



SUPPORTING THE EARLY  
CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE AT SCALE

# Preschool Education in Ukraine

# EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE INITIATIVE

The Early Childhood Workforce Initiative (ECWI) is a global, multi-sectoral effort to mobilize countries and international partners to support and empower those who work with families and children under age 8. This initiative is jointly led by Results for Development (R4D) and the International Step by Step Association (ISSA), and supported by a consortium of funders including Bernard van Leer Foundation, Open Society Foundations, ELMA Foundation, and Jacobs Foundation.



This report was written by Vidya Putcha and Michelle Neuman at Results for Development (R4D), Natalia Sofiy at the Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation (USSF), and Olena Zaplotynska at the Institute for Education Development (IED). The following individuals provided invaluable guidance on this report: Mark Roland (R4D), Robert Francis (R4D), Tangut Degfay (R4D), Kimberly Josephson (R4D), Maggie Gratz (R4D), Nina Omelyanenko (Association of Preschool Educators – Ukraine), Yulia Naida (USSF), Oleksandr Androshhuk (IED), and Nurbek Teleshaliyev (Open Society Foundations). The authors are also grateful for assistance from Natalia Dyatlenko (Borys Grinchenko University), Svitlana Yefimova (Lviv In-service Teacher Training Institute), Natalia Zayerkova (Center for Inclusive Education, Borys Grinchenko University), Olena Osmachko (Local Education Department), Galyna Silina (Kharkiv Academy of On-going Education), and Oksana Fedorenko (Institute of Special Pedagogy, National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences) in carrying out data collection efforts. This study would not have been possible without the support of officials from the Ministry of Education and Science in Ukraine and local and national government officials, preschool teacher educators and trainers, staff in preschool institutions, parents, and experts, who generously shared their time and thoughts for this study.

We extend deep appreciation to the Early Childhood Program at the Open Society Foundations for their generous support of this work.

#### **Suggested citation:**

Putcha, V., Neuman, M., Zaplotynska, O., & Sofiy, N. (2018). *Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce at Scale: Preschool Education in Ukraine*. Washington, D.C.: Results for Development.

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# Introduction

A growing body of evidence shows that early childhood development (ECD) services have a strong impact on children's development, significantly improving childhood development and later adult outcomes. Although access to early childhood development programs has expanded, challenges remain around ensuring that they are of high quality and provide healthy and stimulating experiences for children. One major factor contributing to the quality of ECD programs is the early childhood workforce. A recent meta-analysis of global studies focused on center-based early childhood education and care programs found that higher teacher qualifications are associated with improvements in supporting children's development in areas such as supervision and the scheduling of activities, providing varied social experiences for children, and creating a warm and friendly environment for interactions.<sup>1</sup> Despite its importance for delivering quality services, relatively little is known about this workforce. Through the Early Childhood Workforce Initiative – a multi-stakeholder effort to support and empower those who work directly with young children led by the International Step by Step Association (ISSA) and Results for Development (R4D) – R4D is carrying out a series of country studies to understand the experiences and challenges faced by those in particular workforce roles in several countries. The country studies intend to focus on a range of roles including professionals and paraprofessionals, paid and unpaid workers, and frontline workers and managers, from the education, health and nutrition, social protection and child protection sectors.

This study, the second in this series, focuses on the role of preschool teachers in Ukraine. The country, with a predominantly public network of preschool education, has achieved coverage for a significant proportion of the population. Although it has commendably offered affordable preschool education services to many, Ukraine still struggles to meet demand and experiences a number of quality challenges. Increasing attention in the country to improving the quality of preschool education and supporting inclusion, elevated in recent policy reforms, offers a unique moment to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the system. Accounting for the current policy environment and the significance of the workforce to access and quality in preschool education in Ukraine, this study aims to gain insight into the experiences of preschool teachers, including their backgrounds, the support that they receive, as well as the challenges that they face in their role to support young children and their families.

It is hoped that the findings and recommendations emerging from this study can support officials within the Ministry of Education and Science (*Ministerstvo osvity i nauky*) in Ukraine, as well as local education departments, in order to strengthen and support the policies and programs that are both relevant to preschool personnel and geared toward improving the quality of preschool education. In addition, it is hoped that this study will further contribute to the developing knowledge base around the early childhood workforce by supporting researchers, program managers, advocates and policymakers across a range of contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> Manning, M., Garvis, S., Fleming, C., Wong, T. W. G., (2017). *The relationship between teacher qualification and the quality of the early childhood care and learning environment*. Campbell Systematic Reviews.

# Research aims

This study aims to illustrate the experiences of preschool teachers in Ukraine and identify the size and scope of the challenges they face, including their ability to support children with special educational needs and from diverse backgrounds. Key questions underpinning this study include:

- How are teachers prepared to enter into their roles? What are the strengths and challenges of this system?
- What types of ongoing training and professional development opportunities are provided to teachers? What are the strengths and challenges of these opportunities?
- What types of guidance and mentorship support are available to preschool teachers? What are the strengths and challenges of these mechanisms?
- What career advancement opportunities do teachers have?
- How do incentives and working conditions motivate teachers to enter and remain in the profession?
- What resources do teachers have to support children with special educational needs? What challenges do they face and what additional resources are needed?

Based on the experiences illustrated and challenges identified through this research, the study aims to develop actionable recommendations for policymakers in Ukraine that support and strengthen the workforce delivering the country's preschool education services. This study also identifies lessons for other countries similarly seeking to scale up preschool education.

# Methodology

As a first step, the research team carried out a desk review of policies relevant to the preschool education sector and corresponding personnel involved in its delivery in Ukraine, with a specific focus on preschool teachers and teacher assistants. The research team also carried out a review of ECD services provided to young children and families from birth to age six across the health and nutrition, education, and child and social protection sectors to map the broader system in which preschool is embedded.

Based on issues surfaced in the desk review, a group of key stakeholders was identified to participate in interviews and focus group discussions. These stakeholders included Ministry and local officials responsible for preschool education in the country, teacher educators at pedagogical universities and colleges, trainers at regional in-service training institutes, school-level personnel, parents, and members of civil society knowledgeable of the strengths and challenges of the preschool education sector in Ukraine. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted across three diverse cities - Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Lviv - in order to achieve geographical representation, as well as representation across publicly funded and private preschool education institutions. In addition, school-level stakeholders came from various types of preschool institutions, including regular preschools, mixed preschools, and special preschools.<sup>2</sup> Table 1 indicates the number and type of stakeholders included in these interviews and focus group discussions.

Once data were collected, they were translated into English and then coded and analyzed across the following key themes: initial preparation, ongoing support, parent and family engagement, recruitment, and motivation/satisfaction.

The study had several limitations. First, there was a lack of available information on the experiences of some school-level personnel, including teacher assistants, who were found in few of the sites that were selected

for this study. Also, while efforts were made to ensure diversity in schools and personnel sampled, interview and focus group discussion participants were primarily drawn from urban areas. In addition, as the study did not include observations of teaching and learning, it is difficult to comment on classroom practices. Data were collected in Ukrainian and then translated to English for analysis. Although Ukrainian members of the research team reviewed the findings to mitigate the risk that the intention or meanings of the data were not altered or misunderstood, it was not feasible to carry out back-translation.

**TABLE 1:**  
Number of stakeholders interviewed by type<sup>3</sup>

Stakeholder Type/Level	Stakeholder	No.
Central level	Officials from the Ministry of Education and Science, National Academy of Educational Sciences, and Ministry of Health Care	6
Local/regional level	Preschool teacher educators	6
	Officials from local education departments	5
School level	Teacher trainers at regional training institutes	6
	Preschool directors	12
	Teacher methodologists	37
	Preschool teachers	45
	Teacher technical assistants	14
Civil society stakeholders	Teacher assistants	10
	Parents	43
	Donors, experts, NGO leaders	5

<sup>2</sup> These preschool types are described in further detail in the background section on preschool education in Ukraine.

