education providers, ensuring continuity in the services provided to children across the different stages of Early Childhood.

The data also show that all levels of Early Childhood are available within the education system of the Sultanate of Oman; however, they are classified as non-compulsory, including both Early Childhood Care and the various levels of Pre-Primary Education. This reflects a commitment to providing education and care opportunities in Early Childhood and making them accessible to families, without legally requiring children to enroll before entering formal schooling.

The Omani educational structure also demonstrates a high degree of alignment with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), both in its age-based divisions and in the structure of Early Education levels. This enhances international comparability and supports the alignment of the Sultanate of Oman's Early Childhood policies with relevant international trends and standards.

The educational structure for Early Childhood in the Sultanate of Oman follows a clearly defined progression spanning the ages of two months to six years, with strong alignment with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) and access to all levels of education and care, despite their non-compulsory status.

7. National Initiatives and Policies on Governance and Regulatory Frameworks in Early Childhood:

Initiative to Regulate and Unify Oversight of the Early Education Sector under the Ministry of Education (2024) The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate General of Private Educational Institutions and the Early Education Department, launched a national initiative to regulate the Early Education sector and unify official oversight of all institutions providing Early Education services in the Sultanate of Oman. The initiative seeks to improve the quality of education services by enhancing curricula, staff capacity, and educational facilities; ensuring compliance with safety and security requirements; strengthening the accuracy of national Early Education data and statistics; and fostering a more structured and attractive investment environment. The initiative includes integrating different educational institutions into the formal ecosystem, providing technical and procedural support to complete licensing requirements, conducting regular supervisory visits, and monitoring the registration of data in education systems. The initiative is expected to strengthen compliance with educational and technical standards, improve the quality of services provided to children, and enhance the sustainability of investment in the Early Education sector across the Sultanate of Oman.

Theme Two: Access and Participation

This theme examines the availability of early childhood services and equity in access across different population groups and geographical areas. It also highlights enrollment and retention rates in early childhood programs, reflecting the system's capacity to enroll

and retain children. This theme provides a basis for understanding the level of inclusivity in early childhood and the extent to which it aligns with the principles of equal opportunity.

1. Enrollment Rates in Early Childhood:

Based on the Sultanate of Oman's response to the questionnaire, Table (20) presents the percentage of children enrolled in Early Childhood programs in the Sultanate of Oman during the 2025–2026 academic year, by gender, school type, and geographic area:

Table (20) Percentage of Children Enrolled in Early Childhood Programs in the Sultanate of Oman During the 2025–2026 Academic Year, by Gender, School Type, and Geographic Area

Variable		Type		School Type				Geography
		Males	Females	Public	Private*	Global	City	Rural or Remote Areas (Villages, Outlying Areas, Small Settlements, etc.)
Children's Enrollment Rate*	Under 3 Years	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	3–6 Years	66.5%	67.3%	2.5%	93.3%	4.2%	97.5%	2.5%
Number of Schools	Under 3 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	3–6 Years	1.334		117	1161	56	1.217	117
Number of Classes	Under 3 Years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	3–6 Years	6,031		127	5642	262	5.904	127

Table (20) shows that the enrollment rate in Early Childhood programs among children aged (3–6) years in the Sultanate of Oman reached (66.5%) for males and (67.3%) for females, indicating broadly comparable enrollment rates between the two genders, with a slight advantage for females. The data also show that the vast majority of children enrolled in these programs attend private schools, accounting for (93.3%), compared with only (2.5%) in public schools, while (4.2%) attend international schools. This reflects the central role played by private education institutions in providing Pre-Primary Education services in the Sultanate of Oman.

In terms of geographic distribution, Early Childhood programs are heavily concentrated in urban areas, with (97.5%) of children enrolled in Early Childhood located in cities, compared with only (2.5%) in rural or remote areas. This points to geographic disparities in the availability of Early Education institutions and programs across different areas.

The data on the distribution of institutions offering Early Childhood programs for children aged 3–6 years during the 2025–2026 academic year also indicate that there are (1,161) private institutions, (56) international institutions, and (117) public institutions, bringing the total to (1,334) institutions. These data point to a diverse range of providers of Early Education services, with the private sector playing a pivotal role in serving the largest share of children enrolled at this stage.

In terms of classrooms, there are (5,642) in private schools, (262) in international schools, and (127) in public schools, bringing the total number of classrooms to (6,031). These figures reflect differences in capacity across school types, with private schools accounting for the largest share of classrooms, consistent with their higher enrollment rates compared with public and international schools.

Based on the Sultanate of Oman's response to the questionnaire, Table (21) presents the percentage of children enrolled in Early Childhood programs in the Sultanate of Oman during the 2025–2026 academic year:

Table (21) Percentage of Children Enrolled in Early Childhood Programs in the Sultanate of Oman During the 2025–2026 Academic Year

International Level (ISCED)*	International Designation	Typical Age	Number of Students at Each Level for the 2025–2026 Academic Year	
			Males	Females
ISCED 010	Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC 0–3)	Under 3 Years	-	-
ISCED 020 – Year 1	(Pre-Primary 1)	3–4	20.343	19.656
ISCED 020 – Year 2	(Pre-Primary 2)	4–5	30.492	29.817
ISCED 20 – Year 3	Advanced Pre-Primary Education	5–6	1.309	1.276

Table (21) shows that the total number of children aged (3–6) years enrolled in Early Childhood programs in the Sultanate of Oman during the 2025–2026 academic year reached (102,893) children, comprising (52,144) males and (50,749) females. These figures indicate close parity in enrollment between males and females, with a slightly higher number of males than females.

At the Pre-Primary Education level (ISCED 020 – Year 1), which serves children aged (3–4) years, enrollment reached (39,999) children, comprising (20,343) males and (19,656) females, reflecting a relatively balanced enrollment pattern between the two genders at this level.

At the Pre-Primary Education level (ISCED 020 – Year 2) for children aged (4–5) years, enrollment was the highest among all Early Childhood levels, reaching a total of (60,309) children, comprising (30,492) males and (29,817) females. This indicates a broader enrollment base at this level compared with the other levels.

At the Advanced Pre-Primary Education level (ISCED 020 – Year 3), which serves children aged (5–6) years, total enrollment stood at (2,585) children, comprising (1,309) males and (1,276) females. These figures are considerably lower than those recorded at the two preceding levels, which may be related to how this level is structured or to the more limited number of institutions offering it compared with the Kindergarten and Preparatory levels.

Overall, the data show that enrollment is concentrated in the Kindergarten and Preparatory levels (ages 3–5), which account for the vast majority of children enrolled in Early Childhood programs in the Sultanate of Oman, while the numbers of males and females remain closely balanced across the different educational levels.

The enrollment rate in Early Childhood programs in the Sultanate of Oman among children aged (3–6) years reached approximately two-thirds of the target population, with broadly comparable enrollment rates among males and females. The provision of these programs also relies primarily on the private sector, which serves the vast majority of enrolled children, while services are heavily concentrated in urban areas compared with rural and remote areas. Total enrollment reached (102,893) children across (1,217) educational institutions comprising (5,904) classrooms.

2. Program Retention and Continuity:

The data indicate a high level of continuity among children enrolled in Early Childhood programs, with more than (75%) remaining in these programs until they transition to Primary Education. This is a positive indicator of program stability and their effectiveness in sustaining children's enrollment and retention, thereby helping strengthen their educational and developmental readiness for Primary Education.

3. Inclusive Access (Equity in Admission)

In terms of inclusive access (equity in enrollment), the data indicate that Early Childhood enrollment opportunities in rural and remote areas are available to between (50%)

and less than (75%) of all children living in these areas. This indicator reflects a good level of geographic coverage in the provision of Early Childhood services compared with many contexts where access poses greater challenges. At the same time, it points to scope for further expanding the geographic reach of these programs. This calls for continued efforts to expand access to Early Childhood services in rural and remote areas, thereby promoting greater inclusion and more equitable educational opportunities for all children.

4. Mechanism for Children's Transition from Early Childhood to Grade One:

A clear and structured mechanism is in place to support children's transition from Early Childhood to Grade One of Primary Education. It incorporates several supportive practices, including gradually increasing the time children spend in the learning environment and strengthening collaboration and coordination between Early Childhood institutions and primary schools. This reflects an institutional commitment to ensuring a smooth and secure transition for children, supporting their academic and developmental readiness and promoting continuity of learning across the two stages.

> The ecosystem features a clear and structured transition mechanism between Early Childhood and Primary Education, underpinned by gradual transition practices and institutional coordination that help ensure a smooth and carefully planned transition for children, strengthening their readiness for Primary Education and supporting continuity of learning.

5. Parent and Community Engagement:

The data indicate that the Early Childhood ecosystem in the Sultanate of Oman adopts an approach that supports parental and community engagement through regulatory frameworks and procedures designed to strengthen their role. These include the issuance of a Family–School Partnership Guide and the activation of Parent Councils as a mechanism for ongoing communication about children's progress. The policies also provide for family guidance programs and support for home learning within the legislative framework for education, with an ongoing focus on strengthening their implementation

through executive regulations. This reflects a commitment to strengthening partnerships among families, Early Childhood institutions, and local communities, thereby fostering an integrated learning environment that supports children's development and learning.

6. National Initiatives on Access and Participation:

The **"Family–School Partnership Guide"** is one of the national initiatives designed to strengthen parental engagement in Early Education in the Sultanate of Oman. It was launched in October 2023 by the Directorate General of Private Educational Institutions – Early Education Department, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. The initiative aims to strengthen the educational partnership between families and schools and improve communication between female teachers and parents, thereby supporting children's holistic development and fostering greater integration between home and school learning environments.

One of the initiative's key outputs is the development of a practical guide that sets out mechanisms for communication and collaboration, promotes information sharing on children's development, and strengthens parental engagement in the educational process. The initiative also contributes to improving the quality of learning by aligning the efforts of families and schools and supporting children's academic and social development. Implementation and monitoring mechanisms include parent satisfaction surveys, supervisory visits, and periodic reports assessing the effectiveness of the partnership.

Overall, this initiative reflects a strategic direction towards building a sustainable partnership between families and educational institutions, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of Early Education outcomes, bridging the gap between home and school environments, and sustaining educational impact in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Early Childhood ecosystem in the Sultanate of Oman demonstrates clear progress in participation and access, supported by frameworks and policies that promote parental engagement through institutional initiatives such as the Family–School Partnership Guide, alongside communication channels facilitated through Parent Councils and family support and guidance programs. At the same time, the data indicate a good level of inclusive access to services, although geographic disparities persist in favor of urban areas. This reflects growing efforts to expand coverage and promote greater equity in access to enrollment opportunities.

Theme Three: Curricula and Activities

This theme examines the curriculum and activities ecosystem in early childhood, including the curriculum philosophy and pedagogical approaches, the areas of educational content, and the extent to which the curriculum is comprehensive and integrated. It also examines the educational documents and guidelines that support curriculum implementation and their role in guiding classroom practices and enhancing the quality of education. The theme also addresses the educational values embedded in the curriculum and how they are integrated into learning activities, as well as activities that support children's development across different domains and the mechanisms used for developmental assessment and monitoring. Of good note, the theme aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how the various elements of the curriculum and activities are integrated and the extent to which they align with the objectives of early childhood.

1. Curriculum Philosophy and Orientation:

The data indicate that the Early Childhood curriculum in the Sultanate of Oman is grounded in a holistic learning philosophy that addresses the various dimensions of children's development-cognitive, linguistic, social, physical, and emotional. This philosophy is clearly articulated and formally endorsed within the overall curriculum framework; however, the extent to which it is mandatory and the mechanisms for translating it into practice remain only partially specified, allowing some scope for interpretation in implementation.

The data also confirm that the curriculum embraces learning through play and active exploration as core pedagogical principles. This approach is formally endorsed within education policies, although the level of detail provided to guide classroom practices and the degree to which it is mandated in practice continue to vary, allowing a degree of flexibility in the implementation of activities across learning environments.

In the same context, the data show that education policies allow Early Childhood schools to adopt international curricula or global pedagogical models, subject to specific regulatory requirements and conditions. This reflects a structured degree of curricular flexibility that accommodates diversity in educational practices while maintaining alignment with the national framework and approved standards.

2. Areas of harmonization and integration:

The data indicate that the Early Childhood curriculum in the Sultanate of Oman encompasses the core learning domains of Early Childhood-language, early mathematics, sci-

ence, the arts, social skills, and health and physical development-reflecting an integrated approach to the learning experiences provided to children.

The data also confirm that the national curriculum defines expected developmental and learning objectives by age group, organized around two main age groups: (3–4 years) and (5–6 years). This is consistent with the age-based admission structure adopted for Early Childhood programs and reflects careful alignment of the objectives with the developmental characteristics and needs of each age group.

In the same context, the curriculum incorporates a diverse range of learning activities designed to integrate several key learning domains, strengthening connections across different learning experiences and supporting children's holistic learning. There is also an ongoing emphasis on fostering greater integration across learning domains within the activities provided.

The Early Childhood curriculum in the Sultanate of Oman is comprehensive and integrated, encompassing all key learning domains and defining developmental and learning objectives by age group to ensure that curriculum content is aligned with children's developmental characteristics. The curriculum also incorporates a diverse range of learning activities that support the integration of several learning domains, fostering comprehensive and interconnected learning experiences for children.

3. Curriculum Document and Educational Guidelines:

The Curriculum Framework and Pedagogical Guidelines dimension outlines several practices and policies related to the national curriculum framework for Pre-Primary Education, as follows:

An officially approved national curriculum document for Pre-Primary Education is in place, clearly defining the learning content, objectives, and expected skills for all groups of children at this stage. Although this document has been adopted as a mandatory national reference, the analysis indicates that its implementation remains somewhat limited or is subject to ongoing review and development, reflecting a relative gap between the normative framework and actual practice in educational settings.

The curriculum document or national framework for Pre-Primary Education also includes guidance for male and female teachers, providing clear, practical direction to support the planning and delivery of learning activities across different learning en-

vironments. These guides are accompanied by practical examples that help teachers translate curriculum content into actionable classroom practices, thereby enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in Early Childhood.

The curriculum document also sets out age-appropriate approaches to learning, emphasizing several contemporary pedagogical approaches, including learning through play, collaborative learning, and project-based learning. This reflects a pedagogical approach that promotes active, child-centered learning, supporting the integrated development of children's cognitive, social, and emotional skills.

An approved national curriculum document for Pre-Primary Education is in place, setting out clear learning objectives and content, together with teacher guides and practical guidance to support implementation. The document emphasizes contemporary learning approaches such as learning through play, collaborative learning, and project-based learning; however, their implementation in practice remains somewhat variable.

4. Curriculum Document Values:

The **Values dimension of the Pre-Primary Education Curriculum** reflects a clear emphasis on embedding educational values within the curriculum framework, as follows:

The curriculum clearly and comprehensively defines a set of core values to be fostered during Pre-Primary Education, aligned with the developmental characteristics of this age group. These include values such as: Respect, cooperation, responsibility, honesty, tolerance, empathy, and acceptance of others. This approach is further reinforced by the issuance of the Citizenship Education Framework for Early Education and its dissemination to relevant educational institutions, with specialists monitoring the implementation of its key areas. This reflects an institutional commitment to strengthening the values dimension of Early Education.

Educational values are also integrated across most learning domains, including language, early mathematics, science, the arts, and social, health, and physical activities. These values are clearly reflected in most everyday teaching and learning practices within learning environments, strengthening the integration of values with academic content.

Learning activities also incorporate authentic, real-life situations that help reinforce

values in children's everyday lives, providing opportunities to interact with others and directly practice positive behaviors across diverse contexts. This supports the practical and lasting internalization of these values.

The Teacher Guide also provides clear and comprehensive guidance on fostering values among children, offering structured direction that helps teachers use learning activities to reinforce all core values across a range of classroom and extracurricular contexts, thereby ensuring that educational practice remains aligned with the curriculum's values-based objectives.

5. Activities Supporting Child Development:

The Teacher Guide also provides clear and comprehensive guidance on fostering values among children, offering structured direction that helps teachers use learning activities to reinforce all core values across a range of classroom and extracurricular contexts, thereby ensuring that educational practice remains aligned with the curriculum's values-based objectives. The Teacher Guide also provides clear and comprehensive guidance on fostering values among children, offering structured direction that helps teachers use learning activities to reinforce all core values across a range of classroom and extracurricular contexts, thereby ensuring that educational practice remains aligned with the curriculum's values-based objectives.

The data also indicate that children are provided with diverse learning opportunities across both indoor and outdoor environments, enriching their learning experiences through direct interaction with their surroundings.

6. Developmental Assessment and Monitoring:

The **Assessment and Developmental Monitoring** dimension examines the extent to which institutions apply methods for assessing children's development in Early Childhood. The data indicate a clear reliance on systematic observation as a primary tool for the continued assessment of children's performance within the learning environment. The data also indicate the use of records or portfolios to monitor children's development and document their progress across different developmental domains, enabling systematic tracking of each child's individual learning and developmental trajectory. The data also indicate that parents receive regular feedback on their children's progress, strengthening the partnership between families and educational institutions and supporting children's holistic development.

The data demonstrate the Sultanate of Oman's commitment to regulating and overseeing curricula and educational activities related to Early Childhood. This is evident in the emphasis placed on curriculum content, the integration of values across the curriculum, the diversity of activities that support children's development, and the use of developmental assessment approaches to monitor children's progress and strengthen partnerships with families, thereby fostering holistic and balanced development in Early Childhood.

7. National Initiatives and Policies on Curricula and Activities in Early Childhood:

The Safe Learning Environments for Children Guide initiative is one of the national initiatives aimed at enhancing learning environments in Early Childhood. It was launched in December 2024 by the Ministry of Education – Directorate General of Private Educational Institutions (Early Education Department), in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. The initiative aims to establish a comprehensive framework for designing safe and stimulating physical learning environments that support the quality of Early Education and enhance the effectiveness of educational practices within educational institutions.

The initiative's key objectives include establishing the principles and standards required to create safe, child-friendly learning environments and supporting educational leaders, supervisors, and female teachers in applying international best practices in classroom environment design. The initiative also seeks to enhance the quality of Early Education by providing stimulating environments that enable children to engage in active learning and develop creativity and independence, while aligning these environments with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040 to ensure that educational objectives are integrated with national development goals.

A key output of the initiative is the development of a comprehensive regulatory guide that sets out standards for the design of physical learning environments, helping to enhance the quality of environments in Early Education institutions and ensure safe, stimulating settings that support children's holistic physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. The initiative also contributes to strengthening female teachers' capacity to organize classroom environments and make effective use of learning centers, while promoting self-directed and interactive learning and standardizing educational practices related to the design of learning environments across institutions.

The initiative targets a broad range of stakeholders, including educational leaders, school administrators, educational supervisors, female Early Education teachers, and entities involved in developing the sector, thereby supporting comprehensive implementation across the Sultanate of Oman. The initiative also offers a range of professional, institutional, educational, and non-financial incentives that contribute to improving performance, enhancing institutional quality, and strengthening job satisfaction and professional commitment.

In terms of implementation, the initiative applies clear and measurable standards, supported by continued monitoring of compliance with the guide's requirements for learning environment design and periodic evaluation focused on meeting safety and quality standards. This process is reinforced by supervisory tools and ongoing feedback to improve practices.

At the strategic level, the initiative emphasizes sustainability by supporting the development of an integrated education system that begins in Early Childhood, investing in human capital through high-quality learning environments, reducing educational disparities, and improving the efficiency of education spending. The initiative also contributes to strategic alignment with Oman Vision 2040 by creating learning environments that support the development of creative, capable children who are equipped to adapt to future demands.

Theme Four: Early Childhood Workforce

This theme examines the early childhood workforce in terms of its size and distribution, professional characteristics, and academic qualifications, in addition to analyzing recruitment and hiring practices and suitability for the specific requirements of this stage. The theme also addresses the professional development and professional licensing ecosystem as a key mechanism for enhancing teacher competence and ensuring the quality of educational performance. It also outlines regulations governing teacher-to-child ratios, reflecting standards designed to balance workload with the demands of care and education. The theme concludes by reviewing key national initiatives and policies aimed at developing the early childhood workforce and addressing teacher shortages, thereby strengthening the sector's readiness and enhancing the quality of its outcomes.

