Five MELQO (Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes) tools, designed to generate data\textsuperscript{1} on children’s development and the quality of learning environments for children aged 4 to 6, were adapted and piloted in Tunisia in 2018. The sample included 108 children in 30 schools in greater Tunis, with a mix of public and private institutions under the Ministry of Education (ME) and Ministry of Women Affairs (MFFE). The tools were validated for use in a national survey.

**Tools for Measuring Quality**

1. Classroom Observation
2. Teacher Interview
3. Director Interview

**Tools for Measuring Children’s Development**

4. Teacher Child Report (TCR)
5. Parent Child Report (PCR)

**QUALITY IN CLASSROOMS**

- Sampled classrooms had medium quality scores on the learning activities items, indicating limited use of child- and play-centered strategies by teachers. A score of “1” was given when either no activity or the least desirable behavior was observed, whereas a score of “4” meant that the activity reflected the highest standard of quality in regard to pedagogy and child-centered learning.
- There was a lower incidence of learning activities in classrooms with 4-year-olds, which could reflect a distinct approach to pre-primary education at the année préparatoire level that does not emphasize academic subjects.
- Neither ME nor MFFE schools scored consistently better on the quality indicators, but private schools did slightly better.

**STRENGTHS:** Teachers showed good command of strategies for classroom discipline, children engagement and supervision. Classrooms offered safe conditions and a majority of children had access to adequate classroom space and learning corners. Art and writing materials were often present and used. 95 percent of année préparatoire classrooms or equivalent (5-year-olds) used classical Arabic at least once during the observation, per curricular requirements and 50 percent of 4-year-old classrooms did so as well, even though not required.

**WEAKNESSES:** Few literacy and book reading activities were observed. Close to 20\% classrooms did not have access to books or and a majority did not seem to make use of them or learning materials. In addition, teachers tended to use a one-size-fits-all instruction style, let children wait without any specific activity for more than ten minutes, and limit activities to one or two group types only.

\textsuperscript{1} Data were collected on a small, convenience sample not adequate for determining statistical differences.
CHILDREN’S DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

• Data on children were collected during separate interviews with the parents and teachers.
• MFFE households tended to have more educated parents, to have left their child alone less frequently and to have read to them more often. Households owned similar assets (as a proxy of socio-economic status).
• Children outside of the public system were more likely to be enrolled at the same school starting at a younger age, giving teachers more opportunities to know them.
• The results highlighted the importance of gathering data on the same child from both parents and teachers, as each were better at estimating students’ behavior across different subset of items.

Concerning cognitive and socio-emotional (SEM) development, 5-year-olds did not always perform better than 4-year-olds as would have been expected. This was partly due to the small sample size and higher rate of “I don’t know” answers by both parents and teachers.
• On the cognitive section, some items (for example, math and writing/drawing items) showed more developmental progression than others (reading/naming letters items). Nearly 85% of all sampled children could not read or write a sentence.
• On the SEM section, parents reported children struggling most with not getting upset when left alone, showing self-control, stopping activities upon request and planning ahead. In regards to children’s autonomy and response to violent behaviors (areas of concern identified by the adaptation team), children were less likely to bathe alone, drink alone, and stop fights. The majority of children were able to wash hands and get dressed on their own, and few were reported to fight frequently.

TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS

• The majority of pre-primary teachers reported positively on their experiences, with 66 percent stating “enjoyment” as their main reason for teaching (“J’aime enseigner aux jeunes enfants”). A third had a specialization in early childhood, and the majority were confident in the value of the pre-primary education system.
• Still, about half reported feeling overwhelmed and desirous of receiving additional professional development opportunities. Almost 25 percent of teachers, mostly in jardins d’enfants, did not have access to a national curriculum.