<sup>3</sup> Teacher methodologists, preschool teachers, teacher technical assistants, teacher assistants, and parents were all interviewed in focus group discussions generally comprised of five participants each.

# Overview of ECD in Ukraine

Across the education, health and nutrition, child protection, and social protection sectors, national-level policies in Ukraine articulate a comprehensive set of ECD services on which local authorities base their delivery of services to young children and families. Preschool institutions, including nurseries and kindergartens, offer center-based education and care for children ages zero to six, while children’s clinics and nurses in preschool institutions offer a range of services, such as consultations to parents on feeding, immunization support, breast feeding promotion, and prevention of illnesses. Preschool institutions also

provide meals, which are subsidized based on household need. Health and social services are available to orphans, vulnerable children, and children with disabilities, along with education, care, and social adaptation support delivered in residential institutions. A number of income support programs as well as provisions for parental leave and salary protection are offered under the system of social protection. While the majority of these services are outlined in national policies and delivered through local authorities, social protection services are primarily delivered with support from the central government. A summary of several key services is provided in Figure 1.<sup>4</sup>

**FIGURE 1:**  
Key ECD services offered across sectors

Primary Sector	0-1 years	1-2 years	2-3 years	3-4 years	4-5 years	5-6 years
Education	Center-based education and care in nurseries, kindergartens, and Children’s Homes					
Health and Nutrition	Meals offered in preschool institutions					
	Health services offered in preschool institutions and in children’s clinics					
	Children’s clinics provide individual and group consultations to parents of children on feeding, development, breast feeding promotion, and prevention of illnesses					
Child protection	Health and social services support for children with disabilities, orphans, and vulnerable children					
	Education, care, and social adaptation support in residential facilities for children with disabilities, orphans, and vulnerable children					
Social protection	Parental leave/salary protections (70 days of leave offered before childbirth and 56 days after)					
	Income support for new parents, families with low income, and families with children with disabilities					

<sup>4</sup> This is meant to identify several key services and is not a comprehensive mapping. This mapping focuses on services for children ages zero to six considering the focus of this report on preschool services for children in this age range.



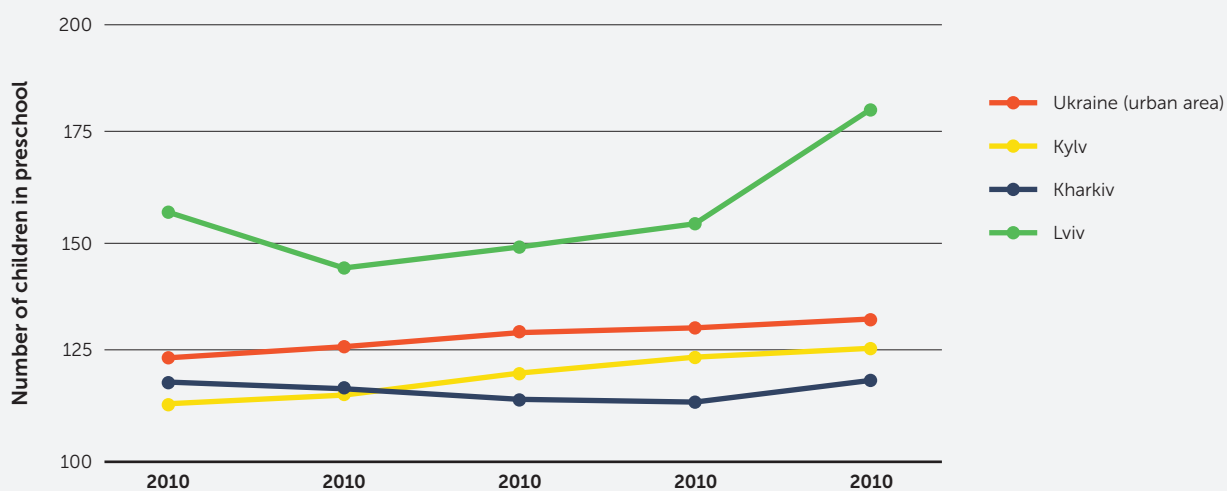
# Background on preschool education in Ukraine

Ukraine has made a significant commitment to providing all children with affordable opportunities for preschool education through its public system. However, as the system struggles to keep pace with demand, a number of children are left without the support they need for their growth and development during a critical stage of life.

The *Law on Preschool Education, 2001 (Zakon pro doshkil'nu osvitu)* guarantees access to preschool education for all children and established the groundwork for the country's current system. Ukraine boasts high enrollment in pre-primary education. In 2013, Ukraine's pre-primary gross enrollment ratio was 84 percent, compared to 74 percent in countries in the Europe and Central Asia region, and 32 percent in lower-middle income countries.<sup>5</sup> Despite high enrollment, there

are a number of barriers that limit universal access. In rural areas, only 40 percent of children ages one to six are enrolled in preschool, compared to 64 percent in urban areas.<sup>6</sup> In addition, although existing preschool institutions offer a total of 1.11 million places for children ages one to six, 1.29 million children are enrolled in preschools, highlighting one of the main challenges facing the system — insufficient places and thus, overcrowding. This is a particular concern in major cities, where there are, on average, 117 children of preschool age enrolled per 100 places. In 2014, 90,000 children were waiting for places in public preschools — 15,000 in Kyiv alone.<sup>7</sup> Figure 2 demonstrates that overcrowding has been a consistent and growing problem in urban areas in Ukraine, and is especially acute in certain cities, such as Lviv. Limited enrollment capacity and overcrowding threaten quality of services but have also

**FIGURE 2:**  
Number of children per 100 places in preschool institutions



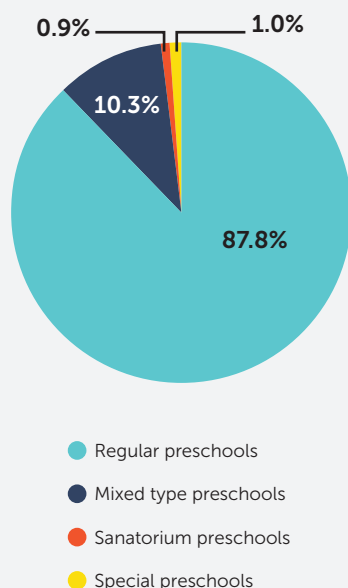
Source: Kyiv City Government.

<sup>5</sup> The World Bank, World Development Indicators (2013). *Pre-primary gross enrollment ratio*.

<sup>6</sup> State Statistics Service of Ukraine. (2015). *Statistical Bulletin on Preschool Education in 2015*. <http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/>

<sup>7</sup> OECD. (2017). *OECD Reviews of Integrity in Education: Ukraine 2017*. Paris: OECD.