1. Workforce Statistics:

Based on the Sultanate of Oman's response to the questionnaire, Table (22) presents the Early Childhood workforce in the Sultanate of Oman, disaggregated by gender (male and female), school type, and geographic area:

Table(22) Early Childhood Workforce Statistics in the Sultanate of Oman.

Variable	Type		School Type			Geography	
	Males	Females	Public	Private*	Global	City	Rural or Remote
Number of Teachers	0	7.425	196	6.850	379	7.229	196
Number of Administrative Staff	0	3.036	0	2.375	661	3.036	0

The table presenting workforce statistics for Early Childhood in the Sultanate of Oman shows a clear concentration of female staff in both teaching and administrative roles, with males almost entirely absent across all categories.

At the teaching level, the total number reached (7,425) female teachers, reflecting the predominance of women in the Early Childhood workforce. By school type, female teachers are distributed as follows: (6,850) in private schools, (379) in international schools, and (196) in public schools. The geographic distribution also shows a pronounced concentration in urban areas, with (7,229) female teachers, compared with (196) in rural or remote areas. It should be noted that the overall figures reflect differences in the way the data are classified by school type and geographic area.

As for administrative staff, the total stood at (3,036), all of whom were female. Of these, (2,375) worked in private schools and (661) in international schools, while no administrative staff were recorded in public schools. All administrative staff were concentrated in urban areas, with none recorded in rural or remote areas.

Based on the Sultanate of Oman's response to the questionnaire, Table (23) presents the number of Early Childhood teachers in the Sultanate of Oman by academic qualification:

Table (23) Early Childhood Workforce in the Sultanate of Oman by Academic Qualification.

Type of Qualification	Number	%
High School Certificate or Equivalent	5.552	76.8
Diploma in Education without a Specialization in Early Childhood Education	340	4.7
Bachelor's Degree in Education, with No Specialization in Early Education	1.301	18
Postgraduate Qualification in Education, with No Specialization in Early Education	36	0.5
Total	**7.229**	**100**

The table presenting the distribution of Early Childhood teachers in the Sultanate of Oman by academic qualification shows that the vast majority hold a General Education Diploma or equivalent qualification, totaling (5,552) teachers and accounting for (76.8%) of the total teaching workforce. The second-largest group comprises teachers holding a Bachelor's Degree in Education in fields not directly related to Early Education, totaling (1,301) teachers, or (18%). This indicates a substantial presence of university-qualified teaching staff within the sector, although their qualifications are not specifically specialized in Early Education. Teachers holding a Diploma in Education without a specialization in Early Education totaled (340), representing (4.7%) of the teaching workforce. This proportion is relatively small compared with the two preceding qualification groups, reflecting limited reliance on this qualification pathway. Teachers holding postgraduate qualifications in Education without a specialization in Early Education constitute the smallest group, with only (36) teachers, representing (0.5%) of the total.

This workforce profile reveals a key human resources challenge that lies not in the number of staff, but in their level of professional and academic specialization. The high proportion of teachers holding secondary-level qualifications, coupled with the low proportion holding university qualifications specifically in Early Education, places human capital development at the forefront of priorities for reforming this stage.

This finding is particularly significant because Early Education is a distinct professional field that requires practitioners to have specialized knowledge of child development and developmental psychology, learning through play, observation and developmental assessment, family engagement, and the management of classroom environments appropriate to the early years. Accordingly, raising qualification levels should not be pursued solely as a quantitative goal; rather, efforts should focus on developing qualifications specifically in Early Childhood.

The data indicate that the qualification profile of the Early Childhood workforce is heavily weighted towards staff with secondary-level qualifications, with smaller proportions holding specialized university and education qualifications. This points to a potential need to strengthen academic qualifications and professional specialization across this vital sector.

2. Recruitment and Hiring:

The findings of the recruitment and hiring analysis indicate the existence of a relatively clear regulatory framework for appointing teaching staff in Early Childhood, although challenges remain in the availability and recruitment of specialized professionals. With regard to teacher appointment criteria, the data indicate that specific standards and procedures are in place for recruiting Early Childhood teachers and are characterized by clarity and transparency. The relevant authorities have established clear requirements and qualifications for teaching positions at this stage, helping to promote fairness and objectivity in selection and recruitment processes and ensure that applicants meet minimum standards of professional competence.

With regard to strategies for attracting and recruiting qualified professionals, the data indicate that current recruitment practices fall within the general employment policies applied across all stages of education, with no specialized strategies or incentives specifically designed to attract qualified professionals to work in Early Childhood. This points to an opportunity to develop more specialized policies that reflect the distinctive nature and importance of this stage, thereby supporting the attraction and retention of graduates with relevant specializations within the sector.

With regard to selecting teachers based on qualifications and professional experience, the data indicate that selection procedures are primarily based on the general criteria applied across different stages of education, without clearly defined requirements for qualifications or experience specifically related to Pre-Primary Education. While general education qualifications are important, the distinctive nature of Early Childhood calls for greater emphasis on the experience and skills specifically related to children's development and learning during the early years.

With regard to the academic qualifications of teaching staff, the data indicate that formal requirements are in place specifying the minimum qualifications required to work at this stage. The Ministry requires female teachers to hold an appropriate academic qualification, such as a Bachelor's Degree in the relevant field; a Bachelor's Degree supplemented by specialized academic preparation in Early Education; or a Diploma in Education accompanied by specified practical experience in Early Education. These requirements reflect a commitment to enhancing the quality of the workforce and ensuring that staff possess the knowledge and skills needed to work effectively with children at this stage of development. However, the data reveal that some Early Childhood institutions appoint female teachers who hold a General Education Diploma supplemented by accredited training programs, due to the limited availability of qualified female teachers

specializing in Early Education. This highlights a significant gap between qualification requirements and labor market realities, resulting from the limited availability of qualified female teachers specializing in Early Education. This demonstrates that addressing the shortage of specialized professionals requires long-term policies for recruitment, professional preparation, and specialized qualification, rather than simply tightening employment requirements.

3. Professional Development and Professional Licensing:

The findings for this theme indicate that the professional development and professional licensing ecosystem for Early Childhood teaching staff in the Sultanate of Oman is still being developed and established. While several initiatives and efforts are in place to strengthen the professional preparation and qualifications of female and male teachers, many practices have yet to become mandatory or be institutionalized within an integrated regulatory framework. With regard to continuing professional development opportunities, the data indicate that training and development opportunities specifically designed for female Early Childhood teachers are available, although their coverage and continuity remain limited. This reflects an emerging commitment to developing the professional competencies of the Early Childhood workforce. At the same time, the response indicates that efforts are currently underway, in coordination with relevant stakeholders, to develop mechanisms for the professional preparation and qualification of female teachers specializing in Early Childhood, reflecting a positive direction towards strengthening the quality of the teaching workforce in the future.

With regard to mandatory participation in professional development programs, the data indicate that participation by female and male Early Childhood teachers is not compulsory. There are also currently no forms of institutional support for participation, either through dedicated training time during working hours or coverage of associated costs. This situation points to limited institutional incentives for ensuring the continuity of professional development among teaching staff. Nevertheless, the data indicate that efforts are underway to require relevant entities to ensure more regular participation by female Early Education teachers in professional development programs, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of teaching practices and improving the quality of services provided to children.

With regard to required professional development hours or periodic professional development requirements, the data indicate the existence of recommendations and programs similar to those adopted in some education systems internationally, which require the

completion of a specified number of professional development hours within a defined period. However, these recommendations are not mandatory.

With regard to professional licensing, the data indicate that a professional licensing system is not currently in place for female and male Early Childhood teachers. This is an area that warrants attention in light of international trends toward professional licensing systems as a means of ensuring minimum standards of professional competence and improving the quality of educational outcomes. The absence of a professional licensing system may also limit opportunities to standardize professional practice and ensure that practitioners meet the professional requirements needed to work with children at this particularly sensitive developmental stage.

With regard to workload and the child-to-teacher ratio, the data indicate that a standard of one staff member for every (20) children is applied for the (3–5)-year age group. This represents an important regulatory standard for managing the number of children in classrooms or learning groups. However, its effectiveness depends on other factors, including staff qualifications, the nature of the educational program, the availability of teaching assistants, and the level of support services provided to children. Accordingly, periodically reviewing this ratio in light of international standards and children's needs could contribute to enhancing the quality of care and learning provided in Early Childhood.

There are promising directions for strengthening the preparation and qualification of the Early Childhood workforce. However, the ecosystem still requires further regulatory and legislative development through expanded professional development opportunities, mandatory requirements for continuing training, the introduction of a professional licensing system, and stronger institutional support mechanisms. Together, these measures would help build a qualified teaching workforce capable of providing high-quality education and care to children during their early years.

4. National Initiatives and Policies for Early Childhood Workforce Development:

Experience-Sharing Program for Male and Female Early Education Supervisors via Microsoft Teams:

The Ministry of Education, through the Directorate General of Private Educational Institutions – Early Education Department and in collaboration with the educational directorates across the governorates, launched an ongoing national program in 2022 to

strengthen the professional development of male and female Early Education supervisors through the establishment of a digital professional learning community on Microsoft Teams. The program focuses on sharing experience and exemplary supervisory practices, the development of professional and supervisory competencies, and the promotion of a culture of continued learning and collaborative practice among education professionals working in the Early Childhood sector.

The program has provided a platform for sharing guidance materials, experience, and documented practices, while strengthening coordination among the educational directorates, making it a promising model for digital professional development. Assessing the program's quantitative impact on supervisory performance, however, requires pre-implementation evaluation indicators and post-implementation evaluation indicators. Based on the available data, its demonstrated value lies in building a professional learning network and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience, while determining its direct impact on performance requires more specific evaluation evidence.

Theme Five: Learning Environments and Facilities

This theme examines the current state of the school environment and physical facilities in Early Childhood institutions in the Sultanate of Oman, addressing several aspects related to the quality of the learning environment and readiness to support children's learning and holistic development. This includes the overall school environment, the physical environment of nursery and Pre-Primary Education classrooms, educational facilities and classroom equipment, the organization of learning areas within classrooms, as well as health and medical facilities and the applicable safety and security standards. The theme also reviews key national efforts and initiatives aimed at developing and improving school environments and facilities in early childhood.

1. School Environment:

The data indicate that more than 90% of institutions provide safe and appropriate environments for learning and daily activities, including playgrounds and open spaces. More than 90% of institutions also provide safe, well-equipped playgrounds that enable children to engage in free play and physical activity.

This finding represents a clear strength in the facilities available at this stage, as engagement in everyday activities, play, and physical movement is fundamental to children's development. Balanced Early Education cannot be achieved in an environment that lacks safe spaces for movement, interaction, and exploration.

The school environment for Early Childhood in the Sultanate of Oman demonstrates a very high level of readiness, with safe learning environments and well-equipped playgrounds available in all or the vast majority of schools (more than 90%). This reflects a clear commitment to providing safe and stimulating learning environments that support children's learning and holistic development.

2. Physical Environment of Nursery and Pre-Primary Education Classrooms:

The data indicate that specific standards are in place to regulate the physical environment in Early Childhood institutions in the Sultanate of Oman, covering both the classroom space allocated per child and the number of children in each classroom, as follows:

- **Classroom Space per Child (Early Childhood Care – Under 3 Years)** The data indicate that the classroom space allocated per child is less than 3 square meters, pointing to the existence of defined regulatory standards governing the space allocated to children at this stage.
- **Classroom Space per Child (3–6 Years)** The response indicates that the classroom space allocated per child is also less than 3 square meters, reflecting broadly comparable classroom space standards across Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education.
- **Number of Children per Classroom (Early Childhood Care – Under 3 Years)** The data indicate that the permitted number of children per classroom ranges from (12–20). The response also notes that Early Childhood Care institutions do not fall under the Ministry of Education, which may explain differences in some of the regulatory standards applicable to this age group.
- **Number of Children per Classroom (3–6 Years)** The data indicate that the permitted class size ranges from (20–25) children, reflecting the existence of regulatory standards governing class size in Pre-Primary Education and supporting effective management of teaching and learning within the classroom.

Class size is clearly regulated across Early Childhood institutions in the Sultanate of Oman, with (12–20) children per classroom in Early Childhood Care and (20–25) in Pre-Primary Education, supporting structured learning environments tailored to the requirements of each age group.

3. Educational Facilities:

This section examines the availability of educational and technological facilities in Early Childhood schools, including learning resources, digital learning tools, and essential furnishings and storage facilities, all of which contribute to creating an appropriate and safe learning environment for children and teachers.

- **Availability of Libraries and Digital Learning Resources:** The data indicate that small libraries stocked with age-appropriate books, as well as computers and digital learning tools that support children's learning, are available in between 50% and 75% of Early Childhood schools. This finding indicates a moderate level of availability, reflecting ongoing efforts to provide diverse learning resources and foster children's cognitive and digital skills, while highlighting the need to expand access to these facilities across all schools.
- **Availability of Appropriate Furniture and Equipment:** The data indicate that age-appropriate chairs and tables for children, as well as suitable furniture for teachers, together with cabinets and storage units for learning tools and materials, are available in all or more than 90% of Early Childhood schools. This finding demonstrates a high level of readiness in providing the essential facilities and equipment needed to support children's comfort, maintain a well-organized learning environment, and enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning within schools.

This indicates that the Sultanate of Oman has achieved a good level of provision in the physical foundations of the learning environment, while further expansion of resources is needed to create a more cognitively rich and digitally enabled learning environment. Accordingly, the future priority lies not only in expanding buildings and essential facilities, but also in enhancing the quality of the learning environment by increasing the availability of learning resources that children use on a daily basis.

The data reveal a disparity between the two categories of educational facilities. More than 90% of schools provide appropriate furniture and essential equipment for children and teachers, whereas the availability of small libraries and digital learning tools remains moderate, ranging from 50% to 75% of schools.

4. Organization of Classroom Learning Areas:

The findings for the Sultanate of Oman indicate the adoption of a pedagogical approach focused on creating classroom environments that foster active learning and children's independence. The response indicates that Pre-Primary Education schools are required to provide integrated **learning centers that support self-directed learning** within the classroom. This reflects a commitment to providing diverse learning spaces that offer children opportunities to explore, experiment, and engage with learning activities in such ways that reflect their interests and developmental needs. This finding also indicates that classroom environment design extends beyond the provision of essential equipment to include the organization of diverse learning centers that foster children's cognitive, social, linguistic, and physical skills and promote their active engagement in the learning process. This represents a contemporary pedagogical practice that supports children's holistic development and strengthens their capacity for self-directed learning and decision-making.

5. Health and Hygiene Facilities:

The data for the Sultanate of Oman indicate that health and hygiene facilities are widely available across Early Childhood institutions. The response indicates that adequate and clean toilets, handwashing facilities equipped with water and soap, safe drinking water, and waste disposal facilities are available in all or the vast majority of Early Childhood schools (more than 90%). This finding reflects a clear commitment to providing children with a healthy and safe environment by ensuring access to essential facilities that support public health and disease prevention. These facilities also help foster positive health behaviors among children and instill good personal hygiene practices from an early age, contributing positively to their health, well-being, and readiness to learn.

6. Medical Facilities and First Aid:

The data indicate that equipped clinics or first-aid rooms for managing illness and minor injuries, together with equipment for monitoring children's physical growth, such as weighing scales, height-measuring devices, and measuring tapes, are available in between 50% and 75% of Early Childhood schools. These data indicate a moderate level of availability, reflecting attention to children's health and safety in several schools. At the same time, they highlight the need to expand and strengthen these facilities to ensure access to primary health care and regular monitoring of children's physical growth across all Early Childhood schools.

This finding points to clear scope for expansion, particularly as first-aid services and growth monitoring are not supplementary features of Early Childhood provision, but are directly linked to children's safety, health, and capacity to learn.

Medical and first-aid facilities are moderately available compared with some other essential facilities, highlighting the importance of expanding the provision of first-aid rooms and physical growth monitoring equipment across all schools, given their vital role in promoting children's health and safety and supporting a safe learning environment.

7. Safety and Security Standards:

The data for the Sultanate of Oman indicate that clear and formally approved safety and security standards have been established by the authority responsible for licensing Pre-Primary Education schools. These standards are implemented and adhered to in all or the vast majority of Early Childhood schools (more than 90%). These data reflect the existence of a clear regulatory framework governing safety and security requirements in Early Childhood institutions, helping to ensure a safe learning environment for children and staff. The high level of compliance with these standards also indicates the effectiveness of monitoring and oversight mechanisms and the commitment of educational institutions to implementing preventive measures that help protect children and safeguard their well-being while in the school environment.

8. National Initiatives and Policies for Developing and Improving Early Childhood School Environments and Facilities:

One of the national initiatives supporting the development and enhancement of school environments and facilities in Early Childhood is the initiative to develop and design the Safe Learning Environments for Children Guide. It was launched in December 2024 by the Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate General of Private Educational Institutions – Early Education Department, in collaboration with the relevant authorities. The initiative aims to establish an integrated national framework for designing safe, stimulating, and child-friendly learning environments by defining the standards and requirements for learning environments in Early Education institutions and supporting educational leaders, supervisors, and female teachers in implementing international best practices in education.

The Guide focuses on enhancing the quality of the learning environment to support active and exploratory learning and foster children's creativity and independence, while aligning learning environment requirements with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. The Guide also targets educational leaders, school administrators, educational supervisors, female Early Education teachers, and entities involved in developing the sector. The initiative incorporates clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms through the application of measurable standards, regular visits and assessments of learning environments, and the use of educational supervision and assessment tools alongside continued feedback to ensure compliance with quality and safety standards and sustain improvements in the learning environment. The initiative thus represents an effort to move beyond the concept of a safe environment in purely protective terms towards one that is both safe and conducive to learning and development.

Overall, Early Childhood learning environments in the Sultanate of Oman demonstrate clear strengths in safety and security, essential facilities, hygiene, and furnishings, while further expansion is needed in the provision of libraries, digital resources, and medical facilities. Accordingly, a balanced assessment places the learning environment at an advanced level in terms of its core infrastructure, while identifying clear areas for qualitative improvement in the richness of its learning, health, and educational technology resources.

Theme Six: Private Sector

This theme examines the current state of investment in Early Childhood in the Sultanate of Oman by analyzing the extent of private-sector participation in the provision of Early Education services, the proportion of children enrolled in the private sector compared with the public sector, and annual fee levels as an indicator of cost and accessibility. The theme also examines the institutional and regulatory framework governing the sector, including mechanisms for licensing, monitoring, oversight, and quality assurance across early education institutions. It also highlights partnerships between early education institutions and government and community entities and their role in supporting the quality of educational, health, and activity-based services provided to children. It also presents key national initiatives and policies aimed at strengthening investment in the sector, particularly awareness programs that contribute to raising public awareness of the importance of early education and encouraging private sector participation in its expansion.

1. Level of Private Sector Investment in Early Childhood:

The data indicate that the private-sector investment in Early Childhood for children aged (3–6) years covers more than (75%) of the required needs, with the value of these investments estimated at more than approximately OMR (77.55) million. This reflects the prominent role of the private sector in providing Early Education services through investment in the establishment and operation of kindergartens and private educational institutions, thereby contributing to providing children with appropriate learning environments in terms of facilities, equipment, educational programs, and complementary activities.
This finding indicates a high level of private-sector participation in supporting Early Education services for children aged (3–6) years, strengthening the sector's capacity to accommodate growing demand for these services and supporting efforts to enhance learning environments and improve the quality of services provided to children at this important stage of development and learning. However, the scale of investment alone is insufficient to assess the quality of the private sector's role at this stage. The true value of this investment lies in its ability to expand access, enhance quality, serve underserved areas, and provide services that families can afford.

2. Partnerships in Early Childhood:

The data indicate a good level of partnership between Early Childhood institutions and supporting government and community entities in the Sultanate of Oman. The response indicates that such partnerships are in place across a substantial proportion of Early Childhood schools, ranging from (50%–75%), and cover several key areas related to supporting the quality of services provided to children. This finding reflects a growing emphasis on strengthening collaboration between Early Childhood institutions and relevant stakeholders, thereby supporting educational, health, and activity programs and improve the learning environments provided for children. The findings also point to further opportunities to expand the scope and reach of these partnerships to encompass the various areas that support children's development and learning, thereby enhancing the quality of services provided at this important stage.

Partnerships between Early Childhood institutions and government and community entities are in place across a substantial proportion of schools (50%–75%), reflecting collaboration that supports improvements in the quality of educational, health, and activity programs provided to children, with further scope to expand the reach and areas of these partnerships in the future.

3. Student Enrollment in the Private Sector Compared with the Public Sector:

The data indicate that children enrolled in private-sector institutions account for (63%) of total enrollment among the (3–6)-year age group, reflecting the key role played by the private sector. This proportion indicates that a substantial share of families rely on private education institutions for the provision of Pre-Primary Education and Early Childhood programs.

As indicated by the data presented earlier (under Theme Two: Access and Participation), (93.3%) of children aged 3–6 years enrolled in Early Childhood during the 2025–2026 academic year attended private education institutions. This highlights the pivotal role of the private sector in meeting the needs of this stage by accommodating a substantial proportion of children in Pre-Primary Education. This proportion indicates that a substantial share of families rely on private education institutions for the provision of Pre-Primary Education and Early Childhood programs.

4. Average Annual Fees per Student in the Private Sector:

The data for the Sultanate of Oman indicate that the average annual fee per child in private-sector Early Childhood institutions for the (3–6)-year age group is approximately OMR 512. This indicator reflects the financial cost associated with enrollment in private-sector Pre-Primary Education, which is one of the factors influencing families' access to Early Childhood services. These data also provide an important indicator for policymakers and relevant stakeholders when assessing investment levels in Early Childhood and comparing the cost of education services with the opportunities available for children to enroll in Pre-Primary Education programs, thereby supporting planning to expand access to these services and enhance their quality.

The data also indicate that no specific fee cap is directly regulated by the supervisory authority. This reflects a degree of flexibility for private-sector Early Childhood institutions in setting their fees, which may allow for variation in both fee levels and the services provided.

5. Licensing, Monitoring, and Oversight Mechanisms for Early Childhood in Private and International Schools:

The Sultanate of Oman has a clear and integrated regulatory ecosystem governing the licensing, monitoring, and oversight of private and international Early Childhood schools. The responses indicate the following:

- The Ministry of Education has a dedicated department responsible for licensing Early Childhood schools, complemented by corresponding departments within the educational directorates in the governorates that oversee and monitor this area.
- Clear regulations and legislation are in place governing the licensing of Early Education schools.
- A documented and formally approved licensing pathway is in place for Early Education schools, clearly setting out the licensing steps and procedures in a structured manner.
- Dedicated units or divisions within the Ministry of Education are responsible for the technical and administrative monitoring and oversight of Early Education schools.
- Clear and structured mechanisms are in place for the technical and administrative oversight of Early Education schools, ensuring quality performance and compliance with established standards.

This indicates the existence of a clear regulatory structure for licensing, monitoring, and overseeing private and international Early Education institutions. It includes a dedicated department within the Ministry of Education and corresponding departments in the educational directorates across the governorates, alongside documented licensing pathways, units responsible for technical and administrative monitoring, and mechanisms for overseeing compliance with established standards.

This regulatory framework plays an important role in governing private-sector provision at this stage, as the sector's substantial role requires strong regulatory capacity from the State to ensure that expanding investment does not lead to uncontrolled disparities in quality, fees, or learning environment standards.

An integrated education governance structure is in place to support quality assurance across Early Childhood institutions, underpinned by clearly defined regulatory roles and the integration of licensing, monitoring, and oversight functions.

6. National Initiatives and Policies Supporting Private Sector Investment in Pre-Primary Education:

The (**Importance of Early Education) Awareness Program** is one of the national initiatives implemented by the Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate General of Private Educational Institutions – Early Education Department. Launched in

December 2024, the initiative forms part of a strategic direction to raise public awareness of the importance of Early Education and foster a supportive learning environment that encourages investment in this vital sector.

The initiative aims to raise public awareness of the importance of Early Education and strengthen partnerships between families and educational institutions. It also seeks to enhance the attractiveness of the Early Childhood sector to private-sector investment by encouraging investment and supporting the expansion of related educational programs and institutions. The initiative also seeks to foster positive attitudes towards Early Education and highlight its contribution to children's holistic cognitive, social, and emotional development.

The initiative has generated several important outcomes, including increased public awareness of the importance of Early Education, a stronger role for families as key partners in the educational process, and a more firmly established culture of investment in Early Childhood. These outcomes have indirectly contributed to greater private-sector interest in the field, driven by improved public perceptions and growing demand for Early Education services.

At the implementation level, the initiative has achieved its objectives to a high degree, particularly in raising public awareness, promoting a culture that recognizes the importance of Early Education, and strengthening institutional partnerships. The initiative has been implemented at the Ministry level, with plans for future geographic expansion across the governorates. The initiative targeted Ministry employees and several Early Education schools, while its awareness-raising impact also indirectly reached stakeholders and investors interested in the Early Education sector.

The initiative also provided knowledge-based incentives in the form of guidance materials, awareness publications, and specialized educational resources, thereby supporting and sustaining knowledge impact and enabling stakeholders interested in the sector to make well-informed decisions. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were based on analyzing levels of engagement and participation and measuring changes in knowledge before and after implementation, providing clear indicators of the initiative's effectiveness.

From a strategic perspective, the initiative is particularly important because it contributes to strengthening the institutional sustainability of the Early Education sector and supporting its investment environment by raising public awareness and improving perceptions of the sector. This, in turn, serves as an important driver for greater private-sector participation, expansion, and investment in Early Childhood programs, ultimately supporting human development and fostering generations that are better equipped to learn and contribute effectively to societal development.

Overview of the Status of Early Childhood in the Sultanate of Oman

The six themes reveal that the Early Childhood ecosystem in the Sultanate of Oman has undergone a clear institutional and regulatory transformation in recent years. Development efforts are no longer limited to expanding the number and availability of institutions but are increasingly focused on strengthening regulation, enhancing quality, developing the learning environment, promoting family engagement, regulating private sector provision, and building an ecosystem that is increasingly driven by data and indicators.

Governance stands out as an area in which the Sultanate has made significant progress. The division and allocation of responsibilities between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development have become clearer, the legislative and regulatory framework has evolved, and initiatives have emerged to harmonize oversight and strengthen sector regulation, alongside efforts to establish a comprehensive framework of quality indicators. However, this ecosystem is still being developed, making the next phase a transition from regulatory oversight to evidence-based quality assurance.

Regarding Access and Participation, the data indicate that the enrollment rate among children aged 3–6 years stands at approximately two-thirds of the target age group, with close gender parity and a retention rate exceeding 75% through the transition to Primary Education. By contrast, the data reveal substantial reliance on private sector provision and a clear concentration of services in urban areas, making expanded coverage and greater geographical equity among the key challenges facing this stage.

The curricula reflect a promising educational approach grounded in holistic learning, play, exploration, and the integration of developmental domains, with a clear emphasis on values, learning activities, and developmental assessment. However, persistent variation in curriculum implementation underscores the need for curriculum development to be accompanied by continued improvement in classroom practices, educational supervision, and workforce professional development.

The workforce represents the most pressing area from a quality perspective. The presence of 7,229 female teachers alone is not sufficient to assess the readiness of the human capital base. Qualification data show that 76.8% of the workforce hold a General Education Diploma or equivalent, while most of those with university qualifications do not hold degrees directly specialized in early education. This makes strengthening professional specialization and restructuring the career pathway for Early Childhood teachers a strategic priority, particularly given the limited and non-mandatory nature of professional development and the absence of a specialized professional licensing system.

The picture is more balanced with regard to the learning environment: safety and security measures, sanitation facilities, furniture, and play areas are widely available, while libraries, digital learning resources, and health care facilities require further expansion. Accordingly, the next challenge extends beyond creating a safe environment to transforming it into a rich, stimulating, flexible, and healthy learning environment that fosters independence, creativity, and exploration.

The private sector, meanwhile, has become a pivotal component of Early Childhood service provision, in terms of investment, the number of institutions, and enrollment. This role enables the expansion of capacity, but at the same time calls for a careful balance between encouraging investment and ensuring quality, affordability, and geographical equity. Achieving this balance becomes even more important given average annual tuition fees of approximately OMR 512 and the absence of a specified cap on fees, according to the available data.

Summary:

Based on the foregoing, Early Childhood in the Sultanate of Oman can be seen as having evolved from a set of fragmented services into a more clearly defined national ecosystem in terms of its institutional and regulatory structure, curricula, learning environment, and partnerships with families and the private sector. The Education Law and the National Education Strategy 2040, together with recent initiatives to regulate the sector and enhance the learning environment, have helped establish a stronger institutional foundation for Early Childhood.

The ecosystem demonstrates several important strengths, foremost among them clearly defined responsibilities for the different age groups, increasingly developed legislative and regulatory frameworks, established mechanisms for supervision and monitoring, and a national curriculum grounded in holistic learning, play, and exploration. Other strengths include a clear emphasis on values and developmental assessment, high standards of safety, security, and essential facilities and equipment, a strong private sector presence, and growing partnerships with families and communities.

However, these strengths do not tell the whole story, as the data reveal several challenges that will shape the next phase of development. Foremost among these challenges is that the Early Childhood quality measurement ecosystem is not yet fully developed. Geographical coverage remains concentrated in urban areas; the workforce requires a higher

degree of specialization; professional development remains limited and non-mandatory; and no specialized professional licensing system is in place. In addition, certain elements of the learning environment-particularly digital resources, libraries, and health facilities-require further expansion.

Accordingly, the strategic priority should be to build an Early Childhood ecosystem around four interconnected transitions: from regulation to quality assurance; from access to equitable access; from workforce provision to building a specialized workforce; and from fragmented initiatives to a national ecosystem driven by data and impact.

In this context, the current Status of Early Childhood in the Sultanate of Oman can be characterized as an evolving national ecosystem with a solid legislative and institutional foundation, promising educational practices, and supportive learning environments. It has made notable progress in regulation, supervision, curricula, partnerships, and the learning environment, but remains in transition from establishing and regulating service provision toward consolidating an integrated ecosystem for measuring quality, achieving equitable access, building a more specialized workforce, and ensuring a consistent educational experience for all children, regardless of where they live or which entity provides the service. This is the pathway that can advance Early Childhood in the Sultanate of Oman from a phase of regulation and expansion toward one defined by excellence, quality, sustainability, and equity.

6

State of Qatar



Introduction:

Education in the State of Qatar is one of the country's most significantly transformed sectors over the past seven decades, evolving from a system with limited capacity in the mid-twentieth century into an integrated education ecosystem closely connected to the country's economic and social transformation and its national aspirations to build a knowledge-based economy and develop human capital. With the launch of Qatar National Vision 2030 in 2008 pursuant to Amiri Decision No. (44) of 2008, education became one of the key drivers of the Human Development Pillar. The Vision provides for the development of a world-class education system that equips citizens with the knowledge and skills needed to participate effectively in sustainable development. Within this context, Early Childhood stands out as the essential starting point for shaping children's development and preparing them for subsequent stages of education, making it a key focus of contemporary education policies and national strategies.

Although attention to Early Childhood in the State of Qatar predates contemporary education reforms by several decades, a more structured institutional focus on education in Early Childhood emerged more clearly as national education policies evolved over the past two decades. Kindergartens gradually expanded in response to growing recognition of the importance of the early years in children's lives. As the education system evolved, the State moved towards integrating Pre-Primary Education into strategic education planning, rather than viewing it solely as an optional preparatory stage. (Ministry of Education and Higher Education of the State of Qatar, 2026b).

Education legislation enacted over the past two decades has increasingly given Early Education a clearer regulatory status within national efforts to develop the education ecosystem, both through regulations governing licensing and through the establishment of specialized administrative units responsible for overseeing this stage. Decree-Law No. (39) of 2002 on the Organization of the Ministry of Education and the Determination of Its Competencies is one of the most important legislative instruments that established the institutional framework for the oversight of Pre-Primary Education. Article (22) provides for a dedicated department for Pre-Primary Education responsible for issuing the required licenses to kindergartens and verifying that their administrative and teaching staff meet the prescribed requirements. Article (21) of the same Decree further mandates the Private Education Sector to promote the expansion of kindergartens and determine the State's requirements for such educational institutions. This represents one

of the earliest legal provisions to explicitly affirm the State's responsibility for planning and regulating the Early Childhood sector.

At a later stage, Amiri Decision No. (9) of 2016 Concerning the Organizational Structure of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education was issued, with the Ministry's competencies subsequently updated in 2019. This led to the establishment of the Early Education Department in its current form, with a broad mandate encompassing the development of Early Education strategies; the formulation of related policies, plans, and programs; oversight of national curriculum development; the provision of technical support to schools; and monitoring compliance with requirements for the appointment of teaching and administrative staff. This Decision represents an important institutional shift, moving beyond the administrative oversight of kindergartens towards a specialized department responsible for the strategic planning and development of Early Education at the national level.

Within the same reform context, regulatory and oversight responsibilities relating to nurseries and Early Childhood Care institutions were transferred to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education following the issuance of Amiri Decision No. (35) of 2022, pursuant to Article (17). Accordingly, the Nursery Department within the Ministry's Private Education Affairs Sector became responsible for licensing and monitoring nurseries.

In Qatar, several government and national entities work collaboratively to support and advance Early Childhood Education. Key institutions include:

1. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education, represented by the following entities:
   - Early Education Department: Responsible for national policies and curricula, as well as educational development for Pre-Primary Education and the early grades.
   - Private Schools and Kindergartens Department: Responsible for the oversight and monitoring of private schools and kindergartens, including their programs, plans, learning materials, compulsory subjects, and national identity requirements.
   - Nursery Department: Responsible for licensing and monitoring nurseries.
2. The National Planning Council, through its monitoring of human development and childhood indicators as part of national strategies.
3. Qatar University and specialized academic institutions, which contribute to workforce preparation and conduct scientific research related to Early Childhood.

While this institutional distribution reflects a move towards collaborative governance of the Early Childhood sector and its integration with broader national development pathways, policies and efforts to advance Early Childhood in Qatar cannot be understood in isolation from Qatar National Vision 2030, which established Human Development as one of its four fundamental pillars. The Vision emphasizes the importance of developing generations capable of creativity, innovation, and global competitiveness-a process that, in practice, begins in the earliest years of a child's life. From this perspective, Early Childhood in Qatar is no longer viewed merely as a preparatory stage, but as a long-term strategic investment in national development.

The development of education in the State of Qatar has progressed through three main stages: the Foundational Stage beginning in 1952, followed by the Expansion Stage after independence, and finally the Reform and Transition towards a Knowledge-Based Economy Stage since the beginning of the third millennium. At the heart of these transformations, Early Childhood has emerged as a national priority of growing importance. The institutional development of the Early Childhood sector also reflects a deliberate rather than ad hoc process, grounded in clear legislative frameworks that began with the 2002 Decree-Law on the organization of the Ministry of Education and evolved into a more comprehensive structure with the establishment of specialized departments. As a result, the State of Qatar now has a growing Early Education ecosystem that is directly aligned with its Human Development objectives and Qatar National Vision 2030.

The development of Early Childhood in Qatar can be understood as a progressive institutional journey that moved from establishing structures and defining responsibilities to developing policies, curricula, and programs, before expanding the regulatory framework to encompass nurseries and the private sector, alongside growing attention to family engagement, school readiness, and professional development. Assessing the maturity of this trajectory ultimately depends on the system's ability to bring together effective institutional structures, procedures, and curricula; high-quality facilities that meet established requirements; a qualified workforce; and systematic, comparative measurement and evaluation of impact-particularly in relation to indicators of the quality of children's learning experiences, continuity, school readiness, and learning outcomes.

Against this backdrop, this section of the report examines the Status of Early Childhood in the State of Qatar across the report's six themes, providing a comprehensive analytical perspective on its current landscape and development directions.

- **Governance and Regulatory Frameworks**, which define the policies and procedures affecting early childhood.

- **Access and Participation**, to ensure that all children have access to appropriate educational opportunities and supportive environments.
- **Curricula and Educational Activities** provided to children, and the extent to which they align with developmental needs and international standards.
- **Early Childhood Workforce**, in terms of academic qualifications, continued professional development, and professional stability.
- **School Environment and Facilities** that support children's development and learning, including learning spaces, equipment, and materials that support educational activities.
- **Private Sector Role and Contribution**, alongside effective models of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in enhancing the quality of services provided to children.

Theme One: Governance and Regulatory Frameworks

1. Early Childhood Oversight Entities:

Analysis of the State of Qatar's responses in this area reveals that governance of Early Childhood is underpinned by a clearly defined institutional structure. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education oversees and monitors this stage by setting overarching policies, establishing professional standards, and monitoring the implementation of educational programs. These functions are carried out through specialized departments within the Ministry, thereby ensuring alignment between policy and practice and to promote quality and specialization in the services provided to children at this stage. The departments responsible for Early Childhood are as follows:

Early Education Department: Responsible for policies, planning, national curricula, and the oversight and monitoring of Pre-Primary Education and Foundation Education institutions. Its responsibilities include policy development and planning; overseeing and developing national curricula; providing guidance and technical support to schools; developing Early Education strategies and processes; verifying compliance with staff appointment requirements; and developing the workforce in collaboration with the Training and Development Center.

Private Schools and Kindergartens Department: Responsible for monitoring and overseeing private schools and kindergartens, including their programs, plans, learning materials, compulsory subjects, and national identity requirements.

Nursery Department: Responsible for licensing, monitoring, and overseeing nurseries in accordance with the applicable laws and regulatory decisions.

At the same time, other government entities, such as the Ministry of Public Health, contribute in areas related to children's health and environmental health and safety requirements. Civil Defense and the relevant municipalities also provide complementary and support services to the Ministry in relation to Early Childhood. This institutional integration is essential to providing an integrated ecosystem of services that responds holistically to children's needs and aligns with contemporary global trends emphasizing coordination across education, health, and environmental protection sectors to support children and create environments conducive to their holistic development.

2. Legislative and Regulatory Framework:

Early Childhood in the State of Qatar is underpinned by a clear legislative and regulatory framework, centered on the Early Education Policy, which serves as the primary reference governing this stage. The Policy is also reviewed and updated every three years, reflecting an institutional commitment to continued improvement and responsiveness to emerging developments in education and research.

Decree-Law No. (39) of 2002 marked an early milestone in establishing and formalizing the State's responsibility for Pre-Primary Education, while the development of the Ministry of Education's organizational structure further strengthened institutional specialization in Early Childhood.

In the private sector, Law No. (23) of 2015 Regulating Private Schools and Ministerial Decision No. (40) of 2017 Issuing the Executive Regulations of the Law constitute key components of the regulatory framework and provide an important legal foundation for the governance of this stage. The ecosystem also includes licensing guides, circulars, and regulations governing safety and monitoring, alongside an enhanced licensing system that enables institutions meeting the required standards to obtain multi-year licenses in accordance with approved requirements.

In the nurseries sector, decisions issued in 2024 introduced a greater level of regulatory detail. Decision No. (13) of 2024 regulates the classification of nurseries, qualifications, experience requirements, and fees, while Decision No. (14) of 2024 establishes detailed requirements for buildings, facilities, space, equipment, health and safety, and child protection.

These requirements extend beyond simply requiring suitable premises. Decision No. (14) of 2024, for example, specifies a minimum indoor space per child, age-appropriate

outdoor space requirements, and the maximum number of children permitted in care and education groups by age group. It also establishes requirements relating to play equipment, sanitation facilities, first-aid rooms, isolation rooms, monitoring systems, protection from hazards, and facilities and equipment for children with disabilities.

This ecosystem reflects an expansion in the scope of regulation beyond licensing alone to encompass the conditions governing service provision and the facilities in which services are delivered. These requirements cover premises, group size, safety, equipment, staff qualifications, and the type of service provided, reflecting an institutional commitment to establishing legislative and regulatory frameworks that address all aspects of Early Childhood in the State of Qatar.