**FIGURE 3:**  
**Preschools in Ukraine by type, 2015**



Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine. (2015). *Statistical Bulletin on Preschool Education in 2015*.

created widespread opportunities for integrity violations involving school directors who may seek unauthorized contributions from parents in exchange for their child's entry into a preschool institution, which has major equity implications.<sup>8</sup> In response to these challenges, in 2013, the Ministry of Education and Science recommended the creation of electronic systems to manage applications and waiting lists. However, because local governments can decide whether or not to utilize an electronic system, these are not universally implemented.<sup>9</sup>

The insufficiency of places in preschool institutions resulted from a reduction in the number of preschool education institutions between 1999 and 2005. During this period, a number of preschool institutions were closed due to insufficient funding and low demand from households who were experiencing high unemployment and reduced need for care outside of the home for their children. While in 1990 there were 24,500 preschool education institutions, there were only 14,900 by 2004. However, by 2010, this trend was reversed, as the number of preschool institutions began to grow again.<sup>10</sup>

According to the *Law on Preschool Education, 2001*,<sup>11</sup> Ukraine has nine types of preschool institutions, which mostly vary in terms of the ages of children served, whether they support children with special educational needs, and the range of services offered (see Box 1 for background on inclusive education in Ukraine). Depending on the services offered, each of these institutions may have different types of groups or classes (i.e. inclusive groups) organized based on the needs of the population of children enrolled. These nine types of preschool institutions can be categorized in the following:

- **Regular preschools** include three types: 1) nurseries for children from two months to three years, 2) nursery/ kindergartens for children two months to six or seven years, and 3) kindergarten for children between three and six or seven years.
- **Mixed type preschools** may include regular classrooms combined with other types of classrooms (special, inclusive, sanatorium), for children between two months and six or seven years.
- **Sanatorium type preschools** are for children between two and seven or eight years who require medical treatment and rehabilitation.
- **Special preschools** (only found in cities) are for children with disabilities ages two to seven or eight years.

In addition to the above, there are residential preschools overseen by the Ministry of Health Care, specifically called Children's Homes (*Budynok dytyny*), which in addition to education and care, provide medical and social services to orphans and vulnerable children, as well as to children with HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and severe disabilities.

## GOVERNANCE AND FINANCING OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATION SECTOR

Responsibilities for preschool education are distributed between the Ministry of Education and Science and other central authorities, such as the Ministry of Health Care, and local governments. While central authorities are primarily responsible for drafting regulations and identifying high-level priorities in the sector, local authorities are responsible for tracking the size of the preschool age population and ensuring availability of infrastructure, human resources, and learning materials. The main responsibilities of central and local authorities in preschool education are detailed in Table 2 below.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> OECD. (2017).

<sup>9</sup> OECD. (2017).

<sup>10</sup> European Research Association. (2013). *Diagnosis of Preschool Education Sector in Ukraine*.

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2001). *Law on Preschool Education*.

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Education and Science. (2001). *Law on Preschool Education*.

## BOX 1.

### Inclusive Education in Ukraine

Inclusive education, which promotes the concept of children with special educational needs learning alongside peers instead of in alternate institutions, gained traction in Ukraine in the 1990s and obtained further prominence after Ukraine ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009. In 2011, inclusive education was introduced in secondary education through the *Law on Secondary Education (Zakon pro zagal'nu serednyu osvitu)*, and was officially incorporated in preschool education through the 2015 *Law on Preschool Education*. These policy advancements have supported an increasing number of inclusive preschool classrooms. In Kyiv, for example, the number of inclusive classrooms has grown from 10 in 2011 to 33 in 2015. The incorporation of inclusive education is viewed as a positive development in the country. Until recently, the dominant approach was to support children with special educational needs through a parallel system of care and education, which has been perceived as discriminatory and not in the best interests of children.

Recent efforts around inclusive education have been elevated by support from Maryna Poroshenko, the First Lady of Ukraine, whose foundation, in partnership with the Ministry of Education in 2016, launched a pilot initiative in five oblasts to train teachers in supporting inclusive classrooms, revise legislation to provide additional financing for inclusive education, and develop relevant materials for teachers in five oblasts. Based on the experience of the pilot, a joint initiative of the Poroshenko Fund, International Renaissance Foundation, and Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation (USSF) is underway to provide guidance to local governments on how to support inclusive education.

In addition, current efforts aim to broaden the definition of inclusion as provision of additional support in education to all children, not only those with disabilities. The recently adopted *Law on Education, 2017* defines children eligible to be supported by inclusive education as all children who require additional, either permanent or temporary, support. This expanded definition of children with special educational needs includes those children affected by conflict as well as those from diverse ethnic groups, including Roma populations. In July 2017, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted a new regulation on Inclusive Resources Centers that replaced the abolished system of Psychological Medical Pedagogical Consultations (*Psyhologo-medyko-pedagogichna konsul'tatsiya*), which assessed children with special educational needs. It is hoped that this reform will help to ensure that all children, not just those with disabilities, will be assessed for special educational needs and that educational institutions adopt an inclusive approach, rather than relegating children with special educational needs to parallel education systems. Specifically, the regulation calls for local authorities to organize Inclusive Resource Centers (*Inklyusyvno-resursnyi tsentr*) for every 7,000 children in rural areas and 12,000 children in urban areas. According to the regulation, these centers will:

- Assess the special needs of children and develop recommendations about how to support them in school
- Provide psychological and pedagogical services to children with special needs
- Develop a register of all children assessed
- Develop a catalogue of all services, schools, rehabilitation centers and professionals that provide services for children with special needs in a certain territory
- Provide methodological support to teachers, preschools, schools and vocational schools on inclusive education topics

In addition to inclusive education, the last several years have seen advancement in the establishment of Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) services, which have been supported by the adoption of policy such as *National Strategy in the Field of Human Rights* in 2015. Today, ECI services for children birth to five years are implemented in 10 regions in Ukraine with the help of various donor organizations. In order to support children's transition from ECI to inclusive early childhood development programs, the USSF has planned a joint project, the Early Intervention Institute (*Instytut rannyogo vtruchannya*) and Rehabilitation Center "Djerelo" (*Reabilitatsiynyi tsentr «Dzherelo»*) in Kharkiv and Lviv respectively, with support from the Early Childhood Program at the Open Society Foundations.

In 2015, financing of public preschool institutions became the responsibility of local authorities as part of an overarching process of financial decentralization. Prior to that, central authorities transferred funds to local budgets. Although local authorities finance most public preschool institutions, there are 69 state kindergartens<sup>13</sup> that are financed by the central government, including the Ministry for Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Defense, which primarily serve children of staff working in these Ministries.<sup>14</sup>

Aside from meal fees, which vary by *oblast* (region), there are no other official fees required of households for children to attend public preschool institutions. However, parental contributions outside of meal costs may support the financing and operation of a school depending on the *oblast*.<sup>15</sup>

## PRIVATE PRESCHOOL EDUCATION SECTOR

The strength of the private sector in preschool education in Ukraine has been historically muted, in part due to the inheritance of Soviet health and hygiene regulations. These regulations required preschool institutions to be equipped with a kitchen, laundry, separate bedrooms, playrooms, dining rooms, and toilets for every class, making it difficult for the private sector to grow given the required capital investments. However, in 2016, revisions were made to the regulations, which liberalized requirements for preschool premises, meal services, and equipment. As a result, it became easier to open private preschools in public buildings and apartments.

While there were only 177 registered private preschool institutions<sup>16</sup> compared to 14,813 public preschool institutions in 2015, there are also likely many unregistered private preschools given that licenses are difficult to obtain.