3. National Ecosystem for Regulating Early Childhood:

The State of Qatar's response regarding the existence of a national strategy for regulating Early Childhood highlights the "Sunrise" Program, one of the strategic programs formally adopted by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The strategic significance of this program lies in the fact that it does not address a single component of the ecosystem in isolation. Rather, it approaches Early Childhood as an integrated ecosystem requiring simultaneous efforts to develop curricula, strengthen institutional structures, expand capacity, and raise public awareness of the importance of this stage.

This strategic program comprises three interconnected projects:

First: Early Childhood Education Enhancement Project

This project aims to raise awareness among parents and the wider community of the importance of the early years of a child's life, recognizing them as the most influential stage in shaping children's cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional capacities. Accordingly, the project focuses not only on children, but also on fostering a community culture that supports Early Education and transforming families from recipients of educational services into key partners in children's learning and development.

Second: Pre-Primary Education Curriculum Development and Design Project

This project reflects an advanced recognition of the importance of the years preceding entry into Pre-Primary Education, which are often less systematically regulated in many education systems. The project aims to develop a clear curriculum framework for younger children, ensuring continuity in learning and developmental experiences from the early years through entry into formal education. This direction represents one of the

clearest indicators of the shift from a "Care" paradigm towards an "Early Education" paradigm, a transition that has taken place across several advanced education systems in recent decades.

Third: Project to Expand Capacity in Public Pre-Primary Education

This project is linked to the strategic objective of expanding access to Early Childhood services and promoting greater educational equity. The significance of this project extends beyond simply increasing the number of available places. It also seeks to improve the geographic distribution of education services, reduce disparities in enrollment opportunities, and increase participation in Early Education, in alignment with sustainable development targets.

Through the "Sunrise" Program and the interconnections among its components and respective objectives, the State of Qatar is adopting an integrated reform model that combines quantitative expansion with qualitative development in the planning and management of Early Childhood.

4. Oversight and Monitoring Mechanisms for Quality in Early Childhood:

The data indicate that the State of Qatar has an oversight and monitoring ecosystem for Early Childhood that employs several supervisory and evaluation tools designed to ensure the quality of teaching and learning and support its continued improvement. This ecosystem comprises four key components:

First: Inspection Visits

Inspection visits are conducted at the beginning of each academic year to assess the readiness of schools and Pre-Primary Education institutions and ensure that they meet the regulatory and technical requirements necessary for the start of the academic year. These visits serve an important preventive function by enabling the early identification of potential shortcomings before the start of the academic year, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the learning environment from the first day of the academic year.

Second: Educational Field Visits

Field visits constitute one of the key components of Qatar's Early Education quality assurance system. Through these visits, educational supervisors monitor actual classroom practice and provide professional support to female teachers and coordinators, particularly in relation to professional licensing indicators, while also monitoring the implementation of professional and regulatory standards. Based on these visits, supervisory

forms are completed to document and assess the performance of coordinators, teachers, and teaching assistants. These visits extend beyond evaluation to embrace a philosophy of "support and improvement," in line with contemporary approaches to educational supervision that view supervisors as partners in professional development rather than solely as an oversight function.

Third: Periodic Reports

Educational supervisors develop quarterly reports that provide a comprehensive analysis of the performance of female teachers and coordinators, identifying strengths and areas for improvement and setting out appropriate individual development plans.

The importance of these reports lies in their ability to transform supervision from a series of discrete practices into a continued institutional process based on analyzing the performance of female teachers and coordinators to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement and inform ongoing support and development plans.

Fourth: Professional Support Programs

The monitoring process does not end with assessing performance; it extends to the provision of a range of professional support programs, including Individual meetings, discussion sessions, training workshops delivered in collaboration with the Training and Development Center, and performance support and development plans. This reflects the adoption by Early Childhood supervisory authorities in the State of Qatar of an approach centered on monitoring for quality and improvement rather than monitoring primarily for accountability.

The frequency of supervisory visits is an important indicator of the rigor of the monitoring ecosystem. The data indicate that each educational coordinator receives eight supervisory visits during the academic year, while each teacher receives three, with additional visits conducted as needed depending on the level of support required. These frequencies are relatively high compared with those in many regional and international education systems, reflecting a clear commitment to continued monitoring and fostering a culture of sustained improvement.

The data also indicate that oversight encompasses all components of the educational process, including Teaching staff, administrative staff and assistants, curricula and activities, the learning environment and school facilities and equipment, and safety, security, and child protection. This broad scope of monitoring reflects the adoption of a comprehensive approach to quality in Early Childhood.

5. Monitoring Indicators:

The State of Qatar employs a clearly defined set of indicators to assess the quality of performance in Early Childhood. These indicators focus on the systematic assessment of the performance of teachers and educational coordinators.

First: Teacher Performance Assessment Indicators

These indicators cover five key areas:

1. Planning
2. Lesson Delivery
3. Assessment
4. Classroom Management
5. Personal Attributes

These areas extend beyond the technical aspects of teaching to encompass the professional and personal attributes that influence the learning environment and children's development.

Second: Performance Evaluation Indicators for Educational Coordinator (School-Based Supervisor)

These include:

1. Professional Support
2. Academic Support
3. Assessment and Monitoring
4. Administrative Support
5. Personal Attributes

These areas reflect a contemporary understanding of the coordinator's role as a school-based educational leader rather than merely an administrative officer. The data confirm that monitoring and evaluation findings are actively used to enhance performance and improve programs, representing one of the key indicators of institutional maturity within the education quality ecosystem.

1. Educational Structure for Early Childhood in the State of Qatar

Based on the State of Qatar's response to the questionnaire, Table (24) presents the educational structure for Early Childhood in the State of Qatar for the 2025–2026 academic year:

Table (24) Educational Structure for Early Childhood in the State of Qatar for the 2025–2026 Academic Year

International Level (ISCED)*	International Designation	Typical Age	Specified Age Range for Each Level	Availability of the Level in the Country (Available / Not Available)	Stage Compulsory Status (Compulsory–Non-Compulsory)	Level
ISCED 010	Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC 0–3)	Under 3 Years	0-2	Available	Non-Compulsory	Nursery
ISCED 020 – Year 1	(Pre-Primary 1)	3–4	3	Available	Non-Compulsory	KG1
ISCED 020 – Year 2	(Pre-Primary 2)	4–5	4	Available	Non-Compulsory	KG2
ISCED 20 – Year 3	Advanced Pre-Primary Education	5–6	5	Available	Non-Compulsory	

* Note: This classification is based on UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) and is intended to assess the alignment of national education systems with the international standard in terms of age, compulsory status, and the sequencing of Pre-Primary Education levels.

Table (24) shows that the educational structure for Early Childhood in the State of Qatar is aligned with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). The first stage, Early Childhood Care (ISCED 010), serves children under 3 years of age. This is followed by Pre-Primary Education (ISCED 020), comprising three levels and serving children aged 3–6 years.

All available levels of Early Childhood in the State of Qatar are classified as non-compulsory, encompassing both Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education. This reflects a commitment to expanding access to Early Childhood services without making enrollment legally compulsory, while providing structured educational pathways that cover the target age groups. The educational structure also demonstrates alignment between the national classification and the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), facilitating alignment with international standards governing Early Childhood and enabling comparisons with other education systems.

2. National Initiatives and Policies on Governance and Regulatory Frameworks in Early Childhood:

Within this framework, the State of Qatar has implemented the following initiatives:

1. School Readiness: This initiative was developed and implemented to assess children's readiness for the transition from Pre-Primary Education to school and is the

first of its kind in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The initiative targets children in the preparatory level and newly enrolled Grade One students who have not previously attended public Pre-Primary Education. The initiative is grounded in a contemporary understanding of School Readiness, which is no longer viewed simply as a child's ability to recognize letters and numbers, but rather as an integrated ecosystem encompassing: Cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical readiness, as well as personal independence. The initiative includes a comprehensive suite of guidance documents comprising: an Implementation Guide, a Verbal Rating Scale, a Parent Guide, and monitoring and follow-up forms, together with clear instructions on monitoring timelines within the NSIS system and direct technical support from the Early Education Department.

2. Documents and Guidance Materials: Responsible for developing, reviewing, and updating educational and regulatory documents to reflect current developments and the needs of educational practice, thereby ensuring clarity of roles and responsibilities and facilitating institutional processes across Pre-Primary Education and Foundation Education. These guides are viewed as tools for ensuring consistency and quality, rather than merely as procedural instruments.
3. Unified Vision Program: A training program for all Early Education Department staff, designed to support professional development and ensure that staff understand and embrace the Department's vision and strategic direction. The program is delivered by both internal and external providers. Such a program represents a core component of quality assurance in the planning and implementation of the Department's work, supporting the achievement of its objectives in serving Early Childhood with the highest possible degree of efficiency.

The State of Qatar's initiatives under this Theme demonstrate an approach that extends beyond establishing regulatory and legislative frameworks for Early Childhood to translating them into actionable initiatives and programs aimed at enhancing the quality of learning, assessing and strengthening children's School Readiness, and building effective partnerships with families and communities.

The State of Qatar's initiatives under the Governance and Regulatory Frameworks Theme represent one of the clearest indicators of focus on strengthening the Early Childhood governance ecosystem. These initiatives seek to move beyond administrative regulation towards directly shaping the planning and enhancing the effectiveness of Early Childhood systems, practices, and environments.

Theme Two: Access and Participation

This Theme examines the availability of Early Childhood services and equity of access across different population groups and geographic areas in the State of Qatar. It also examines enrollment and retention rates to assess the ecosystem's capacity to enroll and retain children in early childhood programs. This theme is important for understanding the level of inclusiveness in early childhood and the extent to which provision aligns with the principles of equal opportunity for children at this stage.

1. Enrollment Rates in Early Childhood:

Based on the State of Qatar's response to the questionnaire, Table (25) presents the percentage of children enrolled in Early Childhood programs in the State of Qatar during the 2025–2026 academic year, by gender, school type, and geographic area:

Table (25) Percentage of Children Enrolled in Early Childhood Programs in the State of Qatar During the 2025–2026 Academic Year, by Gender, School Type, and Geographic Area

Variable		Type		School Type				Geography	
		Males	Females	Mixed	Public	Private*	Global	City	Rural or Remote Areas (Villages, Outlying Areas, Small Settlements, etc.)
Children's Enrollment Rate*	Under 3 Years	6.05%	5.24%	-	-	-		City	-
	3–6 Years	56.33%	54.22%		-			City	-
Number of Schools	Under 3 Years	-	-	146 Private Nurseries	-	146 Private Nurseries		City	-
	3–6 Years	30	34	277	66	23	252	City	-
Number of Classes	Under 3 Years	-	-	858	-	858		City	-
	3–6 Years	206	239	2050	416	154	1925	City	-

The data for the State of Qatar indicate that Early Childhood services are provided through two main pathways: Early Childhood Care for children under three years of age, and Pre-Primary Education for children aged 3–6 years, delivered across different levels

within this stage. This structure aligns with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011), which distinguishes between Early Childhood Care and development services and Pre-Primary Education programs.

Table (19) presents Early Childhood enrollment rates in the State of Qatar for the 2025–2026 academic year, providing indicators of the reach of Pre-Primary Education services and the extent to which the education system responds to societal demand for this stage. Based on the data available for the 2025–2026 academic year, the table indicates that, in Early Childhood Care (under 3 years), the enrollment rate in nurseries stands at 6.05% for male children and 5.24% for female children. They are distributed across 146 coeducational nurseries in Qatar's urban areas. These nurseries comprise 858 classrooms. While these figures indicate low enrollment rates in nurseries, the State of Qatar's response in this area explains that this is attributable to many families preferring to care for children at home during the early years (0–3 years), under the supervision of parents or other family members, rather than enrolling them in nurseries.

In Pre-Primary Education, the enrollment rate stands at 56.33% for male children and 54.22% for female children, indicating broadly comparable enrollment rates between the two genders, with a slight difference in favor of males.

Male and female children in Pre-Primary Education are distributed across 30 boys-only kindergartens comprising 206 classrooms, 34 girls-only kindergartens comprising 239 classrooms, and 277 coeducational kindergartens comprising 2,050 classrooms.

Pre-Primary Education institutions are classified into three categories: These comprise 66 public Pre-Primary Education institutions, 23 private Pre-Primary Education institutions, and 252 international Pre-Primary Education institutions. Public Pre-Primary Education institutions comprise 416 classrooms, while private institutions comprise 154 classrooms and international schools provide 1,925 Pre-Primary Education classrooms. These figures reflect differences in capacity across school types, with international schools accounting for the largest share of classrooms, consistent with their higher enrollment rates compared with public and private schools.

In terms of geographic distribution, the data available in the table, based on the State of Qatar's response, indicate that Early Childhood services across both Early Childhood Care and Pre-Primary Education are concentrated in urban areas. Data on the distribution of these services in rural or remote areas could not be obtained. Consequently, there are insufficient data to assess geographic equity in access, and no conclusion can be drawn as to whether geographic disparities exist. This issue is particularly important

when assessing equity of access, as geographic equity is a key factor that can be measured by comparing the distribution of institutions, available capacity, the number of children within the relevant age group, travel distances, unmet demand, transportation patterns, and the characteristics of residential areas. Developing a geographic database that links the Early Childhood-age population with institutional capacity remains an important tool for supporting future expansion planning, particularly within the framework of the Public Pre-Primary Education Capacity Expansion Project.

Based on the State of Qatar's response to the questionnaire, Table (26) presents the number of children enrolled in Early Childhood programs in the State of Qatar during the 2024–2025 academic year:

Table (26) Number of Children Enrolled in Early Childhood Programs in the State of Qatar During the 2024–2025 Academic Year.

International Level (ISCED)*	International Designation	Typical Age	Number of Students at Each Level for the 2024–2025 Academic Year	
			Males	Females
ISCED 010	Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC 0–3)	Under 3 Years	2057	1758
ISCED 020 – Year 1	(Pre-Primary 1)	3–4 (3)	4802	4828
ISCED 020 – Year 2	(Pre-Primary 2)	4–5 (4)	12191	11701
ISCED 20 – Year 3	Advanced Pre-Primary Education	5–6 (5)	9611	8701

* Note: This classification is based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011) issued by UNESCO and is intended to assess the alignment of national education systems with the international standard in terms of age, the compulsory status of each stage, and the sequencing of pre-primary education stages.

Table (26) presents data on the number of children enrolled in Early Childhood programs in the State of Qatar during the 2024–2025 academic year, based on the State of Qatar's response; data for the 2025–2026 academic year were not available in this area.

The data in the table indicate that a total of (3,815) children under 3 years of age were enrolled in Early Childhood programs in the State of Qatar during the 2024–2025 academic year, comprising (2,057) male children and (1,758) female children. These figures indicate close parity in enrollment between males and females, with a slightly higher number of males than females.

Table (20) also shows that a total of (51,834) children aged (3–6) years were enrolled in Early Childhood programs in the State of Qatar during the 2024–2025 academic year, comprising (26,604) male children and (25,230) female children. These figures indicate close parity in enrollment between males and females, with a slightly higher number of males than females.

At the Pre-Primary Education level (ISCED 020 – Year 1), serving children aged (3–4) years, enrollment totaled (9,630) children, comprising (4,802) male children and (4,828) female children, reflecting balanced enrollment between the two genders at this level.

At the Pre-Primary Education level (ISCED 020 – Year 2) for children aged (4–5) years, enrollment was the highest among all Early Childhood levels, with a total of (23,892) children enrolled, comprising (12,191) male children and (11,701) female children. This indicates a broader enrollment base at this level compared with the other levels.

At the Advanced Pre-Primary Education level (ISCED 020 – Year 3), serving children aged (5–6) years, total enrollment stood at (18,312) children, comprising (9,611) male children and (8,701) female children. These figures indicate broadly comparable enrollment between the two genders at this level, with a slightly higher number of male children than female children.

Overall, the data show that enrollment is concentrated in Pre-Primary Education Year 2 and Advanced Pre-Primary Education, which together account for the vast majority of children enrolled in Early Childhood programs in the State of Qatar. The data also show continued close parity between the numbers of male and female children across the different educational levels.

2. Program Retention and Continuity:

The data available for the State of Qatar do not provide information on children's continuity in Early Childhood programs through their transition to Primary Education. The lack of such information therefore precludes the identification of indicators that could provide a basis for determining retention levels and continuity rates in Early Childhood Education.

3. Mechanism for Children's Transition from Early Childhood to Grade One:

The State of Qatar's response in this area indicates that children transition from Early Childhood to Grade One in accordance with the Admission and Registration Policy through an automatic progression process. By this stage, children are expected to be ac-

ademically, linguistically, and behaviorally prepared for transition to subsequent stages of education, having developed through Early Education a foundation of language and verbal skills, the ability to express themselves, a sense of initiative, life skills, greater readiness to learn, and an enhanced ability to follow classroom rules.

4. Parent and Community Engagement:

The State of Qatar's response in this area indicates that the primary objective of Early Childhood monitoring and supervision is to establish a shared language of communication between the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and key stakeholders, including parents and the wider community. This is intended to enhance the effectiveness and development of educational institutions and ensure their alignment with the Ministry's vision and strategic direction. The relevant data also highlight efforts by the Early Education Department at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in the State of Qatar to support parental and community engagement. These efforts include the publication of Jusoor (Early Education) Magazine, which aims to extend the impact of Early Education beyond school boundaries by strengthening community engagement and raising awareness of the importance of Early Childhood. To this end, awareness-raising materials are regularly produced and disseminated through this periodic digital magazine, targeting parents and the wider community to encourage children's enrollment in public Pre-Primary Education, strengthen the complementary roles of the home, school, and community, and highlight key Early Childhood issues.

Theme Three: Curricula and Activities

1. Curriculum Philosophy and Orientation:

The data for the State of Qatar regarding the Early Childhood curriculum indicate differences between the curricula adopted by public Early Education institutions and private Pre-Primary Education institutions. In public Early Education institutions, a formally approved national Early Education curriculum document is in place and implemented across public education institutions. In private Pre-Primary Education institutions, a range of curricula and educational programs may be implemented, provided that they are approved under the education system followed by the institution and comply with national requirements, compulsory subjects, and applicable regulations. This reflects a structured degree of curricular flexibility that allows for diversity in curricula and related components within clearly defined requirements.

The data on the curriculum philosophy applied in Early Childhood in the State of Qatar indicate that the curriculum is grounded in a holistic learning philosophy that supports children's development across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical domains. This approach reflects a commitment to addressing children's developmental and learning needs holistically. This philosophy is clearly and comprehensively documented in the curriculum documents, formally approved, and mandatory across all educational institutions at this stage.

With regard to pedagogical approaches to learning at this stage, the curriculum explicitly adopts learning through play and active exploration as core learning strategies. These approaches are also clearly and comprehensively defined, formally approved, and documented as mandatory requirements for educational institutions at this stage. These approaches are translated into classroom practices that enable children to build and develop thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and intellectual curiosity through interaction with their environment and the construction of knowledge through direct experience.

2. Areas of Curriculum and Content:

The State of Qatar's responses regarding curriculum domains and content confirm that the Early Childhood curriculum combines comprehensiveness and integration, covering all six learning domains that reflect the different dimensions of children's development at this stage. The curriculum covers the following domains: Islamic Education, Language and Communication, Early Mathematics, Science and Exploration, Arts and Creative Expression, Social Skills, and Health and Physical Development. This reflects the comprehensive scope of the curriculum content and its emphasis on promoting the balanced and holistic development of children at this stage.

With regard to the expected developmental and learning objectives at this stage, the findings indicate that the curriculum sets out detailed developmental and learning objectives covering several age groups (three or more). The curriculum adopts an integrated approach to the design of learning activities, bringing together different learning domains through themes or educational projects that connect multiple domains within diverse and integrated learning experiences.

3. Curriculum Document and Educational Guidelines:

The data for the State of Qatar indicate that a comprehensive Early Childhood curriculum document is in place, defining the learning content, objectives, and expected skills for all groups of children at this stage. The data for the State of Qatar indicate that a

comprehensive Early Childhood curriculum document is in place, defining the learning content, objectives, and expected skills for all groups of children at this stage. These guidance materials are accompanied by practical examples that support teachers to translate curriculum content into actionable classroom practices, thereby enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in Early Childhood. The national curriculum document also sets out learning approaches appropriate to this age group, with a particular focus on contemporary pedagogical approaches such as learning through play, cooperative learning, and project-based learning. This reflects a pedagogical approach that supports active, child-centered learning and contributes to the integrated and holistic development of children's cognitive, social, and emotional skills. The availability of this curriculum document and the associated practical guidance reflects a commitment to ensuring alignment between a reference framework that governs the quality of performance and assessment and educational practice in Early Education.

The availability and implementation of the curriculum document and the associated guidance and practical materials across Early Education institutions in the State of Qatar reflect a commitment to reducing variation in the quality of curriculum implementation and enhancing the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes.

4. Curriculum Document Values:

The data for the State of Qatar regarding the integration of values into the curriculum indicate that a set of core values appropriate to the age groups at this stage is incorporated, including respect, cooperation, responsibility, honesty, tolerance, and acceptance of others. The curriculum clearly defines core values that are appropriate for children at this stage and integrates them throughout the curriculum across all learning domains. The target values are developed and reinforced through clear, authentic, and structured learning situations that bring these values to life in contexts relevant to children's experiences. Learning activities are designed to provide regular opportunities for children to practice these values in tangible, real-life situations, helping to embed them in their everyday behavior.

The Female Teacher Guide provides clear and comprehensive guidance on developing the targeted values among Early Childhood children in the State of Qatar across teaching and learning contexts and throughout all activities. The Guide provides female teachers

with clear pedagogical tools and strategies. The Guide aims to standardize practices for fostering values and reduce disparities in their implementation across different learning environments at this stage.

5. Activities Supporting Child Development:

The State of Qatar's responses regarding activities that support children's development indicate a combination of diversity and integration in the learning activities provided at this stage. These include daily physical activities that promote physical health, artistic and creative activities that foster self-expression, and rich language activities incorporating stories, dialogue, and songs, as well as activities that provide opportunities for learning across diverse indoor and outdoor environments. This broad diversity of activities and learning environments can help enrich children's experiences and strengthen their learning skills.

6. Developmental Assessment and Monitoring:

The data indicate that the State of Qatar applies assessment approaches in Early Childhood that are based on structured developmental observation of children's performance, appropriate to their age and developmental stage. Assessment also draws on portfolios and monitoring records, as well as educational projects completed at the end of each learning unit. Regular feedback on children's progress is also provided to parents. Assessment findings are also used to improve the planning of learning activities.

7. National Initiatives and Policies on Curricula and Activities in Early Childhood:

The State of Qatar has implemented several initiatives under the Curriculum and Activities Theme for Early Childhood in the public sector, the most notable of which include:

1. In 2021, a supplementary resource entitled My Language, My Identity was developed to provide a range of language activities designed to teach students the principles and fundamentals of Arabic at the Primary Education stage. The resource comprises two levels: The first level comprises the My Language, My Identity 1 Workbook, while the second comprises the My Language, My Identity 2 Workbook. The activities in both workbooks were developed using an approach that combines the analytic and whole-language methods to provide the greatest possible degree of foundational learning appropriate to Level One.
2. The Stories of the Holy Qur'an Program has been implemented in collaboration with the Wijdan Cultural Center (Ministry of Culture) since 2023 and adopted as a supple-

mentary learning resource. The values embedded in the program are translated into age-appropriate learning experiences and activities, while teachers receive training on how to integrate the program into classroom practice and learning resources. Its educational impact on strengthening children's values and identity is subsequently monitored.

3. Training workshops are provided for male and female Early Childhood teachers to strengthen students' written expression skills. The initiative has been implemented in 25 schools and is ongoing.

4. The Mental Arithmetic Program was introduced during the past two years (2024–2025). At the beginning of each lesson, students are presented with arithmetic questions and trained to solve them mentally without using any tools, with the aim of developing speed of thinking, concentration, and rapid response skills. The program has contributed to strengthening children's self-confidence and improving their arithmetic skills.

5. The Learning Mathematics through Play Initiative (since 2017) is one of the key initiatives focused on advancing the curriculum philosophy towards active learning and exploration. The initiative includes activities such as a counting learning center, pattern games, and measurement activities using water and sand. It has also resulted in the development of Teacher Guides and supplementary learning materials and has contributed to increasing children's engagement with mathematical concepts.

6. The Learning Centers Initiative (Mathematics Center – 2026) was implemented to strengthen the integration of the curriculum with classroom practice through activities such as number matching, ordering by length, and the use of learning materials, helping to develop children's thinking skills and independence.

7. Recreational Days: Recreational Days are incorporated into term plans as a supporting activity to create a stimulating environment that enriches children's psychological, social, and cultural development. As part of efforts to enrich these days with meaningful cultural content, a schedule of selected countries is adopted each year to introduce children to their cultures. These are incorporated into Recreational Day activities under the theme Culture Day, helping to foster children's awareness of diverse cultures and broaden their understanding of the world around them.

The initiatives provided by the State of Qatar under the Early Childhood Curriculum and Activities Theme reflect a comprehensive approach to development, encompass-

ing curriculum enhancement, learning activities, teaching workforce development, and improvements to learning environments. This reflects a commitment to advancing this stage and strengthening the capacities of its workforce to improve learning outcomes.

The State of Qatar's responses in this area did not indicate the extent to which these initiatives are implemented in private Pre-Primary Education institutions, nor did they provide information on the related inputs and outcomes needed to assess the impact of their implementation.

Theme Four: Early Childhood Workforce

The Workforce theme represents a core pillar in assessing the quality of early childhood ecosystems, as the competencies of teachers and administrators are directly linked to the quality of learning experiences provided to children and the extent to which educational and developmental objectives are achieved. This theme examines the size and characteristics of the workforce, mechanisms for its recruitment, qualification, and professional development, as well as the regulatory frameworks governing its work.

1. Workforce Statistics:

Based on the State of Qatar's response to the questionnaire, Table (27) presents the Early Childhood workforce in public schools in the State of Qatar for the 2025–2026 academic year, disaggregated by gender (male and female), school type, and geographic area. Corresponding data for private education at this stage were not available.

Table (27) Early Childhood Workforce Statistics in Public Schools in the State of Qatar, 2025–2026

Variable	Type		School Type			Geography	
	Males	Females	Public	Private*	Global	City	Rural or Remote
Number of Teachers	94	2.380	✓			✓	
Physiotherapist Special Education Teaching Assistant Occupational Therapist	–	38	✓			✓	
Number of Administrative Staff	1	914	✓			✓	

As shown in Table (27), the data indicate that (2,380) female teachers work in Pre-Primary Education in public schools in the State of Qatar, reflecting a strong reliance on female teaching staff at this stage, in line with its nature and pedagogical requirements. The number of male teachers working in public schools at this stage stands at (94). A to-

tal of (38) female staff members work in non-teaching roles in public schools, including physical therapists, Special Education teaching assistants, and occupational therapists, while no male staff members are employed in these roles. A total of (914) female administrative staff and only one male administrator work in public Early Childhood schools.

In terms of the academic qualifications of staff working in public institutions at this stage, the data provided in the State of Qatar's response indicate the following: There are (75) staff members holding a specialized diploma in Early Education, (383) holding a bachelor's degree in Education with a specialization in Early Education, (9) holding postgraduate qualifications in Education with a specialization in Early Education, and (1,976) holding a bachelor's degree or higher without a specialization in Early Education. This finding is particularly important when analyzing workforce selection and qualification policies, as the large number of staff whose qualifications are not directly specialized in Early Childhood highlights the importance of continued specialized professional development pathways, particularly for roles directly involving educational practice with children. At the same time, the data alone do not allow for determining the specific roles held by all staff with non-specialized qualifications. The figure should therefore not be interpreted as direct evidence of insufficient specialized qualifications.

2. Recruitment and Hiring:

The appointment of teaching staff in Early Childhood in the State of Qatar is governed by clear and well-defined standards that take into account the distinctive nature of this stage and children's developmental needs. This reflects the existence of a regulatory framework that helps to ensure the selection of teaching staff suited to the stage and its professional requirements. The data also indicate that effective recruitment strategies specifically tailored to Early Childhood are in place to attract qualified professionals to work at this stage.

An academic qualification in Education, such as a diploma or bachelor's degree in Education, is a mandatory requirement for teaching at this stage in the State of Qatar. Although the response indicates a clear and appropriate emphasis on selecting teachers based on their qualifications and educational experience, particularly those related to Early Childhood, the presence of (1,976) staff members working in public institutions at this stage who are not specialized in Early Education highlights the need for greater emphasis on tailoring recruitment standards to the specific nature of this stage. Working with children in the early years requires knowledge of child development, learning-through-play strategies, classroom environment management, family engagement, and

developmental monitoring. These areas require specialized preparation and differ in nature from teaching at other educational stages.

3. Professional Development and Professional Licensing:

The State of Qatar's response in this area indicates a commitment to providing continued professional development opportunities for the Early Childhood teaching workforce in collaboration with the Ministry's Training and Development Center. The professional development needs of teachers, coordinators, and educational leaders are identified, while feedback from educational supervisors is taken into account in designing training programs that address their actual needs and keep pace with emerging developments in educational practice. One example is the Using Artificial Intelligence to Support Early Childhood Education Program, which forms part of the programs implemented under the Sunrise Project. These professional development programs are in place and readily accessible.

Regarding the requirement for female and male Early Childhood teachers to participate in continued professional development programs, the data indicate that participation is mandatory for all teachers, with a minimum required amount of time specified and comprehensive support provided, reaching a coverage rate of more than 90%.

Compared with some international models that require female and male Early Childhood teachers holding the minimum qualifications to complete a specified number of continued professional development hours in teaching methods and approaches to working with children in Early Childhood within a defined period, the data indicate that a fully comparable system is applied in the State of Qatar to all teachers who meet the minimum qualification requirements.

With regard to the implementation of a professional licensing system to ensure the sustained professional competence of teachers, the data for the State of Qatar indicate that the system is fully implemented for all or nearly all female and male Early Childhood teachers, with coverage exceeding (90%). The response indicates that more than 200 leaders, teachers, and coordinators in Pre-Primary Education have obtained professional licenses at different levels: (Novice – Competent – Proficient – Expert) during the 2025–2026 academic year.

Based on the State of Qatar's response to the questionnaire, Table (28) presents statistics on the Early Childhood workforce who participated in professional development training programs during the 2025–2026 academic year.

Table (28) Statistics on the Early Childhood Workforce Who Participated in Professional Development Training Programs During the 2025–2026 Academic Year

Job Position	Number of Trainees
Assistant Teacher	81
Deputy Principal for Pre-Primary Education Affairs	68
Supervisors – Experts – Consultants	27
Kindergarten Teacher	287
Early Childhood English Language Teacher	297
Humanities Track Teacher	219
Science Track Teacher	209
Early Childhood English Language Coordinator	150
Kindergarten Coordinator	80
Humanities Track Coordinator	28
Science Track Coordinator	48
Total	1467

Table (28) presents the numbers of teachers, educational leaders, and support staff who participated in various professional development pathways during the 2025–2026 academic year, including specialized programs, programs leading to professional licensure, optional programs, conferences, and forums.

The workforce participating in these programs comprised: The workforce comprised 81 Teaching Assistants, 68 Deputy Principals for Pre-Primary Education Affairs, 27 Supervisors, Experts, and Consultants, 287 Pre-Primary Education Teachers, 297 Early Childhood English Language Teachers, 219 Humanities Track Teachers, 209 Science Track Teachers, 150 Early Childhood English Language Coordinators, 80 Pre-Primary Education Coordinators, 28 Humanities Track Coordinators, and 48 Science Track Coordinators, totaling 1,467 staff members. The diversity of participants benefiting from the training programs reflects a comprehensive and integrated approach to professional development that encompasses different segments of the sector's workforce, including educational leaders, experts, teachers, and administrative staff.

These factors provide an important institutional foundation for sustaining professional competence, particularly as professional licensure links continued professional practice to specific requirements, while continued professional development enables practitioners to keep their knowledge and skills up to date. This becomes increasingly important as pedagogical practices, educational technologies, and monitoring and assessment tools continue to evolve, alongside the emergence of new areas such as the use of Artificial Intelligence to support Early Education.

4. Initiatives for the Professional Development of Early Childhood Teachers

KASEB Lessons Initiative: The KASEB Lessons Initiative is among the initiatives aimed at improving teaching practices and enhancing the learning experiences provided to children in the classroom. The initiative uses classroom observation lessons to enable female and male teachers to develop their skills and apply best teaching practices in their schools, thereby enhancing the quality of children's learning. Teachers who participated in developing and delivering these lessons were recognized in celebration of their creativity and to encourage their colleagues to participate in future professional development initiatives. This initiative reflects the State of Qatar's commitment to promoting exemplary professional practices and facilitating the exchange of educational expertise among teachers, thereby contributing to enhanced quality in classroom practice.

The State of Qatar places a clear emphasis on the Early Childhood workforce. This commitment is evident in the implementation of an integrated ecosystem for recruitment, supervision, and professional development, encompassing recruitment standards, academic qualifications, professional development, educational supervision, and continuous performance assessment.

Theme Five: Learning Environments and Facilities

1. School Environment:

The findings for the State of Qatar indicate that more than 90% of Early Childhood schools provide a safe and appropriate environment for children's learning and daily activities, including playgrounds and open spaces. This demonstrates the readiness of the school environment in Early Childhood and reflects an institutional commitment to providing a comprehensive and safe learning environment that supports children's learning and development across diverse contexts.

It is also evident that all or the vast majority of schools (more than 90%) provide safe, well-equipped playgrounds that enable children to engage in physical activities and free play. This represents an essential component of children's physical and social development and expands opportunities for interactive learning.

2. Educational Facilities:

The State of Qatar's response regarding educational facilities indicates the availability of facilities that support children's learning in Early Childhood, as follows:

- **Availability of Libraries and Digital Learning Resources:** The findings indicate that educational facilities supporting learning in Early Childhood are provided in all or the vast majority of schools, with coverage exceeding (90%). The response indicates that these schools have small classroom libraries stocked with age-appropriate books, alongside digital learning resources and computers. The provision of both traditional and digital learning resources reflects an approach that combines the development of Early Literacy skills with the enhancement of children's digital competencies from an early age.
- **Availability of Appropriate Furniture and Equipment:** The findings indicate that appropriate classroom furniture and equipment are available in all or nearly all schools, with coverage exceeding (90%). These include chairs and tables designed to suit children's characteristics, dedicated equipment for teachers to support effective teaching, and organized and safe storage solutions for learning materials. This contributes to creating a comfortable and well-organized classroom environment that supports and facilitates effective learning.
- The findings for the State of Qatar on this indicator reflect an emphasis on the quality of the classroom environment in terms of physical facilities and organization, helping to create a comfortable and safe learning environment for children while providing teachers with the equipment needed to perform their teaching and educational responsibilities effectively.

3. Health and Hygiene Facilities:

The data for the State of Qatar indicate that appropriate health and sanitation facilities for children are available in all or the vast majority of Early Childhood schools, with coverage exceeding (90%). The findings indicate that schools provide sufficient and clean sanitation facilities, handwashing facilities equipped with water and soap, safe and potable drinking water, and effective waste disposal systems. Attention to this area also includes ensuring the quality of these facilities, maintaining their continued readiness, and providing effective waste disposal systems. This reflects a commitment to providing a healthy and hygienic environment that promotes positive health behaviors and personal hygiene among children, thereby supporting their overall health and readiness to learn.

4. Health Care and First Aid Facilities:

The State of Qatar's responses in this area indicate that basic health care services are available within Early Childhood schools to support children's safety and monitor their growth. The findings show that all or the vast majority of Early Childhood schools (more than 90%) provide clinics or equipped first-aid rooms for managing illness and minor injuries, alongside tools for monitoring children's physical growth, such as weighing scales, height-measuring devices, and measuring tapes. This finding reflects a clear commitment to integrating health care within Early Childhood learning environments, with schools combining rapid responses to urgent health needs with regular monitoring of children's physical growth.

5. Safety and Security Standards:

The data for the State of Qatar indicate that clear safety and security standards are in place and formally approved by the authority responsible for licensing Early Childhood schools. The responses confirmed a very high level of compliance with safety and security standards in early childhood schools. Schools follow clear standards issued by the competent licensing authorities, which are implemented in all schools or in the vast majority of them (more than 90%). This confirms the existence of a regulatory framework that ensures the implementation of preventive measures, enhances children's safety, and strengthens confidence in the learning environment.

6. National Efforts and Initiatives to Develop and Improve School Environments, Facilities, and Equipment:

One of the initiatives undertaken to improve Early Childhood school facilities involved replacing the flooring in nurses' rooms in Pre-Primary Education institutions with bacteria-resistant polyurethane (PU) flooring, in response to health and safety recommendations and to enhance the quality of the health environment within educational institutions. Such initiatives reflect the State of Qatar's commitment to the continued improvement of educational infrastructure, helping to ensure safer and healthier school environments for children and staff in educational institutions.

In conclusion, the State of Qatar's responses under the School Environment and Equipment Theme indicate a very high level of availability of the required learning environments and equipment across Early Childhood institutions. Nevertheless, an independent field-based assessment is needed to determine the quality and readiness of each educational institution. In addition, a distinction remains between the availability of equipment and the quality of its use and impact on educational practice.

Theme Six: Private Sector

1. Share of Total Investment Required to Meet Early Childhood Needs Provided Annually by the Private Sector

The State of Qatar's response indicates that annual private-sector investment in meeting the investment needs of Pre-Primary Education for children aged 3–6 years accounts for between (25%–50%) of the total investment required to meet these needs. The State of Qatar's response indicates that annual private-sector investment in meeting the investment needs of Pre-Primary Education for children aged 3–6 years accounts for between (25%–50%) of the total investment required to meet these needs. The data available do not include a detailed methodology for calculating the "total investment required," nor do they provide a comparable estimate for nurseries.

Nevertheless, the percentage reported in the State of Qatar's response indicates a substantial investment gap that the private sector could help address by increasing its investment to meet the needs of this stage. The significance of this finding lies in demonstrating that the expansion and development of Early Childhood services cannot rely on government expenditure alone but require a broader investment ecosystem that includes the private sector, while ensuring that all institutions comply with quality, safety, and regulatory requirements.

2. Early Childhood Partnerships Between Private Schools and Pre-Primary Education Institutions and Government or Community Entities:

The data on the level of partnerships between private schools and Pre-Primary Education institutions and government or community entities in supporting the quality of Early Childhood indicate the following:

These partnerships are in place across (50% - 75%) of Pre-Primary Education institutions serving children aged (3–6) years. These partnerships cover several key areas that support the quality of Early Childhood, including learning activities, health services, and community support. The relatively high prevalence of these partnerships reflects growing recognition of the importance of an integrated approach to supporting quality at this stage through collaboration among the public sector, private sector, and community. Nevertheless, a gap remains that should be addressed by increasing the prevalence of these partnerships, broadening their scope, and making them more comprehensive so that they encompass the various areas that support children's development and learning, thereby enhancing the quality of services provided in Early Childhood.

The response indicates an established foundation for collaboration between private institutions and government and community entities, although the nature and depth of these partnerships vary across institutions. Future in-depth analysis of this indicator should move beyond measuring the existence of partnerships to assessing their objectives, continuity, scope, outputs, and impact on children's development and service quality.

3. Percentage of Students Enrolled in the Private Sector Compared with the Public Sector:

The data indicate that (63.1%) of children aged (3–6) years enrolled at this stage attend private-sector Pre-Primary Education institutions, compared with (36.9%) enrolled in public-sector Pre-Primary Education. The comparison between these percentages highlights the key role of the private sector in providing Early Education services and accommodating a substantial proportion of children in Pre-Primary Education. The high enrollment rate in private-sector institutions points to two key considerations: A substantial proportion of families rely on private education institutions to provide Pre-Primary Education services and Early Childhood programs, while private-sector institutions demonstrate the capacity to meet the operational requirements for educational institutions at this stage.