**TABLE 2:**  
**Division of responsibilities for preschool education in Ukraine**

Ministry of Education and Science (or other central authorities)	Local authorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing legal regulations for preschool education system</li> <li>• Developing and approving state standards for financial and material support of children and technical equipping of preschools</li> <li>• Defining priorities for the preschool education system</li> <li>• Development and approval of the Basic preschool education component (standard) (<i>Bazovyi komponent doshkil'noi osvity (standart)</i>)</li> <li>• Determining the certification procedure for pedagogical employees in the preschool education system</li> <li>• Compiling lists of obligatory learning, didactic, correctional, and program and methodology materials, textbooks, literature, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing necessary infrastructure for public preschool institutions</li> <li>• Forecasting and ensuring development of preschool institutions based on the demands of the community</li> <li>• Licensing private preschools so that they have the right to provide educational services in preschool education</li> <li>• Certifying preschool educators</li> <li>• Controlling execution of preschool education tasks and adherence to requirements of Basic preschool education component and state inspection in preschools</li> <li>• Organizing research and methodology materials for preschool education, implementation of best practices and new teaching technologies</li> <li>• Accounting of preschool-age population</li> </ul>

Source: Ministry of Education and Science. (2001). Law on Preschool Education.

<sup>13</sup> State Statistics Service of Ukraine. (2015).

<sup>14</sup> These preschool institutions are not financed by the Ministry of Education.

<sup>15</sup> OECD. (2017).

<sup>16</sup> State Statistics Service of Ukraine. (2015).

# Background on preschool personnel in Ukraine

There are several categories of staff involved in delivering preschool education services, including administration, teaching staff, auxiliary staff, medical employees, volunteers, and private instructors. Table 3 provides additional detail on the range of personnel involved in providing preschool education.

As of 2015, 307,161 persons worked in preschools, including 172,311 technical staff and 134,850 teaching staff – out of whom, 68 percent were preschool teachers.<sup>19</sup> Thirty- three percent of teaching staff are under 35 years, 61 percent between ages 35 and 60, and 6 percent are over 60 years old.<sup>20</sup> According to staff lists, there are 318,580 staff positions in preschools, out of which 308,914 are occupied. Only three percent of teaching staff and four percent of auxiliary staff positions are vacant.<sup>21</sup>

## STAFFING NORMS

Staffing norms outline the number and type of staff that should work in a preschool institution based on the type of preschool and groups that are served, as well as number of students. Norms generally guide staffing decisions. However, at their discretion, preschool directors can introduce new positions or adjust their staffing mix depending on the availability of funds.<sup>22</sup>

Although norms guide staffing decisions, there is some concern they do not always align with needs. For example, while groups entirely comprised of children with special educational needs are required to have the support of a speech therapist, these same requirements do not apply to inclusive groups, although children may need similar support.

**TABLE 3:**  
**Preschool personnel<sup>17</sup>**

Category	Relevant positions
Teaching staff	Director (head), Deputy directors (heads), Teacher methodologists, Preschool teachers, Teacher- speech Therapists, Teacher - practical psychologists, Social pedagogue, Teacher-defectologists, Teacher assistants (for inclusive groups), Instructors for Crafts, Instructors for Physical Education, Instructors for Audio Room, Music Teachers, Heads of clubs and studios as well as other forms of group work
Technical staff	Teacher technical assistants, Supply manager, Secretary, Cook, Laundry operator
Medical employees	Nurses
Volunteers and private instructors <sup>18</sup>	Child assistants, English class teachers, Dance class teachers

<sup>17</sup> Official data are only available on teaching and technical staff.

<sup>18</sup> These personnel are not included in the official staffing norms; however, they are included here as preschools can utilize such volunteers and invite these private instructors if parents agree to pay for additional services.

<sup>19</sup> State Statistics Service of Ukraine. (2015). <sup>20</sup> State Statistics Service of Ukraine. (2015). <sup>21</sup> State Statistics Service of Ukraine. (2015).

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2010). Order Number 1157/18452. *Staff Standards for Preschool Institutions*.

## BOX 2.

### The role of teacher methodologist

The position of teacher methodologist has been in place since Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union. Current staffing norms recommended the introduction of a 0.5 FTE position of teacher methodologist in preschools where there is a minimum of four groups and one FTE where there is a minimum of six groups.

In order to become a teacher methodologist, a teacher must have received a master's degree and have a minimum of three years of work experience. Teacher methodologists' primary tasks include: supervision of teaching staff, keeping up to date on best practices in teaching and sharing relevant information with teachers, supporting the selection of particular textbooks and education materials, and holding consultations with parents.

Source: Ministry of Education and Science. (2010). Order Number 1055. *On Approval of the Typical Staffing Norms in the Preschools*.

## KEY PRESCHOOL PERSONNEL

**Preschool directors** are appointed by local education departments, and manage the operations of a preschool. Using staffing norms as a guide, directors recruit pedagogical staff with agreement from the local education department.<sup>23</sup> **Preschool teachers** work in all types of preschools, and the exact number within an institution depends on work hours and number of groups. On average, two teachers are assigned per group, i.e. there are five to 10 children per teacher. The preschool director can establish smaller sizes of preschool groups. For preschools located in rural areas, the founder (owner) determines the number of children in groups depending on the demographic situation. The position of **teacher assistant** was created to support inclusive groups (which contain up to 15 children, including one to three children with special educational needs).<sup>24</sup> This position was created in 2015 in response to the growing number of children with special educational needs in kindergartens and are meant to provide greater support to both preschool teachers and children with special educational needs.<sup>25</sup> **Teacher methodologists** are senior teachers who are tasked with

providing supervisory support and guidance to preschool teachers (see Box 2 on Teacher methodologists). **Teacher technical assistants**, who have no formal educational requirements to enter into the role, support preschool teachers in carrying out tasks such as cleaning classroom space and helping to deliver food to children at meal time. While their tasks are primarily non-pedagogical, according to regulations, teacher technical assistants may take on some ad hoc pedagogical tasks like substituting for a preschool teacher if he or she is sick.

As defined in the *Instruction on organization of Inclusive Groups in Kindergartens (Instruktsiya z organizatsii inklyuzyvnyh grup u doshkil'nyh zakladah osvity)*, parents or other individuals may serve in the volunteer role of **child assistant**. Child assistants accompany children with special educational needs throughout the day and provide support where required. The only requirement for being a child assistant is having medical permission. Preschools, in particular those that support children with special educational needs, may also have a **speech pathologist, speech therapist, defectologist, and/or practical psychologist**.

<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Education and Science. (2001). *Law on Preschool Education*.

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Education and Science. (2015). *Letter to Local Education Departments on Organization of Inclusive groups in preschool institutions*.

<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Education and Science & Ministry of Health. (2015). Order Number 104/52. *On Approval of the Procedure for Inclusion of Inclusive Groups in Preschool Education Institutions*.

# Preschool Teachers in Ukraine

## QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

According to the *Law on Preschool Education, 2001*, preschool teachers are required to hold a university degree in teaching.<sup>26</sup> In reality, nearly all teachers in Ukraine have completed post-secondary education in teaching, the majority at universities; of the 134,850 preschool teachers in Ukraine in 2015, 40 percent had graduated from pedagogical colleges and 59 percent, from universities.<sup>27</sup>

## INITIAL PREPARATION AND ONGOING TRAINING

There are 93 higher education establishments that train professionals in preschool education.<sup>28</sup> In order to gain admission into these training programs, an applicant must pass an external independent test and achieve a certain score (universities determine the scores that they are willing to accept each year). Although there is variation across colleges and universities, the curriculum includes general courses on topics such as history and philosophy in the first two years, after which there is more professionally-focused training.

Once working in the field, preschool teachers are required to participate in training to enhance their professional qualifications. *Oblast* governments finance this training and provide direct support to regional teacher training institutes. While there is some ambiguity in existing policies around whether teachers can undergo

in-service training at an institution of their choosing, teachers attend regional training institutes funded by local governments on a de facto basis.<sup>29,30</sup> Each institution offers their own curriculum; for example, at the Postgraduate Pedagogical Education Institution attached to the Kyiv Borys Hrinchenko University, in-service training modules include five days of classroom sessions and five days of distance learning. Teachers take an additional 30 days to prepare a final project or final term paper, which they select a topic for when registering for a course.<sup>31</sup> The new *Law on Education, 2017 (Zakon pro osvitu, 2017)* introduced changes to the certification and professional development system, such as integrating a greater variety of professional development opportunities and introducing provisions that tie salaries to certification results.

## MENTORING AND SUPPORT

According to legislation, methodologists from local education departments are required to work with all kindergartens and schools to provide methodological support to teachers to improve their qualification and professional competences.<sup>32</sup> These methodologists may also be members of attestation commissions (described below).<sup>33</sup> In addition, the local education departments organize conferences, seminars, clubs and other events on issues relevant to teachers. Teachers receive day-to-day guidance from teacher methodologists in schools (see Box 2).

<sup>26</sup> Ministry of Education and Science. (2003). Order Number 305, *Regulations on Preschool Institutions*.

<sup>27</sup> State Statistics Service of Ukraine. (2015).

<sup>28</sup> Data collected during interview with staff at Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education and Science.

<sup>29</sup> There are conflicting policies related to teacher autonomy in selecting where to receive in-service training. While Ministry of Education and Science Order Number 930 (2010) "On the Typical Statement on Teachers Attestation" outlines participation in professional development courses at educational establishments of a teacher's own choosing as a requirement for attestation, Ministry of Education and Science Order Number 538 (2000) "On the Statement of In-service Training Institutions" states that regional training institutions should provide in-service training using oblast budgets.

<sup>30</sup> There are 27 regional institutes of postgraduate pedagogical education in Ukraine.

<sup>31</sup> Kyiv Department of Education and Science. (2016). "Schedule of advanced training courses for the 2016-2017 academic year." Appendix 1 to the Department of Education and Science order #540 of the Kyiv City Council.

<sup>32</sup> In this report, for clarity, we refer to methodologists in local education departments as "methodologists" and teacher methodologists in schools as "teacher methodologists."

<sup>33</sup> Ministry of Education and Science. (2010). Order Number 1070. *On Methodical Cabinet in Preschool Institutions*.

## CAREER PATHWAY FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

By law, preschool teachers are required to undergo what is known as attestation (*atestatsiya*), which typically takes place every five years, and involves evaluation of teaching activities and suitability for a particular post by an attestation commission.<sup>34</sup> Participation in in-service training at least once in a given five year period is necessary for completing this process.<sup>35</sup> According to attestation results, teachers can be assigned a higher qualification level (e.g. specialist, second category specialist, highest category specialist) or promoted to higher teaching categories such as teacher methodologist and senior teacher.<sup>36</sup>

In practice, one of the major challenges of this system is that teachers without a master's degree are ineligible to attain higher qualification or teaching categories. This is due in part to conflicting policy messages on the matter. The *Regulation on Teacher's Attestation, 2010* (*Typove Polozhennya pro atestatsiyu pedagogichnyh pratsivnykiv, 2010*) only specifies "higher education" as a requirement for teachers to advance, although it was based on the *Law on Higher Education, 2002* (*Zakon pro vyshchu osvitu, 2002*), which equated higher education to a master's degree. However, the *New Law on Higher Education, 2014* (*Novyi zakon pro vyshchu osvitu, 2014*) defines higher education at different levels – bachelor's, master's, etc. – making it unclear what level of higher education is needed in order to advance per the *Regulation on Teacher's Attestation, 2010*.

## WORKING HOURS, SALARIES, AND OTHER BENEFITS

Preschool teachers may work five to six days a week, and sometimes may be required to work on weekends and holidays. Preschool teachers are generally expected to work 30 hours per week, though this may differ if they are working in preschools that serve children with special educational needs.<sup>37</sup> Preschool directors, with the approval from respective education and health

care departments, establish the working hours of their schools – regardless of ownership type and form.

Salaries for preschool teachers are calculated based on a standard *stavka* (tariff) with bonuses provided for qualification categories and increasing years of experience. Advanced roles, such as the school-based teacher methodologist, receive a 10 percent higher *stavka*. In 2015, the average monthly salary of a preschool teacher was only 38 percent of the average wage of full-time employees of private enterprises, and only 45 percent higher than the minimum wage in Ukraine.<sup>38</sup> Although salaries for teachers in preschool education institutions in Kyiv were 97 percent of salaries received by teachers in general education institutions in 2016, differences were marked for teacher methodologists and directors in preschool education institutions, who received 80 percent and 60 percent of what their counterparts in general education institutions received, respectively.<sup>39</sup> Although preschool teachers still do not have parity with teachers in general education institutions, in September 2017, significant salary increases were introduced – the basic monthly *stavka* for teachers without any qualification category increased 36 percent from UAH 2310 (US \$ 88) to UAH 3152 (US \$ 120).

In terms of vacation benefits, teachers receive 42 calendar days of vacation; those who work with a majority of children with special educational needs are eligible for 56 calendar days of vacation.<sup>40</sup> In terms of health benefits, teachers receive sick leave as well as a *stavka* once per year for health-related costs.

## RECENT POLICY REFORMS

The new *Law on Education, 2017*, developed over a period of four years, was passed in September 2017. A number of stakeholders were involved in its creation including experts, civil society organizations, university officials, school leaders, teachers, representatives of the private sector, and international organizations. It is expected that the new law will make the following

<sup>34</sup> In special circumstances, attestation can take place every two years and may be requested by teachers or at the recommendation of a school director.

<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Education and Science. (2010). Order Number 1255/18550. *Regulation on Teachers Attestation*.

<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Education and Science. (2010). Order Number 1255/18550. *Regulation on Teachers Attestation*.

<sup>37</sup> Ministry of Education and Science. (2001). *Law on Preschool Education*.

<sup>38</sup> Unified Tariff Plan for 2015. (2015). Available from: <https://buhgalter.com.ua/dovidnik/pratsya-ta-zarobitna-plata/posadovi-okladi-za-yets-posadovi-okladi-za-yets-2015/>

<sup>39</sup> Data collected during interview with staff from Kyiv Department of Education and Science.

<sup>40</sup> Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. (1997) Resolution Number 346. *On Approval of the Procedure for Granting Annual Basic Vacations for up to 56 calendar days to Managers of Educational Institutions and Educational Establishments, Educational (Pedagogical) Parts (Departments) of Other Institutions, Pedagogical, Scientific and Pedagogical Workers and Research Workers*.



changes – all of which will impact preschool education institutions and their staff. Particularly strong implications on the system of training and professional development are likely:

- Ease requirement for preschools to follow state curriculum;
- Develop provisions for the number of hours per day that a teacher assistant can work with children;
- Support development of teacher competences;
- Remove requirements for preschool staff to develop annual plans for professional development;
- Develop a voluntary certification process (administered by an independent agency) for teachers which would allow them to receive a higher salary;
- Reform in-service teacher professional development system by removing monopoly of regional training institutes; and
- Mandate that practical training in initial preparation programs constitute 10 to 25 percent of activities.