4. Average Annual Fees per Student in the Private Sector in the State of Qatar:

In 2026, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education launched the School Fees Policy for Private Schools and Pre-Primary Education Institutions (First Edition) to strengthen governance and transparency and regulate the mechanisms for approving tuition fees, operating and service fees, and optional fees, thereby balancing the sustainability of private educational institutions with the protection of the rights of parents and students. The Ministry indicated that the Policy constitutes a mandatory regulatory framework for all private schools and Pre-Primary Education institutions in the State of Qatar, including both existing licensed institutions and new institutions undergoing the licensing process.

The data provided in the State of Qatar's response regarding annual school fees for children enrolled in private Early Education indicate that the State of Qatar does not apply a standardized fee across all private Pre-Primary Education institutions. Fees vary according to the institution, its education system, and the services provided, while both the fees and requests for their adjustment are subject to the School Fees Policy and the regulations and procedures approved by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. This indicates a degree of flexibility in setting fees within the private sector, supported

by approved regulations and procedures governing both fee levels and requests for adjustment. This may allow for variation in fees based on the quality and distinctiveness of the services provided and the facilities offered by each educational institution.

5. Licensing, Monitoring, and Oversight Mechanisms for Early Childhood in Private and International Schools:

The State of Qatar's response indicates that the Ministry has introduced an enhanced licensing system for private schools and Pre-Primary Education institutions, under which institutions meeting the required standards may be granted multi-year licenses ranging from three to five years, alongside updated safety and monitoring requirements. The enhanced system, which updates the mechanisms for licensing, monitoring, and overseeing private Pre-Primary Education institutions and schools, operates within the framework of Law No. (23) of 2015 Regulating Private Schools, Ministerial Decision No. (40) of 2017 Issuing the Executive Regulations of the Law, and the regulatory circulars and requirements issued by the Ministry, including the enhanced licensing system for private schools and Pre-Primary Education institutions.

Licensing and monitoring mechanisms include the following:

- Verifying compliance with all licensing requirements set out in the law, its Executive Regulations, and the approved Licensing Guide.
- Ensuring that the location, premises, facilities, and equipment of the school or Pre-Primary Education institution are appropriate to its educational mission and that the premises are used exclusively for educational purposes.
- Requiring the submission of essential documents, including the Commercial Registration, Commercial License, authenticated lease agreement or title deed, Civil Defense Certificate, Traffic Department approval, and an inspection report issued by a consultancy office approved by the Ministry.
- Monitoring the validity of the required documents and licenses throughout the term of the educational license through the Private Education Institutions Platform.
- Requiring each school or Pre-Primary Education institution to renew Traffic Department approval annually and to renew documents relating to building safety and regulatory licenses within the specified timeframes.
- Conducting an inspection visit by an approved consultancy office to verify the safety and security of the school building (18) months after the educational license is issued or renewed.

- Monitoring the submission of required documents by schools or Pre-Primary Education institutions through the Licensing Platform and verifying their continued validity based on notifications issued by the Platform.
- In cases of non-compliance with document submission requirements or repeated significant deficiencies, the prescribed measures and sanctions are applied. These include issuing a warning and setting an appropriate timeframe for corrective action, followed by the application of sanctions in accordance with approved regulations if the deficiencies are not rectified.

The data in this area indicate the existence of a clear governance ecosystem encompassing governance standards and procedural requirements for licensing, regulating, and overseeing private and international schools operating in Early Childhood to ensure the quality of their provision.

6. National Initiatives and Policies Supporting Private Sector Investment in Pre-Primary Education:

The State of Qatar's responses indicate the existence of national initiatives and policies that support increased private-sector investment in Pre-Primary Education, including the following:

- Initiative to Increase the Number of Pre-Primary Education Centers, Promote Enrollment, and Expand Access to Low- and Mid-Fee Private Pre-Primary Education Centers:

  The initiative is overseen by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The initiative encompasses several projects, including the development of a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model with private Pre-Primary Education institutions to expand their capacity or establish new institutions, as well as exploring the provision of investment incentives where needed. Implementation of the project began on January 1, 2026.

  The initiative also includes a project to **simplify and expedite approval procedures for establishing private Pre-Primary Education centers**. Launched on April 1, 2025, the project aims to improve the investment environment by reviewing and streamlining licensing procedures, analyzing challenges, and developing a comprehensive guide covering all licensing processes for private schools and Pre-Primary Education institutions.

  The initiative also includes a project to **develop a communication and awareness plan to attract investment in the private Pre-Primary Education sector**.

Launched on October 1, 2025, the project aims to promote investment opportunities in the sector, strengthen engagement with investors and government and private-sector entities, and develop an analytical study on the current landscape of investment in Pre-Primary Education in the State of Qatar.

- General Policy Framework of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education:
- It aims to standardize the methodology for developing, reviewing, and approving policies, thereby strengthening governance and institutional coherence and supporting the more systematic and sustainable development of policies for Pre-Primary Education and private education.
- Indicator: Number of Schools Participating in National Identity Enhancement Activities in Private Schools and Pre-Primary Education Institutions:

This indicator supports efforts to strengthen National Identity within private educational institutions through partnerships with relevant government entities and national institutions. The indicator showed notable growth in the number of participating schools, rising from 135 schools in the 2022–2023 academic year to 351 schools in 2024–2025-an increase of 216 schools, representing a growth rate of 160%. This reflects a substantial expansion in the participation of private education institutions in activities that strengthen National Identity.

In addition to the initiatives outlined above, which have already been launched and are currently being implemented, several further initiatives have been proposed to promote private-sector investment, including:

- Initiative to Develop a Supportive Private-Sector Partnership Model:

This is represented by the Contract/Project for the Operation and Management of a High-Performing Private School in Partnership with a Private-Sector Operator, under which a Ministry-owned school building is made available for operation and management in accordance with contractual, technical, and oversight requirements, thereby strengthening private-sector participation in the provision of quality education services.

- Proposed **"Rasekh" Accreditation and Associated Incentives** Initiative:

This proposed initiative aims to support improvements in the quality of education in private and international schools by strengthening the Arabic language and National Identity and linking accreditation to performance indicators and regulatory incentives once the necessary technical and governance frameworks have been finalized, thereby fostering a positive competitive environment among private schools.

The diversity of these initiatives-spanning projects, policies, and implementation plans, including those currently underway and proposals being developed for future implementation-reflects the State of Qatar's aim to strengthen investment in Pre-Primary Education and the private education sector. These initiatives seek to attract investment by developing partnerships, streamlining procedures, exploring incentives, and strengthening governance, thereby attracting investors and enhancing the quality of education services provided by private-sector institutions.

An Integrated Overview of Early Childhood in the State of Qatar

Across the preceding Themes, the Early Childhood ecosystem in the State of Qatar is characterized by increasingly developed institutional arrangements, an expanding scope of policies and programs, and a diverse range of intervention tools. This development is evident in the successive introduction of legislation and specialized institutional structures; the transfer of responsibility for regulating nurseries to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education; the issuance of detailed decisions governing schools, Pre-Primary Education institutions, and nurseries; the development of the School Fees Policy for private schools and Pre-Primary Education institutions; and the expansion of strategic programs and initiatives relating to families, School Readiness, curricula, and professional development.

Governance at this stage is characterized by a central education authority that leads policy, curriculum, and development, supported by specialized departments with responsibilities spanning Early Education, private education, and nurseries. This specialization has helped clarify roles and supported the transition from general oversight to more specialized management of this stage. At the same time, the maturity of governance should not be assessed solely by the number of structures or procedures in place, but by the capacity of these structures to deliver measurable outcomes and ensure consistency in implementation across different types of institutions.

The presence of the strategic Sunrise Program represents a central component of development at this stage, bringing together expanded access, quality improvement, increased enrollment, greater family awareness, and workforce development. The launch of the Early Childhood Education Enhancement Project in 2026 further reinforces this direction by extending a significant component of these efforts into the family and community spheres.

In terms of access, enrollment rates for children aged 3–6 years stand at 56.33% for male children and 54.22% for female children, with lower rates among children under 3 years

of age. These data indicate broader participation in Pre-Primary Education than in Early Childhood Care, with relatively similar participation rates between male and female children. However, assessing the adequacy of these rates requires examining them in relation to the size of the population within the target age groups, unmet demand, family preferences, available capacity, and geographic distribution.

A significant information gap remains in relation to geographic equity and continuity. The lack of sufficient data on rural and remote areas prevents an assessment of geographic equity, while the absence of longitudinal data on children's retention in programs does not allow continuity to be measured. These indicators are particularly important at a non-compulsory stage, where educational participation is influenced by both family choices and the availability of services.

In the area of curricula, a clear standards-based foundation is in place, comprising a national curriculum document and accompanying implementation guides, with an explicit emphasis on holistic development, learning through play and exploration, and active learning. Several initiatives are also evident across mathematics, language, values, culture, and recreational activities. The key challenge in this area remains measuring the extent of alignment between the standards-based framework and actual classroom practice, particularly across public and private institutions.

The workforce ecosystem encompasses several important institutional components, including mandatory professional development, professional licensure, training programs, and classroom observation lessons. Conversely, qualification data reveal a substantial number of staff holding university qualifications that are not directly specialized in Early Education, making continued specialized professional development an important pathway for strengthening the professional capital of the Early Childhood workforce.

In the area of learning environments, the responses indicate that most essential elements are available in more than 90% of institutions, including playgrounds, libraries and digital learning resources, furniture, sanitation facilities, first-aid facilities, and safety standards. This is further reinforced by recent regulatory decisions governing nurseries, which establish detailed requirements for space, equipment, health and safety, and child protection.

The private sector stands out as a key structural component of this stage, with the data indicating that 63.1% of children aged 3–6 years are enrolled in private-sector institutions, compared with 36.9% in public-sector institutions. This distribution requires education policy to approach the quality of Early Education as a shared responsibility

between the public and private sectors, while the State continues to set and monitor standards and ensure transparency and equity.

The regulation of the private sector saw an important development in 2026 with the introduction of the School Fees Policy, which established a standardized framework for approving fees, requests for fee increases, and fee disclosure, while taking into account the financial sustainability of institutions and the rights of families. At the same time, high levels of private-sector participation do not necessarily imply consistently high quality across all institutions. The private sector itself encompasses diverse education systems and varies in terms of fees, size, facilities, curricula, and workforce. This underscores the importance of moving beyond measuring the size of the sector to assessing its quality, diversity, and impact.

Summary

The data available indicate that Early Childhood in the State of Qatar has undergone clear development in recent years in its institutional and regulatory structures, accompanied by an expansion in the scope of policies and initiatives addressing access, quality, curricula, workforce development, learning environments, and the private sector. This development is reflected in the establishment of specialized Early Education departments, more detailed regulation of nurseries, enhanced licensing and monitoring tools, curriculum documents, professional development and professional licensing systems, and programs focused on School Readiness and family awareness.

The integration of Early Education with national human development policies stands out as a defining feature of Qatar's experience. Early Education has become an integral part of strategic education planning, with investment in the early years increasingly linked to the goals of human development, improving education quality, and preparing children for subsequent stages of education. This direction is reinforced by the combined emphasis on expanding access, improving quality, promoting enrollment, raising family awareness, and strengthening professional development programs for the Early Childhood workforce.

In terms of access, the data indicate broader participation among children aged 3–6 years than among those under three years of age, with relatively similar participation rates between male and female children. Enrollment rates among children aged 3–6 years stand at 56.33% for males and 54.22% for females, compared with 6.05% for

males and 5.24% for females among children under 3 years of age. These indicators need to be interpreted in relation to family and demographic contexts and available capacity, particularly given that Pre-Primary Education is non-compulsory.

Geographic equity and continuity remain areas requiring further data. The lack of sufficient data on rural and remote areas does not allow geographic disparities to be assessed, while the absence of longitudinal data on children's continuity in programs prevents the accurate measurement of retention and transition. These information gaps do not, in themselves, indicate shortcomings in practice; rather, they limit the ability to measure actual conditions.

In the area of curricula, a clear national framework is in place, grounded in holistic development, learning through play and exploration, and active learning, supported by a range of guides, resources, and initiatives. This area includes initiatives focusing on language, mathematics, values, culture, and learning through play. The key area for further development lies in strengthening the assessment of actual curriculum implementation and its impact on children's learning, particularly given the diversity of curricula across the private sector.

In the area of the workforce, a structured framework of qualification requirements, professional development, and professional licensure is in place, alongside (1,467) staff members who participated in professional development programs during the 2025–2026 academic year. This provides an important foundation for capacity building, while the proportion of staff whose qualifications are not directly specialized in Early Education warrants continued attention within qualification and professional development policies.

In the area of learning environments and equipment, the responses indicate that elements of a safe environment, along with educational, health, and medical facilities and safety standards, are available in more than 90% of institutions. Recent regulations governing nurseries also reflect a move towards establishing detailed specifications for the physical environment, space, equipment, and child protection.

The private sector has become a key structural partner in the provision of Pre-Primary Education services, accounting for an enrollment share of 63.1%, according to the data available. This role heightens the importance of government regulation of fees, licensing, safety, curricula, workforce requirements, and quality oversight. The 2026 School Fees Policy represents an important step towards establishing a clearer and more transparent framework governing the relationship between the Ministry, private educational institutions, and families.

From an overall perspective, the current stage of Early Childhood development in Qatar can be characterized as a transition from building institutional and regulatory foundations towards strengthening quality assurance and impact measurement. The core frameworks are increasingly in place, programs and initiatives have expanded, Early Childhood has assumed a clear position within education planning, and the private sector has become a key component of the access ecosystem. Accordingly, a key qualitative priority for the next stage could be to strengthen the capacity to demonstrate the quality of the Early Childhood ecosystem through data. This includes developing longitudinal databases that track children throughout Early Childhood and their transition to Grade 1; establishing national indicators for continuity and School Readiness; linking institutional capacity data with population data at the geographic level; standardizing indicator definitions across the public and private sectors; developing indicators that measure curriculum implementation rather than merely its existence; linking professional development data to classroom practice; and strengthening the measurement of the impact of programs and initiatives on children's development and learning.

This direction becomes increasingly important as the diversity of service providers in Qatar expands. The presence of public, private, and international providers heightens the need for a unified national quality framework, while continuing to allow diversity in curricula and programs. Differences in educational models should remain aligned with common national requirements relating to child safety, the quality of learning environments, workforce qualifications, values, language, School Readiness, and child protection.

Overall, the State of Qatar has established a structured institutional, regulatory, and programmatic foundation for Early Childhood, with a clear orientation towards sustained development and a range of enabling factors that support progression towards a more advanced stage of quality assurance. The key strategic challenge lies in translating these enabling factors into an integrated national ecosystem whose outcomes can be measured and compared and whose impact on children can be continuously monitored.

Accordingly, the development trajectory of Early Childhood in the State of Qatar can be understood through four interconnected directions: expanding access, deepening quality, standardizing service standards across diverse providers, and strengthening evidence- and impact-based measurement. Together, these directions provide an important foundation for the continued development of an ecosystem capable of providing children in the State of Qatar with a higher-quality and more consistent educational start.

Conclusion:

Future Investment A Strategic Framework for Strengthening the Early Childhood Ecosystem in the Gulf States

Introduction: A New Development Paradigm for the Early Years

Contemporary educational and development thinking has moved beyond the traditional view of Early Childhood as merely a preparatory stage or a form of "daytime care" preceding formal education. From both scientific and economic perspectives, these foundational years have become the solid structural foundation upon which the quality of entire education systems is built and a key driver of opportunities for sustainable human development.

Scientific research in neuroscience and the economics of education-most notably Heckman Curve developed by Nobel laureate in Economics James Heckman-indicates that the cumulative return on investment in Early Childhood interventions ranges from 7% to 13% annually. This return substantially exceeds that of investments aimed at addressing educational gaps and learning difficulties at later stages. Every monetary unit invested in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) generates multiple times its value in subsequent savings across remedial education, social protection, and health care budgets.

Reports by the World Bank and partner United Nations organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), affirm that Early Childhood represents the most critical demographic window for shaping human capital. During this stage, the human brain undergoes exceptionally rapid growth and forms neural connections at rates unmatched at any other stage of life. This means that any neglect or deficiency in the quality of a child's learning, nutritional, and emotional environment during the first 1,000 days of life may compromise their ability to reach their full developmental potential, with adverse implications for their future productivity and competitiveness.

Status of Early Childhood in the Gulf Ecosystem: From Access to Sustainable Quality

National reports issued by the member states of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) reveal notable qualitative advances in Early Childhood. These advances are reflected in the modernization of legislative frameworks, substantial expansion in the establishment of Pre-Primary Education institutions, curriculum modernization, and enhanced teaching workforce capacity through continued professional development programs. This momentum has generated a rich body of knowledge and practical experience that varies across, while complementing, the different national models in the Gulf States, providing fertile ground for establishing a shared regional ecosystem under a unified reference framework.

The reports confirm that Early Childhood is receiving increasing attention in development and education policies and plans, reflecting growing recognition of its importance in shaping children's character, developing their cognitive, linguistic, physical, social, and emotional capacities, and strengthening their readiness to learn and engage positively in subsequent stages of education. This commitment is reflected in the development of regulatory legislation and frameworks, the designation of authorities responsible for supervision and monitoring, the establishment of quality assurance frameworks and standards, and the implementation of several initiatives and programs aimed at improving the quality of services provided to children and their families. The governance and regulatory landscape also reflects a growing orientation towards regulating the Early Childhood sector and ensuring the quality of its services through updated legislation, enhanced licensing, oversight, and assessment procedures, and the adoption of indicators to monitor institutional performance. Nevertheless, the involvement of multiple stakeholders in Early Childhood, with overlapping responsibilities across education, health, social development, and child protection, highlights the importance of strengthening institutional coordination, defining roles and responsibilities more clearly, and moving from partial coordination towards integrated governance that ensures a unified direction and coherence across policies and services.

Under the Access and Participation Theme, clear efforts are being made to expand opportunities for enrollment in Early Childhood programs and provide diverse services for different age groups. However, participation levels continue to vary across age groups, types of institutions, and geographic areas, while Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for children under three years of age requires greater attention compared with Pre-Primary Education. This underscores the need to continue the systematic expansion of services, moving beyond simply increasing the number of places and institutions to ensuring equitable access, service quality, and continuity, particularly for children with the greatest needs, children with disabilities, and those whose economic, social, or geographic circumstances may limit their opportunities for enrollment.

With regard to curricula and educational activities, there is a clear emphasis on developing curricula aligned with children's developmental characteristics, with a focus on active learning, play and exploration, language development, and the development of social skills and values. Several institutions also provide a diverse range of activities that support children's holistic development across physical, artistic, creative, linguistic, and social domains. Nevertheless, there remains a need to strengthen alignment between curriculum frameworks and actual practice within learning environments and to ensure that Early Education does not become a scaled-down extension of traditional schooling

based on rote instruction and premature academic achievement. This requires preserving the distinctive nature of this stage and placing play, interaction, exploration, and children's self-initiated activity at the heart of the learning process.

Developmental assessment should also be recognized as a key area for further development, extending beyond the measurement of knowledge and academic skills to provide a holistic picture of children's development and progress across different domains. This requires the use of multiple tools, including structured observation, portfolios, continued documentation, and regular communication with families, as well as using assessment findings to design learning activities tailored to each child's needs and to support the early identification of developmental delays, learning difficulties, or special needs.

Under the Workforce Theme, the findings confirm that the quality of Early Childhood programs is directly linked to the competence of the female and male teachers, assistants, specialists, educational leaders, and administrative staff who work within them. The data indicate a clear emphasis on workforce qualification and professional development; however, variation remains in qualifications and areas of specialization, the availability of professional licenses, and the regularity and sustainability of professional development programs. There is also a need to enhance the attractiveness of careers in this sector, strengthen pathways for recruiting and retaining qualified professionals, provide clear opportunities for career development, and align training with the actual needs of professional practice and institutional performance indicators.