# Findings

Based on data collected during interviews and focus group discussion, the following key takeaways were identified:

## INITIAL PREPARATION

### FINDING 1:

***While pedagogical colleges and universities are perceived as providing prospective teachers with a strong theoretical foundation in teaching, initial preparation programs offer limited opportunities for practical training and are often unsuccessful in encouraging students to enter into the profession.***

*a) Higher education programs do not impart sufficient practical training to prepare teachers to work in preschools or support inclusive education.*

As mentioned earlier in this report, almost all preschool teachers in Ukraine have completed some higher education in teaching, either at pedagogical colleges or universities, reflecting the priority placed on specialized education for preschool teachers as well as efforts to ensure access to initial preparation programs. This reality is not mirrored in other countries, including for example, the U.S., where only 45 percent of teachers supporting children ages three to five in center-based settings have completed a bachelor's degree.<sup>41</sup>

Preschool teacher educators interviewed for this study generally described an even balance between theory and practice in higher education programs. One of the commonly-identified strengths of initial preparation programs is the depth of knowledge shared on theoretical subjects, such as psychology and pedagogy. However, there was a sense among a wide range of stakeholders, including teachers, teacher methodologists, school directors, and regional- and central-level officials, that

while there is a strong theoretical foundation imparted to students, programs could offer more opportunities for practical training. Teachers expressed that they often did not know how to support individual children and that their initial training did not provide them with adequate preparation for their work, with limited practicum opportunities. Many courses in university and college training programs were described as being lecture-based, mainly with limited opportunities for hands-on learning until after the first year. For example, practical education may not begin until the second year of university programs, when students observe preschool teachers. Subsequent hands-on opportunities involve student teaching during the third and fourth years. Taken together, the emphasis on theoretical training and the lack of practical opportunities seem to inhibit the ability of pre-service training programs to impart a professional identity that can serve to motivate teachers in their career.

*"First, I finished the teacher's training school, currently they are called colleges, then I entered the university. It seems to me the training school gave me much, much more than the university."*

*- Preschool Teacher*

The lack of practical opportunities in pedagogical training programs is also related to the fact that many teacher educators do not have practical experience themselves. This seems to be a particular challenge in universities, where professors more commonly have academic backgrounds, rather than teaching backgrounds. Relatedly, parents and other experts noted that preschool teachers often utilize outdated approaches to teaching and learning, which stems from the training programs where these approaches are taught. One preschool teacher mentioned a desire to use more interactive methods like those used in Montessori or Waldorf programs.

<sup>41</sup>National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (NSECE). (2013). *Number and Characteristics of Early Care and Education (ECE) Teachers and Caregivers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE)*. OPRE Report #2013-38. Washington DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

In addition, teachers, preschool teacher educators, and experts agreed that initial preparation programs lack information for teachers on how to support inclusive education. Although there has been growing focus on inclusive education in the country, and some colleges and universities offer specific courses on working with children with various educational needs, there is still insufficient training and support for preschool teachers on how to embrace inclusive education as a new paradigm for education.

***b) Many graduates of pedagogical colleges and universities do not go on to undertake roles in preschools, which may reflect ineffective screening criteria for applicants as well as an inability of higher education institutions to impart a professional identity among students around teaching.***

The current admissions process for teacher training colleges and universities is reliant on the results of external, independent tests (*zovnishniy nezalezhniy*). While preschool teacher educators expressed that these tests are able to identify cognitive abilities, they felt that such tests do not sufficiently address factors such as motivation and interest in working with children. One major challenge facing programs is that for many years, school graduates with the lowest test results have been going to pedagogical universities. A study of young people choosing preschool education as a university specialization found that only a third of the students had chosen that specialization due to professional interests.<sup>42</sup> Considering that many graduates do not pursue careers in preschool education and that programs do not deliver sufficient practical training, it may be that higher education institutions are not effectively imparting a professional identity among students, which could sustain their interest and motivation in working with children.

***“We want to work and to prepare people who will really work with children - motivated people. However, while there are some students who are very motivated to work with children there are some people who got to the field of pedagogy by accident.”***  
- Preschool Teacher Educator at Higher Education Establishment

## PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

### FINDING 2:

***While parents seem to be generally satisfied with the support that their children receive, there appears to be a mismatch between parents' expectations of teachers and teacher capacity, which has resulted in growing interest and enrollment in private kindergartens.***

***a) Parents express appreciation for teachers and preschool institutions.***

Many parents expressed appreciation for the work that preschool teachers do to support their children despite low salaries and heavy workloads. Parents also mentioned the friendly nature of preschool teachers and recognized the fact that teachers facilitate a number of activities with their children. Parents also talked about opportunities for regular communication with teachers about how individual children behave, what they ate, etc., and opportunities for more intensive engagement with teachers during regularly scheduled parent-teacher meetings.

***“Parents don't perceive teachers as skilled, but rather as nannies. Moreover, now parents require education themselves, as they think preschool teachers are nannies although many of them are specialists of high level.”***

- Preschool Teacher Educator

***b) Teachers mention that one of the biggest challenges that they face is communicating with parents.***

While parents generally reflected positively on interactions with teachers and other preschool staff, teachers, preschool directors, and teacher methodologists frequently mentioned communication with parents as one of teachers' biggest challenges. Teachers often expressed that parents were not involved enough in their child's development and learning, and that parents ignored recommendations on how to support children at home through activities such as reading. For parents of children with special educational needs, teachers mentioned that parents were often unwilling to acknowledge the barriers their children face and the additional support that they may require. Teachers also perceived that parents did not believe them to have valuable skills, and did not understand

<sup>42</sup> Belenka, V. (2012). "Formation of professional competences of future preschool teachers." Available from: [http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/Nzsp\\_2012\\_4\\_25](http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/Nzsp_2012_4_25)

that teachers work with many children, not just their own. When asked in which areas they would like more assistance, teachers frequently cited the need for additional support when engaging parents.

**c) Recent growth in private preschool enrollments reflect the ability of these schools to flexibly meet the needs of parents.**

While parents generally expressed satisfaction with services provided in public preschool institutions, a growing number of parents are enrolling their children in private preschools. Although the private preschool education sector remains small, parents of children in these institutions expressed appreciation for the modern approaches private preschool teachers employ. In addition, parents reflected on the flexibility of private preschools, which contrasts with the perceived rigidity in the public system. One teacher in a public preschool institution explained that the daily regimen in her preschool “doesn’t allow the child to feel at home.”

One private preschool director explained that teachers in her preschool incorporate learning through play and other creative activities in the curriculum. She also described catering to children’s diverse needs, including dietary requirements – for example, unlike her counterparts in the public sector, she allows children to bring their own food for meals. Her preschool also operates from 7am to 11pm

and organizes occasional evening events for children to give parents a night off. Teachers interviewed for an earlier study also described smaller class sizes as another perceived advantage of private preschools, which allowed for greater efficiency and focus on play techniques.<sup>43</sup>

## RECRUITMENT

### FINDING 3:

***It is difficult to recruit qualified candidates to teach in preschool, particularly in metropolitan areas where there are more attractive employment alternatives.***

Preschools face challenges in recruiting an adequate number of qualified preschool teachers. For example, in the city of Kyiv alone, in 2017, there were 817 preschool teacher vacancies, 9 percent of all preschool teacher positions (see Table 4).<sup>44</sup> A methodologist at a local education department explained that while “we would like young, motivated, and educated and creative specialists to come to kindergartens... unfortunately, [the] profession of a preschool teacher is not prestigious. Youth [don’t] like connecting their life with work in the kindergartens.” The primary factors contributing to the lack of interest include the low salary and social status afforded to professionals in these roles. In addition, while the private preschool sector

**TABLE 4:**  
**Vacant preschool positions in Kyiv (2017)**

Position	Number of filled positions	Number of vacant positions	Percentage of positions vacant
Director	546.0	9.0	2%
Teacher Methodologist	479.4	55.4	10%
Preschool Teacher	8699.5	817.2	9%
Teacher Assistant	29.8	19.0	37%
Teacher Technical Assistant	5258.9	564.7	10%

Source: Kyiv City Department of Education.

<sup>43</sup> European Research Association. (2013). *Diagnosis of Preschool Education Sector in Ukraine*.

<sup>44</sup> Data collected during interview with staff from Kyiv Department of Education and Science.

is still relatively small, its growing presence and generally better pay – estimates suggest that their pay is double that of teachers in public preschools – create competition for recruiting preschool teacher candidates.

In general, too few students completing higher education in preschool education enter into the profession. A one-time allowance is offered to university graduates who are willing to work in rural schools for three years.<sup>45</sup> However, the number of graduates who are taking this allowance has declined over time; in 2014, there were 2,504 graduates who accepted this allowance, 1,594 in 2015, and 800 in 2016. One of the reasons graduates do not take this allowance is their hesitation to relocate to a rural area for three years, which is a condition of receiving the funds.<sup>46</sup>

Many school directors highlighted recruitment challenges, with one describing the considerable effort that she has taken to encourage qualified candidates to work in her preschool. Her efforts have included encouraging students of higher education institutions to visit her kindergarten for practical training and stay on as teachers, as well as supporting the professional development of teacher technical assistants. Similarly, one staff member of a regional education office noted efforts to partner with preschools and higher education institutions in order to support the student transition from training programs to work in preschools.

## ONGOING SUPPORT

### FINDING 4:

***Preschool teachers value access to ongoing support and the opportunity it provides to connect with peers, as well as daily guidance provided by teacher methodologists; however, additional peer learning and practical training opportunities are needed.***

***a) Although teachers are offered mentorship by more experienced teachers and supervision by school-based teacher methodologists and school directors, these opportunities do not fully address their needs.***

Teachers are supported by senior teachers, teacher methodologists, and in some cases, school directors (see table 5 for a description of common forms of ongoing support). Teacher methodologists observe teachers' practice, review teachers' lesson plans in order to ensure relevance and offer guidance where needed, often suggesting particular resources for teachers to utilize. Teacher methodologists may also organize workshops or seminars for preschool teachers, such as a weekly "pedagogical hour." In schools with four or fewer classes, there is no teacher methodologist,<sup>47</sup> so a school director fulfills those duties instead. School directors and teacher methodologists also mentioned that when new teachers enter into a preschool institution, they are often informally paired with more experienced teachers who provide them with guidance.

**TABLE 5:**  
**Common forms of ongoing support**

Location/individual providing support	Description of ongoing support
Kindergartens	Teachers may share experiences and lessons during formal and informal communication with senior colleagues and school directors. In addition, teacher methodologists may provide consultations to teachers, observe lessons, and facilitate discussions with teachers about various issues that they face.
Local Education Departments	Methodological officers may provide support for teachers according to their annual and monthly plans. Support could come in the form of seminars, lectures, or observation of lessons.
In-Service Teacher Training Institutes	In-service teacher training institutes may offer formal support which may come in the form of training sessions, thematic summer courses, and lectures/ seminars.
Non-formal support provided by civil society organizations	Depending on availability, teachers may have access to distance courses, online seminars, and lectures offered through civil society organizations.

<sup>45</sup> Government of Ukraine. (2005). Presidential decree Number 1013/2005. *On urgent measures to ensure the functioning and development of education in Ukraine.*

<sup>46</sup> Data collected during interview with staff at Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education and Science.

<sup>47</sup> Ministry of Education and Science (2010). Order Number 1157/18452. *Staff Standards for Preschool Institutions.*

*“Additional training is useful for providing better support to preschool teachers to ‘keep up with the times.’”*

– Teacher methodologist

Although teacher methodologists are committed to supporting teachers, teachers reflected that they often have limited knowledge on specialized topics, particularly on supporting their work with students with special educational needs and children and families affected by the recent conflict in Eastern Ukraine (see Box 3). One preschool teacher noted, “I seldom [go to] the teacher methodologist as the teacher methodologist is not herself ready for inclusive education.” Another teacher mentioned that “when [the teacher methodologist] cannot answer questions about working with children with special educational needs, together we search for information on the Internet.” Teachers also expressed that teacher methodologists rely too heavily on sharing literature and resources rather than modeling good teaching practice for them.

Teacher methodologists themselves acknowledged that they did not always have the knowledge and resources to support teachers and would value additional

opportunities to learn and exchange knowledge with peers from other schools or other countries. In addition, they also mentioned that it was challenging for them to advise so many teachers.

In addition to methodological support provided in schools, in-service teacher training institutes house methodological centers that provide support to teachers within a particular *oblast*. Staff members in local education departments also offer pedagogical guidance through various seminars and workshops to teachers within a particular *oblast*. However, since local education departments have a limited number of staff who support teachers across levels, there is some concern that such staff do not have enough specialized knowledge on preschool education.

***b) Teachers value in-service training for the opportunities that it provides to connect with peers and to reduce burnout; however, the content and format is not always relevant to preschool teachers’ needs.***

With support through funding from local budgets, teachers are required to receive in-service training support every five years. While there is some ambiguity in existing policies around whether teachers can undergo in-service training at an institution of their choosing,

### BOX 3:

#### Supporting preschool teachers working with children affected by conflict

The conflict in Eastern Ukraine has led to widespread population displacement within the country and adverse social and economic conditions. Children are not spared the consequences – it is estimated that 200,000 children are in critical need of psychosocial support services. Those living through this conflict may experience chronic fear due to unpredictable fighting, and parents and school staff have reported behavior changes in young children, including severe anxiety. However, supporting these children and their families who face high levels of trauma and stress can be difficult for teachers and communities. In response, UNICEF implemented the “Promoting social cohesion and integration of internally displaced persons in eastern Ukraine” project, which includes a component aimed at improving the quality of preschool education services in the regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Zaporizhya, where the impact of the crisis has been felt most strongly.

Two central aims of the preschool component of the project were to promote the knowledge and skills of preschool teachers on the importance of various components of early childhood development and to improve the dialogue between parents, teachers and administration of preschools on the needs of children affected by the conflict. Between December 2016 and April 2017, the Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation, in cooperation with National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, trained 2,614 preschool teachers in 812 preschool institutions. The trainings involved helping preschool staff understand how to create an environment friendly to a child – from fostering the development of a child’s positive self-assessment to expanding his or her ability to express feelings and to manage stress and emotions. In addition, 28 representatives of local education departments and in-service teacher training institutions were trained in order to ensure sustainability of the project, as these representatives provide relevant methodological support to preschool teachers and promote the dissemination of best practices.

Sources: UNICEF Ukraine. (2017). “200,000 children need urgent support to overcome trauma of volatile conflict in eastern Ukraine.” Available at: [https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/children\\_30732.html](https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/children_30732.html); International Step by Step Association. (2017). “The Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation and UNICEF deliver training benefitting children in war zones.” Available at: <http://www.issa.nl/content/ukrainian-step-step-foundation-and-unicef-deliver-training-benefitting-children-war-zones>

teachers attend regional training institutes funded by local governments on a de facto basis. According to experts interviewed for this study, these regional training institutes differ in quality.

Teachers and school directors expressed appreciation for these opportunities, which they described as helping teachers connect with and learn from peers, and to reduce burnout. One school director noted that “many preschool teachers have occupational burnout – they return quite different persons with new strengths after such training.”

*“There was a time, when five years probably was good but nowadays it’s too much time in between. In a year, even in half a year, everything seen or heard by the preschool teacher in the room becomes already old- fashioned. It’s like a cell phone.”*

– Teacher Trainer at Regional Training Institute

However, there were some concerns that teachers are unable to choose training courses that interest them, given limited offerings, and that training courses are not relevant to teachers’ needs. In addition, some feel that training opportunities should be offered more frequently. Several teachers expressed interest in having more opportunities to learn from other teachers, suggesting that practical knowledge from peers may better address professional needs than training courses. Teachers also lamented their lack of access to online resources and training opportunities, which they believe would support ongoing training and professional development. One school director said, “computerization is a condition of the current times but we don’t have computers.”