The report also highlights the importance of looking beyond workforce numbers and formal qualifications when assessing quality to consider the quality of their daily interactions with children. Supportive and safe interactions, responsiveness to children's needs, the ability to facilitate play-based learning, responsiveness to individual differences, and the development of positive relationships with families are all essential components of professional competence at this stage. Accordingly, developing specialized professional standards for the Early Childhood workforce and linking them to qualifications, licensure, assessment, and continued professional development represents a key priority for improving the quality of practice.

With regard to school environments and equipment, there is a clear emphasis on providing safe and appropriate environments for children, encompassing classrooms, facilities, playgrounds, furniture, learning materials, and technology. This represents an important development; however, the quality of the learning environment is measured not merely by the availability of buildings and equipment, but by how well they respond to children's developmental characteristics and their capacity to promote movement, exploration, in-

teraction, play, and independent learning. These environments should also meet standards for safety, security, health, and child protection and be flexible, inclusive, and accessible to all children, including children with disabilities and those with individual needs.

The Private Sector Theme demonstrates that the private sector plays an important role in expanding the reach and diversity of services and, in some contexts, accounts for a substantial proportion of Early Childhood institutions. This role creates significant opportunities for service development, innovation, and investment, while also underscoring the need for clear regulatory and oversight frameworks to ensure consistent quality across public and private institutions, safeguard the rights of children and families, and reduce disparities in access and service quality. Partnership with the private sector should also evolve beyond service provision towards a development partnership that contributes to program development, capacity building, the financing of high-impact initiatives, and support for research and innovation.

The reports also reveal a rich diversity of national experiences and initiatives, offering an important opportunity for mutual learning and the development of shared knowledge in Early Childhood. Some experiences have demonstrated particular strengths in developing regulatory frameworks, others in curricula and activities, and still others in assessment and quality assurance, workforce development, the use of technology, or strengthening partnerships with families and the private sector. Documenting, analyzing, and sharing these practices can help reduce duplication of efforts, accelerate knowledge transfer, and support the development of improvement models that draw on shared experience while respecting the distinctive context of each education system.

Alongside this quantitative growth in enrollment rates, the GCC States now face the imperative of transitioning towards maximizing quality and developmental impact. The challenge is no longer limited to building classrooms and expanding the availability of places; it now extends to ensuring program sustainability, measuring outcomes, and linking funding to demonstrable impact.

This transition requires the development of integrated national policies that transcend traditional sectoral boundaries. Early Education cannot be separated from comprehensive health care, adequate nutrition, and systems for safety and social protection. The integration of these elements constitutes what UNICEF and other international organizations refer to as “Nurturing Care,” which provides an essential foundation for ensuring equal opportunities, equity, and fairness for all children, particularly those with the greatest needs, those living in remote areas, and children with disabilities.

Strategic Recommendations for Developing the Early Childhood Sector

Drawing on scientific evidence, leading international practices from UNESCO, the World Bank, and partner development organizations, as well as national reports from the Gulf States, the following recommendations are proposed to shape the next roadmap :

First: Policy Development

- **Developing a Unified Gulf Guiding Framework:** Develop a unified GCC policy framework that establishes regional standards for the quality of learning and educational environments and defines standardized, comparable performance indicators, while respecting the regulatory context of each member state.
- **Institutionalizing Early Childhood within National Visions:** Integrate Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programs at the heart of economic transformation plans and national future visions, positioning them as one of the most important investments in human capital.
- **Strengthening Cross-Sector Governance:** Establish high-level interministerial coordination councils spanning education, health, human resources, and social development to ensure the delivery of an integrated package of services encompassing nutrition, mental and physical health, and Early Education within a safe and protected environment.

Second: Enhancing Quality

- **Adopting Evidence-Based Professional Standards for Teacher Preparation:** Implement national competency frameworks for female and male Early Childhood teachers, with a focus on purposeful interaction skills and emotional support for children, while aligning with findings from Early Education research, such as the World Bank's Quality Early Learning report.
- **Curriculum Modernization Based on Play and Inquiry:** Reform curricula and school environments to promote interactive learning and both free and structured play. Longitudinal studies, including those supported by the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), demonstrate that play- and inquiry-based classrooms foster children's oral expression, creativity, and problem-solving skills more effectively than systems characterized by a rigid academic orientation.
- **Early Developmental Screening and Intervention:** Integrate screening programs for learning difficulties, developmental delays, and disabilities into Pre-Primary Education to ensure the early provision of appropriate medical and educational inter-

ventions-an approach identified in UNESCO reports as the most cost-effective and effective pathway towards full social inclusion.

Third: Knowledge Investment

- **Establishing the Gulf Early Childhood Observatory:** Develop a unified regional cloud-based data system for collecting, classifying, and analyzing data on children's development, enrollment rates, and quality levels, providing Gulf policymakers with accurate, real-time data to support evidence-based decision-making.
- **Supporting Research and Longitudinal Studies:** Direct financial support to universities and national research centers to conduct longitudinal studies tracking cohorts of children benefiting from quality programs over several years, with the aim of measuring the actual economic returns on investment and their impact on reducing learning poverty and school dropout rates.
- **Responsible Use of Digital Technologies and Artificial Intelligence Applications:** Design smart learning environments and interactive content that support teachers and enable Personalized Learning, while strictly adhering to ethical frameworks that protect children's digital privacy and prevent excessive screen exposure that could adversely affect their visual and cognitive development.

Fourth: Strengthening Regional and International Partnerships

- **Institutionalization of Sharing Promising Practice:** Facilitate the transfer and localization of innovative Gulf models and initiatives-such as impact-based social financing programs and comprehensive inclusion models-and support their adoption across member states to reduce fragmentation of efforts.
- **Global Knowledge Transfer Partnerships:** Expand channels of collaboration with international organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank to draw on global standards and guidance tools and adapt them to local contexts in such ways that reflect Arab and Islamic culture and identity.
- **Positioning the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) as a Regional Reference:** Entrust the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) with leading and coordinating the "Joint Gulf Early Childhood Program," positioning it as a platform for knowledge generation and institutional capacity building. A periodic evaluation report should be developed every three years to monitor progress, assess policy impact, and shape priorities for the region's shared development future.

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Alphabetical Glossary of Education-Related Terms, Abbreviations and Acronyms

Based on the 2026 Status Report on Early Childhood Education and Care in the ABEGS Member States

Scope and definition basis

This glossary contains 265 distinct entries and is comprehensive within the attached report. It includes education stages, concepts, indicators, frameworks, standards, authorities, and every education-related abbreviation or acronym used in the report. Personal names, currency codes, date abbreviations, law numbers, and purely technical web labels are excluded.

Definitions are concise paraphrases of the report's operational terminology and cited official frameworks. Where the report uses a branded label rather than an expandable acronym (for example, IEN or KASEB), no invented full form is supplied.

Alphabetization: Entries are ordered by the exact label shown in Column (1). Abbreviation entries begin with the official full form in Column (2).

Term / Abbreviation / Acronym	Full Form and Official Definition
ABEGS	Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States. A regional educational organization that supports cooperation, knowledge development, policy, research, curricula, and professional capacity across the GCC Member States.
Academic Qualification	A formally recognized educational credential, such as a certificate, diploma, bachelor's degree, or postgraduate qualification, used to establish eligibility for an educational role.
Access and Participation	The extent to which children have equitable and inclusive opportunities to enroll in, benefit from, remain in, and complete early childhood programs and services.
Accreditation	Formal recognition that an educational institution, program, or service meets approved quality standards or requirements.
Active Exploration	Learning in which children investigate materials, environments, and ideas directly through movement, experimentation, questioning, and interaction.
Active Learning	An approach in which children participate directly in meaningful activities, exploration, problem-solving, discussion, and reflection rather than receiving information passively.
ADEK	Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge. The local authority responsible for regulating, overseeing, and developing education in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.
Administrative Staff	Personnel who manage the organizational, operational, recordkeeping, financial, or support functions of an educational institution.
Advanced Pre-Primary Education	The final year or level of pre-primary education, generally serving children aged 5-6 immediately before entry into primary education.
Age-appropriate learning experience	A learning activity designed to match children's age, developmental characteristics, abilities, interests, and learning needs.
AL-ASAFEER	Romanized Arabic for "Sparrows." In the report, it names Bahrain's early education scouting movement; it is a program name, not an acronym.
AL-KATATIB	Romanized Arabic plural of kuttab: traditional schools in which children learned reading, writing, and the Quran before the expansion of formal schooling.
Art Area	A classroom learning area where children develop creativity, fine-motor skills, and artistic expression through drawing, coloring, modeling, and varied materials.
Artificial Intelligence in Education	The responsible use of AI-enabled tools or systems to support learning, content, planning, assessment, or personalized support while protecting children's privacy and well-being.
Arts and Creative Expression	A learning domain that develops imagination, aesthetic awareness, self-expression, and creative skills through visual arts, music, movement, drama, and related activities.
Assessment Strategy	A planned approach for collecting and using evidence about children's learning and development through suitable methods, tools, and timing.
Authentic Assessment	Assessment based on children's performance in natural, meaningful activities using evidence such as observation, work samples, interactions, and portfolios.
Bachelor's Degree in Education	An undergraduate academic qualification that prepares graduates for teaching or other professional roles in education, sometimes with an early childhood specialization.
Building and Blocks Area	A classroom area where construction activities develop planning, creativity, logical thinking, problem-solving, spatial understanding, and fine-motor skills.
Caregiver	An adult responsible for a young child's care, protection, responsive interaction, and support for health, learning, and development.
Centralized Governance	A governance model in which primary authority for policy, regulation, oversight, or service management is concentrated in one ministry or national body.
Child-Centered Learning	An approach that organizes learning around children's developmental needs, interests, choices, participation, and active construction of knowledge.
Child Development	The progressive growth of children's cognitive, linguistic, physical, motor, social, emotional, and self-regulatory abilities.
Child-Initiated Learning	Learning that begins with children's interests, questions, choices, or actions, with adults providing an enabling environment and appropriate guidance.
Child Protection	Policies, procedures, and practices that prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation, violence, and other threats to children's safety and rights.

Term / Abbreviation / Acronym	Full Form and Official Definition
Child-to-Staff Ratio	The number of children assigned to each staff member in an early childhood setting; a structural quality indicator affecting supervision and interaction.
Child-To-Teacher Ratio	The number of children assigned to each teacher; lower ratios generally permit more individualized attention and responsive interaction.
Children of Determination	The official UAE term used for persons with disabilities, including children requiring inclusive, accessible, or individualized educational support.
Class Size	The number of children in a class or learning group; it is commonly regulated by age, available space, staffing, and quality requirements.
Classroom Density	The concentration of children within a classroom, often considered through class size and space available per child.
Classroom Learning Area	A clearly organized classroom zone dedicated to a type of activity, such as reading, art, blocks, discovery, writing, music, or role play.
Classroom Observation	Systematic viewing and recording of teaching, interactions, children's participation, or learning processes for assessment, feedback, or professional development.
Cognitive Development	The development of thinking, attention, memory, reasoning, concept formation, problem-solving, and related intellectual abilities.
Cognitive Games Area	A classroom area using puzzles and structured games to develop perception, classification, matching, visual-motor coordination, reasoning, and problem-solving.
Collaborative Learning	Learning in which children work together, exchange ideas, share responsibility, and jointly complete tasks or solve problems.
Community Engagement	The participation of community members and organizations in supporting educational programs, children's development, and institutional improvement.
Community Partnership	A structured relationship between an educational institution and community entities to provide programs, resources, expertise, or services for children and families.
Competency Framework	An organized set of knowledge, skills, behaviors, and professional expectations used to guide preparation, recruitment, development, assessment, or licensing.
Compliance Indicator	A measure used to determine whether an institution meets applicable laws, licensing requirements, operational rules, health and safety provisions, or professional standards.
Compliance Inspection	An official inspection that verifies whether an educational institution meets approved legal, licensing, operational, health, safety, and quality requirements.
Compulsory Education	Education that children are legally required to attend during the ages or grades established by national law.
Computer Corner	A classroom learning area where children use age-appropriate digital tools and educational technologies to develop foundational digital skills.
Constructivism	A learning perspective in which children actively build knowledge through experience, exploration, social interaction, and connection with prior understanding.
Continued Professional Development	Ongoing, practice-related learning that updates educators' knowledge, skills, and professional competence after initial qualification.
Continuity of Participation	Children's sustained attendance and engagement in an educational program over time, including progression through the program and transition to the next stage.
Cooperative Learning	A structured form of group learning in which children work interdependently toward shared learning goals while contributing individually.
Cross-sector coordination	Planned coordination among education, health, social protection, family, and other sectors to provide integrated services and coherent policy for children.
Curricula and Activities	The structured frameworks, content, learning experiences, values, methods, activities, and assessment approaches used to support children's holistic development and learning.
Curriculum Alignment	The consistency among curriculum goals, content, teaching practices, learning activities, assessment, standards, and intended outcomes.
Curriculum Content	The knowledge, skills, values, concepts, experiences, and learning domains included in an educational curriculum.

Term / Abbreviation / Acronym	Full Form and Official Definition
Curriculum Document	An approved document that sets out curriculum philosophy, learning domains, objectives, content, expected outcomes, and implementation guidance.
Curriculum Framework	A high-level structure that defines the principles, organization, learning domains, outcomes, and guidance used to design or implement curricula.
Curriculum Integration	The deliberate connection of multiple learning domains, skills, values, and experiences within coherent themes, projects, or activities.
Curriculum Learning Domains	The major areas of learning and development addressed by a curriculum, such as language, mathematics, science, arts, social skills, health, and physical development.
Curriculum Modernization	The systematic updating of curriculum philosophy, content, outcomes, methods, resources, and assessment to reflect current evidence, needs, and technologies.
Curriculum Philosophy and Orientation	The pedagogical principles and approaches that guide curriculum design and implementation to support children's holistic, play-based, and developmentally appropriate learning.
DAP	Developmentally Appropriate Practice. NAEYC's strengths-based, play-based approach for promoting each child's optimal learning and development in ways appropriate to age, individuality, culture, language, and ability.
Data Governance	Policies, roles, standards, and controls for collecting, classifying, sharing, protecting, managing, and using educational data responsibly.
Data-Informed Decision-Making	The systematic use of reliable data, indicators, and evidence to guide policy, planning, resource allocation, teaching, and improvement.
Decentralized Governance	A governance model in which education responsibilities are distributed among national, regional, local, or specialized authorities.
Developmental Assessment	The systematic collection of evidence about a child's progress across developmental and learning domains to guide support, planning, and intervention.
Developmental Delay	A slower-than-expected progression in one or more areas of development, such as language, cognition, movement, social-emotional development, or self-care.
Developmental Domain	A broad area of child development, such as cognitive, linguistic, physical, motor, social, emotional, or psychosocial development.
Developmental Monitoring	Ongoing observation and documentation of children's development over time to identify progress, needs, or possible concerns.
Developmental Outcome	A measurable result relating to children's growth, learning, skills, behavior, health, well-being, or readiness across developmental domains.
Developmentally Appropriate Technology	Digital technology selected and used in ways suited to children's age, abilities, developmental needs, learning goals, safety, and well-being.
Digital Citizenship	The knowledge, values, and behaviors needed to use digital technologies responsibly, safely, ethically, and constructively.
Digital Learning Resources	Electronic content, applications, devices, platforms, or interactive materials used to support teaching and learning.
Digital Skills	The abilities needed to use digital tools and information effectively, safely, and appropriately for learning, communication, creation, or problem-solving.
Digital Well-Being	Healthy, safe, balanced, and age-appropriate engagement with digital technologies, including protection from excessive exposure and online risks.
Discovery Area	A classroom area that promotes curiosity, scientific thinking, investigation, and exploration through hands-on materials and experiences.
Distance Learning	Education delivered when learners and educators are not physically together, using digital platforms, broadcasts, printed materials, or other remote methods.
Dropout Rate	The proportion of learners who leave an education program or level before completing it or transitioning as expected.
Early Childhood	For this report, the period from birth to age six and the associated institutions, programs, and services for care, learning, and development.
Early Childhood Care	The stage of organized care, learning, and developmental provision for children below pre-primary age, generally from birth to under three in this report.

Term / Abbreviation / Acronym	Full Form and Official Definition
Early Childhood Development	The interconnected cognitive, physical, language, motor, social, emotional, and self-regulatory development that occurs during the early years.
Early Childhood Ecosystem	The interconnected institutions, policies, services, workforce, families, sectors, resources, and governance arrangements that support young children's development and learning.
Early Childhood Educational Development	ISCED 0 provision primarily intended for children under age three, with intentional educational content supporting early development and learning.
Early Childhood Institution	An organization or setting that provides care, education, development, or related services to young children, such as a nursery or kindergarten.
Early Childhood Workforce	Teaching, support, specialist, leadership, and administrative personnel working in early childhood institutions and programs.
Early Developmental Screening	A brief, standardized process used to identify children who may have developmental delays, learning needs, disabilities, or a need for further assessment.
Early Education	Learning processes and experiences in the early years that support holistic development through developmentally appropriate language, mathematics, science, arts, social, health, physical, play, and exploration activities.
Early Education Curriculum Framework	Bahrain's national reference for consistent early education curriculum philosophy, content, learning experiences, and practices across institutions.
Early Education Department	The Qatar Ministry unit responsible for policies, programs, guidance, professional support, and development relating to kindergarten and foundation education.
Early Education Licensing and Monitoring Department	The Bahrain Ministry of Education department responsible for licensing, regulating, monitoring, and supporting early education institutions.
Early Grades of Primary Education	The first years of primary schooling, sometimes linked organizationally or pedagogically with early childhood to support continuity and transition.
Early Learning	Learning that begins from birth through sensory experience, movement, language, interaction, play, exploration, and participation in everyday activities.
Early Learning Developmental Standards	Standards that specify expected learning and developmental outcomes for children at different ages and guide curriculum, teaching, assessment, and program quality.
Early Literacy	Foundational abilities that precede and support reading and writing, including oral language, vocabulary, phonological awareness, print awareness, and emergent writing.
Early Mathematics	Foundational mathematical learning involving number, quantity, pattern, shape, measurement, classification, spatial awareness, and problem-solving.
ECA	Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority. A specialized authority that develops and coordinates an integrated early childhood ecosystem in Abu Dhabi.
ECDI	Early Childhood Development Index. An index used to assess whether young children are developmentally on track across specified areas of development.
Ecdi2030	Early Childhood Development Index 2030. UNICEF's 20-item population-level measure for children aged 24-59 months across health, learning, and psychosocial well-being, used for SDG indicator 4.2.1.
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care. Integrated education, care, learning, and developmental services provided during the early years; in this report, it particularly includes provision for children under age three.
Education and Training Evaluation Commission	Saudi Arabia's national body responsible for education evaluation, standards, assessment, accreditation, and related quality functions, including professional licensing and school evaluation.
Education and Training Quality Authority	Bahrain's independent national body that reviews education and training institutions and publishes evaluations against approved quality frameworks and standards.
Education Ecosystem	The network of institutions, policies, people, resources, relationships, and services that collectively organize and deliver education.
Education Structure	The organized sequence of education levels, stages, ages, grades, availability, and compulsory status within an education system.

Term / Abbreviation / Acronym	Full Form and Official Definition
Educational Activities	Planned experiences and tasks through which children develop knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, creativity, health, and social-emotional competence.
Educational Content	The knowledge, concepts, skills, values, materials, and experiences selected for teaching and learning.
Educational Guides	Approved guidance materials that translate curriculum or policy into practical directions, examples, procedures, and implementation support for educators or families.
Educational Leadership	The direction and management of educational institutions and teaching and learning, including planning, staff support, quality improvement, and accountability.
Educational Technology	Digital tools, systems, media, and resources intentionally used to support teaching, learning, assessment, management, or access.
EHCD	Education, Human Development and Community Development Council. The UAE's high-level council for strategic direction and coordination across education and human development.
Enrollment Rate	A measure of participation showing the proportion of a defined population enrolled in an education program or level.
Equitable Access	Access designed to ensure that children can participate regardless of location, gender, disability, socioeconomic circumstances, or other barriers.
Equity in Access	The fair distribution of educational opportunities and support so that different groups can enroll, participate, and benefit according to their needs.
Evaluation Indicator	A measure used to judge educational performance, quality, outcomes, leadership, learning environments, or developmental progress.
Evidence-Based Decision-Making	The use of credible research, data, evaluation findings, and professional evidence to select policies, programs, or practices.
Evidence-Based Practice	Educational practice selected and implemented using the best available research evidence together with professional judgment and learner context.
Experiential Learning	Learning through direct experience, action, experimentation, reflection, and application rather than through explanation alone.
Exploration-Based Learning	Learning in which children investigate objects, environments, questions, and ideas through active discovery and guided inquiry.
Family Engagement	Families' active, sustained participation in children's learning, development, communication with institutions, decision-making, and learning support at home.
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria. The national government cited in the report as a source of education policy and early childhood literature.
First Aid Facility	A designated, equipped space or service for immediate care of illness or minor injury and initial response to emergencies.
Flexible Learning Space	A learning environment that can be rearranged or used in multiple ways to support different activities, groupings, movement, and developmental needs.
Formal Education	Institutionalized, intentional, planned education recognized by national authorities and organized within the official education system.
Foundation Education	In the Qatar context, the early primary stage linked with kindergarten under the Early Education Department to support continuity in children's learning.
Foundational Skills	Core early capabilities, especially language, literacy, numeracy, social-emotional, physical, and learning-to-learn skills, that support later education.
Furniture Ergonomics	The design and sizing of furniture to fit children's bodies and activities, supporting comfort, posture, safety, attention, and participation.
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council; officially, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. A regional intergovernmental organization for cooperation among six Gulf states.
GDP	Gross Domestic Product. The total value of goods and services produced in an economy; education expenditure is sometimes expressed as a percentage of GDP.

Term / Abbreviation / Acronym	Full Form and Official Definition
General Technical Supervision Department for Pre-Primary Education	The Kuwait Ministry of Education unit responsible for technical and pedagogical oversight, curriculum implementation, teacher performance, and quality in public pre-primary institutions.
GER	Gross Enrollment Ratio. Total enrollment in an education level, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group for that level.
Governance and Regulatory Frameworks	The institutional, legislative, policy, oversight, monitoring, evaluation, quality assurance, and coordination arrangements governing early childhood education.
Guided Play	Play in which children retain active agency while an adult intentionally structures the environment or prompts learning toward defined goals.
Health and Hygiene Facilities	Child-appropriate toilets, handwashing facilities, safe drinking water, cleaning arrangements, and waste-management provisions that protect health in educational settings.
Higher Education	Education beyond secondary level provided by universities, colleges, institutes, or equivalent institutions and leading to advanced qualifications.
Holistic Development	The integrated development of the whole child across cognitive, linguistic, physical, motor, social, emotional, moral, and well-being dimensions.
Home Corner	A role-play and imaginative-play area where children develop language, social interaction, communication, imagination, and self-expression.
Human Capital Development	Investment in people's knowledge, skills, health, capabilities, and productivity across the life course, beginning in the early years.
Human Resources	The workforce dimension covering staff numbers, roles, qualifications, recruitment, licensing, development, retention, class size, and child-to-teacher ratios.
IEN	IEN (Arabic brand: عين) Education Portal and Channels. A Saudi Ministry of Education service providing digital curricula, learning content, activities, and distance-learning resources; it is a brand name, not an expanded initialism.
Inclusion Services	Educational and support services that enable children with disabilities or additional needs to participate meaningfully in ordinary learning environments.
Inclusive Access	Admission and participation arrangements that remove barriers and enable all children, including disadvantaged groups and children with disabilities, to benefit from early education.
Inclusive Education	Education that welcomes all learners and adapts policies, environments, teaching, resources, and support so each can participate and learn.
Individualized Support	Targeted educational, developmental, behavioral, health, or communication assistance designed around a particular child's assessed needs.
Inquiry-Based Learning	Learning organized around questions, investigation, evidence, exploration, and discussion, with children actively constructing understanding.
Institutional Governance	The structures, roles, decision rights, accountability, and procedures through which an educational institution or sector is directed and controlled.
Institutional Oversight	Formal supervision of institutions to verify performance, compliance, quality, safety, and appropriate use of resources.
Integrated Data System	A coordinated system that links data on inputs, participation, processes, quality, workforce, and outcomes to support monitoring and policy.
Integrated Learning	Learning that connects multiple developmental domains, subjects, skills, values, and experiences within coherent activities or contexts.
Intermediate Education	The education stage between primary and secondary education in systems that use an intermediate level.
International Curriculum	A curriculum originating outside the national system or recognized internationally and implemented subject to national licensing and regulatory requirements.
International School	A privately operated school that follows an international or foreign curriculum rather than the national Ministry of Education curriculum.
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education. UNESCO's framework for classifying education programs and qualifications to support consistent national and international statistics.

Term / Abbreviation / Acronym	Full Form and Official Definition
ISCED 0	The ISCED level for early childhood education, encompassing early childhood educational development and pre-primary education.
ISCED 01 / ISCED 010	Early childhood educational development programs, primarily intended for children under age three and containing intentional educational content.
ISCED 02 / ISCED 020	Pre-primary education programs, typically intended for children from age three until entry into primary education.
KASEB Lessons Initiative	A Qatar professional-learning initiative that uses classroom observation lessons to improve teaching practice, share exemplary approaches, and strengthen children's learning experiences. KASEB is a program name, not an expanded acronym.
KG	Kindergarten. An early education stage before primary school; national age ranges and level structures vary.
KG1	Kindergarten 1. The first kindergarten level, commonly serving children around ages 3-4 or 4-5 depending on the national structure.
KG2	Kindergarten 2. The second kindergarten level, commonly serving children around ages 4-5 or 5-6 depending on the national structure.
KG3	Kindergarten 3. A third kindergarten or advanced pre-primary level, generally serving children aged 5-6 before primary education.
KHDA	Knowledge and Human Development Authority. Dubai's authority for regulating and assuring quality in private education, including early childhood provision within its jurisdiction.
Kindergarten	An organized early education program before primary school that supports children's learning, development, socialization, and school readiness.
Language and Communication	A learning domain covering listening, speaking, vocabulary, comprehension, expression, emergent reading and writing, and communication with others.
Learning Area	A defined classroom or curriculum area organized around a domain, resource set, or type of activity.
Learning Domains	Broad categories used to organize curriculum and development, such as language, mathematics, science, arts, social-emotional, health, and physical development.
Learning Environments and Facilities	The physical, educational, health, safety, infrastructure, and resource conditions provided to support children's learning, development, well-being, and protection.
Learning Outcome	A clear statement of the knowledge, skill, value, behavior, or developmental capability a learner is expected to demonstrate.
Learning Resources	Books, toys, manipulatives, digital materials, equipment, media, and other resources used to support learning and teaching.
Learning Through Play	An approach in which purposeful play is a primary means for children to explore, interact, solve problems, communicate, and develop across domains.
Licensing	Official authorization for an institution or professional to operate or practice after meeting specified legal, qualification, safety, and quality requirements.
Listening and Music Area	A classroom area that develops listening, auditory discrimination, rhythm, musical appreciation, language, and expression.
Local Education Authority	A subnational public body responsible for regulating, monitoring, supporting, or delivering education within a defined geographic jurisdiction.
Longitudinal Study	Research that follows the same children, learners, institutions, or groups over time to examine development, outcomes, or long-term effects.
Ministry of Education	The principal government authority responsible for national education policy, regulation, curricula, standards, provision, or oversight, depending on the country's structure.
Monitoring and Evaluation	Systematic tracking and assessment of implementation, performance, quality, results, and impact to support accountability and improvement.
Monitoring Indicator	A defined measure used repeatedly to track participation, quality, compliance, performance, resources, or outcomes over time.
Multisectoral Governance	Governance involving coordinated roles across education, health, social development, child protection, family, and other sectors.

Term / Abbreviation / Acronym	Full Form and Official Definition
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children. A professional organization that develops standards, guidance, and position statements for high-quality early childhood education.
National Curriculum	An officially approved curriculum that establishes common educational aims, content, learning outcomes, values, and guidance for national implementation.
National Curriculum Center	Saudi Arabia's specialized national body responsible for developing curriculum frameworks, curricula, educational documents, standards, and related curriculum initiatives.
National Education Strategy	A national policy framework setting long-term education priorities, objectives, programs, indicators, governance arrangements, and implementation directions.
NER	Net Enrollment Rate. The number of children in the official age group enrolled in the corresponding education level, expressed as a percentage of that age-group population.
NERDC	Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council. Nigeria's statutory body for curriculum development, educational research, book development, language development, and policy support.
Non-Compulsory Education	Education that is available within the education structure but is not legally mandatory for the relevant age group.
NSIS	National Student Information System. Qatar's official system for recording and managing student information, enrollment, progression, results, and related education records.
Nursery	An early childhood setting that provides care, learning, and development services before kindergarten or pre-primary education, often for children under age three or four.
Nurturing Care Framework	A WHO-UNICEF-World Bank roadmap for supporting young children through good health, adequate nutrition, responsive caregiving, security and safety, and opportunities for early learning.
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. An intergovernmental organization that produces comparative education data, analysis, policy guidance, and international surveys.
Operational Definition	A definition adopted for a specific report, study, policy, or measurement purpose so a term is applied consistently within that context.
Oversight and Monitoring	Formal supervision and repeated review of institutions, programs, staff, services, compliance, quality, and outcomes.
Parent Engagement	Parents' active participation in communication, decision-making, educational activities, and support for their children's learning and development.
Participation Rate	The proportion of a defined population that takes part in an education program, service, activity, or organized learning opportunity.
Pedagogical Interaction	A purposeful interaction between educator and child that supports learning, language, thinking, emotional security, participation, or development.
Pedagogical Practice	The methods, interactions, routines, decisions, and learning experiences educators use to support children's learning and development.
Pedagogy	The theory and practice of teaching and learning, including how educational experiences, environments, interactions, and assessment are designed.
Personalized Learning	Learning adapted to an individual child's needs, interests, pace, strengths, and progress, supported by appropriate teaching and resources.
Physical Development	The development of growth, health, movement, coordination, strength, balance, gross-motor skills, and fine-motor skills.
Play-Based Learning	Learning designed around purposeful play that supports exploration, motivation, creativity, communication, problem-solving, and development across domains.
Playground / Play Area	A safe indoor or outdoor space equipped for free play, physical activity, social interaction, exploration, and experiential learning.
Portfolio	A purposeful collection of a child's work, observations, and other evidence assembled over time to document learning and developmental progress.

Term / Abbreviation / Acronym	Full Form and Official Definition
PPP	Public-Private Partnership. A structured collaboration between government and private entities to finance, provide, manage, or improve education services or infrastructure.
Pre-KG	Pre-Kindergarten. An early pre-primary level before KG1, commonly serving children aged about 3-4.
Pre-Primary Education	Organized education before primary school, generally for children aged 3-6, designed to support holistic development, learning, and readiness for primary education.
Pre-Primary Education Performance Review Framework	Bahrain's framework for evaluating pre-primary institutions through defined domains, standards, and indicators covering child development, learning, leadership, and family-community engagement.
Preparatory Level	A pre-primary level immediately before primary school, intended to consolidate readiness and transition skills; national age and naming conventions vary.
Primary Education	The first formal stage of compulsory or basic schooling, beginning with Grade One and providing foundational literacy, numeracy, knowledge, and skills.
Private Education	Education provided by non-government institutions, usually subject to public licensing, regulation, inspection, and quality requirements.
Private Sector Engagement and Partnerships	Private-sector participation in providing, financing, expanding, or improving early childhood services, including collaboration with government and civil society.
Process Quality	The quality of children's daily experiences, including educator-child interactions, pedagogical practices, emotional support, participation, and learning processes.
Professional Competency	The integrated knowledge, skills, judgment, behaviors, and values required to perform an educational role effectively.
Professional Development	Planned learning that strengthens educators' or leaders' professional knowledge, skills, practice, and effectiveness.
Professional Licensing	A formal system that authorizes educators to practice after they meet approved qualification, assessment, competency, and renewal requirements.
Professional Standards	Approved expectations describing the knowledge, skills, conduct, and performance required of educators or educational leaders.
Program Retention	The extent to which enrolled children remain in a program through completion or transition to the next education stage.
Project-Based Learning	An approach in which learners investigate and respond to a meaningful question or task through an extended, integrated project.
Psychosocial Well-Being	A child's emotional and social functioning, including security, relationships, behavior, coping, self-regulation, and sense of well-being.
Public Education	Education funded, managed, or directly provided by government authorities within the national education system.
Quality Assurance	The policies, standards, monitoring, evaluation, inspection, and improvement processes used to ensure and strengthen education quality.
Quality Evaluation	A structured assessment of educational performance and outcomes against approved standards, criteria, or indicators.
Quality Indicator	A measurable feature used to assess educational structures, processes, environments, services, practices, or outcomes.
Quality Standard	An approved expectation or benchmark specifying the level of provision, practice, safety, performance, or outcome required.
Recruitment And Hiring	The policies and procedures used to attract, select, appoint, and place qualified staff in educational roles.
Regulatory Compliance	Conformity with applicable laws, regulations, licensing conditions, policies, standards, and official requirements.
Regulatory Framework	The laws, regulations, standards, policies, roles, and procedures governing how educational institutions and services operate.
Remote-Area Access	The availability and practical reach of education services for children living in rural, remote, outlying, or sparsely populated areas.

Term / Abbreviation / Acronym	Full Form and Official Definition
Retention Rate	The proportion of enrolled learners who remain in a program or education level through a specified point, completion, or transition.
Role Play and Imaginative Play	Play in which children take roles, create scenarios, use symbols, and rehearse social, language, emotional, and everyday-life experiences.
Safe Learning Environment	A physical and psychological environment that protects children from harm and supports security, belonging, participation, learning, and well-being.
Safety And Security Standards	Approved requirements for facilities, supervision, access control, emergency procedures, child protection, risk prevention, and incident response.
SASO	Saudi Standards, Metrology and Quality Organization. Saudi Arabia's national body for standards, technical regulations, metrology, conformity, and quality infrastructure.
SASO-3001	Educational Curriculum Quality Standard. A Saudi standard cited in the report to support consistency and quality in curriculum design and implementation.
SASO-3055	Early Childhood Environment Standard. A Saudi standard cited in the report for quality requirements relating to early childhood environments.
School Environment and Facilities	The buildings, classrooms, spaces, furniture, equipment, resources, health facilities, safety provisions, and organizational conditions supporting education.
School Evaluation	A systematic assessment of a school's leadership, teaching, learning, outcomes, environment, compliance, and improvement needs.
School Readiness	A multidimensional state of preparedness for school encompassing cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, physical, and personal-independence capabilities, together with supportive schools and families.
SDG 4	Sustainable Development Goal 4: ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
SDG / SDGS	Sustainable Development Goal / Sustainable Development Goals. The 17 global goals adopted by the United Nations for sustainable development through 2030.
SDG Target 4.2	The target to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so they are ready for primary education.
Secondary Education	The stage following primary or intermediate education and preceding higher education, generally serving adolescents through lower and upper secondary levels.
Self-Directed Learning	Learning in which children exercise choice, initiative, independence, and responsibility in exploring activities and resources, with appropriate adult support.
Self-Evaluation	An institution's structured review of its own performance against defined standards to identify strengths, gaps, and improvement priorities.
Social-Emotional Development	The development of relationships, emotional understanding, self-regulation, empathy, cooperation, identity, behavior, and social competence.
SPEA	Sharjah Private Education Authority. The authority responsible for regulating and supporting private educational institutions in the Emirate of Sharjah.
Special Education	Specialized teaching, services, accommodations, and support designed for learners with disabilities or additional educational needs.
Stakeholder Engagement	Meaningful involvement of families, educators, authorities, communities, providers, and partners in planning, delivery, review, or improvement.
Structural Quality	Quality features such as staff qualifications, child-to-staff ratios, group size, space, facilities, resources, regulation, and working conditions.
Support Staff	Specialist or auxiliary personnel who support children, teachers, or institutional operations, such as psychologists, speech specialists, assistants, and special education specialists.
Systematic Observation	Planned, repeated, and documented observation of children or educational practice using defined purposes and criteria.
Systematic Reading and Writing Methodology	A structured, evidence-informed approach for teaching early reading and writing skills through sequenced methods, materials, lessons, and teacher guidance.

Term / Abbreviation / Acronym	Full Form and Official Definition
Talis Starting Strong	Starting Strong Teaching and Learning International Survey. OECD's international survey of early childhood staff and leaders, covering preparation, practice, working conditions, leadership, and professional development.
Teacher Assistant	A staff member who supports the teacher and children in care, supervision, classroom organization, activities, inclusion, and learning.
Teacher-Child Interaction	The verbal, emotional, social, and instructional exchanges between educators and children that shape learning, engagement, security, and development.
Teacher Guide	A practical curriculum-support document providing educators with planning guidance, learning activities, methods, examples, assessment approaches, and implementation directions.
Teacher Licensing	The formal authorization of a teacher to practice after meeting approved professional, qualification, competency, and assessment requirements.
Teacher Preparation	Pre-service education and practical training that develop the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and experience required for teaching.
TPD Framework	Teacher Professional Development Framework. A structured system aligning professional-learning pathways and training with teacher competencies, performance evidence, and educational needs.
Transition to Primary Education	The planned process that supports children's movement from early childhood or pre-primary education into Grade One through alignment, preparation, communication, and continuity.
UAE	United Arab Emirates. An ABEGS Member State whose federal and local authorities share responsibility for education and early childhood governance.
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics. UNESCO's official statistical agency and the source of internationally comparable education data, standards, classifications, and indicators.
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The UN specialized agency supporting international cooperation, standards, data, policy, and knowledge in education, science, and culture.
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund. The UN agency working to protect children's rights and improve their health, education, development, protection, and well-being.
Universal Access	A condition in which all eligible children can obtain and participate in appropriate education services without exclusion or prohibitive barriers.
Values Development	The gradual formation of ethical, social, cultural, civic, and personal values through curriculum, interaction, practice, role modeling, and authentic experiences.
Values Education	The intentional integration of values such as respect, cooperation, responsibility, honesty, tolerance, empathy, belonging, and citizenship into learning and daily practice.
Verbal Rating Scale	A structured assessment tool that describes levels of performance or development using words or ordered verbal categories rather than numerical scores alone.
Vocational Training	Education and training designed to develop occupational knowledge and practical skills for specific work roles or professions.
WHO	World Health Organization. The UN specialized agency for international public health and a co-developer of the Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development.
Workforce Retention	The ability of an education system or institution to keep qualified staff employed and professionally engaged over time.
Workload	The amount and distribution of professional responsibilities assigned to staff, including class size, contact time, duties, and child-to-teacher responsibilities.
World Bank Group	An international development institution that provides financing, research, data, and policy support, including for education, human capital, and early childhood development.
Writing Area	A classroom area that develops emergent writing, fine-motor control, mark-making, letter knowledge, and readiness for written expression.

Definition and Source Basis

Primary source. Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), *Status Report on Early Childhood Education and Care in the Member States of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States* (2026), including its operational terminology, theoretical background, country chapters, conclusion, and references.

Method. Report definitions were shortened without changing their intended scope. Institutional names and selected technical definitions were cross-checked against the following official sources.

- UNESCO Institute for Statistics: education glossary and enrollment indicators
- UNICEF: Early Childhood Development Index 2030 Technical Manual
- OECD: What is TALIS Starting Strong?
- NAEYC: Definition of Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- World Health Organization: Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development
- Qatar Ministry of Education and Higher Education: National Student Information System (NSIS)
- Qatar Ministry of Education and Higher Education: KASEB Program
- Saudi Ministry of Education: IEN education channels and portal
- Saudi Standards, Metrology and Quality Organization (SASO)
- Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council: official mandates

Interpretive note. This is a report-specific reference glossary. Legal or regulatory meanings may vary by jurisdiction, and the governing national instrument should be consulted where a term is used for compliance or licensing purposes.



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