Although previous policies have limited frequency of formal training opportunities and options for teachers to make their own choices on training topics and providers, reforms in the new *Law on Education, 2017* around increasing the frequency of opportunities present welcomed change.

*“I have secondary education but I dream of higher education. For me, employment in the kindergarten is the first career step. I’m going to enter the pedagogical university, part-time and receive at least a Bachelor’s Degree Diploma. That’s why practical experience working with children is important to me. I observe the preschool teacher’s work and learn.”*

– Teacher Technical Assistant

*c) Despite existing pathways for teachers and teacher technical assistants to advance within the preschool education system, opportunities can be limited, which has contributed to low career aspirations among some teachers.*

Of the 45 teachers interviewed for this study, 13 indicated having previously served in an assistant role. Similarly, a number of teacher technical assistants interviewed expressed interest in advancing to teacher roles. Data collected by the Kyiv Department of Education further backs this trend, finding that 317 teacher technical assistants in that city were interested in pursuing higher education in order to become preschool teachers.<sup>48</sup> While the experience of teachers in the system who have transitioned from teacher technical assistant roles and the interest among teacher technical assistants to advance suggests a positive career trajectory, transitioning from a technical assistant to a teacher role can be difficult. Advancement requires completion of a higher education degree – which can take three to four years if done on a part-time basis – and additional financial resources.

*“I have never reflected about my own career goals. Probably, I would need to live in a big city where there are more opportunities and resources if I dreamed of career advancement. And in our town, it brings happiness simply to have stable work.”*

– Preschool Teacher

Although attestation processes provide a formal mechanism by which teachers can be considered for higher categories and roles, without a master’s degree, a teacher has limited options for advancement. For example, in order to achieve a specialist category, a master’s degree is required, as well as if a teacher wants to advance to a senior teacher or teacher methodologist role. While some teachers interviewed expressed interest in advancing in the preschool education system, others had limited aspirations – the likely a result of the perceived lack of opportunities for advancement. In addition to limited career aspirations, only a few teachers mentioned engagement with teacher methodologists around career and professional development topics. One in-service training educator interviewed suggested that teacher methodologists should better understand available training courses, in order to more effectively direct teachers to content that addresses their individual strengths and weaknesses.

<sup>48</sup> Data collected during interview with staff from Kyiv Department of Education and Science.

## MOTIVATION AND SATISFACTION

### FINDING 5:

*Despite challenging workloads, low pay, and low status, teachers remain in the profession due to their motivation to work with children and few employment alternatives.*

**a) Teachers are motivated by a desire to work with children and express appreciation for opportunities to see children grow and develop.**

When describing why they joined the profession and what brought them the most satisfaction in their work, teachers frequently mentioned a strong desire to work with children and satisfaction derived from seeing children grow and develop with their support. A number of teachers also mentioned entering the profession after their own schooling experience where they were struck by the impact of their own teachers. Several teachers also mentioned entering the profession after being inspired by their own parents, grandparents, and other family members who were teachers.

*“Yesterday a child could not wear his shoes and today he can – I am pleased that I was the one who taught the child.”*  
– Preschool Teacher

**b) Teachers face challenging workloads in terms of the number of children for whom they are responsible, the range of tasks they support, as well as the diversity of children’s needs.**

Teachers frequently noted that large group sizes were one of the negative aspects of their jobs, contributing to a heavy workload. In addition, teachers hinted toward the large amount of paperwork they were responsible for, which detracted from the time that they could spend working with children. One example of paperwork that preschool teachers are required to complete includes preparing reports of conferences or seminars attended. While the breakdown may differ for preschool teachers, a 2016 survey carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science at the primary and secondary levels is instructive. According to this survey, teachers spend nearly an entire workday per week on paperwork. The study found that, on average, teachers at the primary and secondary levels spend 7 hours per week on paperwork, 21.5 hours on

delivering lessons, 9.25 hours on preparation for lessons, and 8.5 hours on different activities with pupils and parents.<sup>49</sup>

*“A great amount of paperwork interferes as the time you spend on it could be given to children.”*  
– Preschool Teacher

Numerous teachers described challenges related to working with children with special educational needs, citing a lack of knowledge and skills to support them effectively. Regarding inclusive education, one teacher noted that “they introduced it without training teachers.” As a result, teachers, school directors, and experts all lauded the recent addition of the teacher assistant role to support inclusive classrooms. To date, however, few teacher assistants have been deployed and there have been several barriers in mainstreaming this role. This is in part due to the low number of inclusive classes in preschools, but also to the fact that qualification requirements have not yet been developed. Such would serve as a basis on which school directors could develop job descriptions and begin recruiting candidates. In addition, since the number of inclusive classrooms depends on the number of children with special educational needs in a particular preschool, some believe that preschool directors may be hesitant to recruit and hire teacher assistants who may not be consistently needed.

**c) Despite low pay and low status, teachers enter and remain in the profession due to a lack of employment alternatives.**

All stakeholders interviewed – central and local authorities, experts, preschool personnel and parents – agreed that teachers’ salaries are too low. Although recent salary increases are a big step forward, more work may be required to remunerate teachers in a manner that motivates them and heightens job satisfaction. A survey of 499 teachers in 2015 found that, on average, teachers believed that a beginning teacher should receive a monthly salary of UAH 3822 (approximately US \$ 146),<sup>50</sup> significantly higher than the recently raised *stavka* of UAH 3152 (approximately US \$ 120) for teachers without a qualification category. In addition to low salaries, teachers receive few incentives apart from some minimal health benefits and small bonuses.

<sup>49</sup> Ministry of Education and Science. (2016.) “Survey on workflow pressure in school management system.”

<sup>50</sup> Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation. (2015). “Secondary Education in Ukraine: Parents, Teachers and School Principals’ Opinions.” Available at: <http://iro.org.ua/ua/main/research/23>



In addition to low salaries, teachers describe feeling undervalued for their work. Among a multitude of potential factors contributing to these feelings are perceptions among teachers that parents do not believe them to be highly skilled. In addition, there may be some influence from recent efforts to expose integrity violations among education personnel, including recent reports on the contributions that parents make to schools and the private tutoring market, in which teachers in public institutions provide supplementary tutoring for a fee to students in public schools. While engagement from civil society around these topics may be creating greater awareness of such challenges, they still seem to be negatively impacting individual teachers and how they are perceived.

Low salaries and status can create recruitment challenges, particularly in metropolitan areas. However,

*“I don’t like when they often talk about bad preschool teachers and their dishonest work in TV programs and articles and then parents think about all of us like that.”*  
– Preschool Teacher

in rural areas, teachers have few employment alternatives and are grateful to find work in preschool institutions.

Though it is unclear to what degree these efforts are successful, in order to balance limited salaries, teacher methodologists and school directors have attempted to increase teacher motivation through competitions including for the best preschool teacher. Selected teachers are presented with a monetary award, as well as non-financial incentives like certificates of merit.

# Recommendations

Ukraine has made a robust commitment to providing children with affordable preschool education. While ensuring all children gain access to this opportunity remains a challenge, there is a particular need to enhance the amount of support preschool teachers, who are the heart of the system, receive in order to improve the quality of services delivered at scale.

While this study found that preschool teachers are motivated by a strong desire to work with children and see them grow and develop, it also identified that teachers need additional support prior to entry and while in their roles. In addition, more attention is needed to ensure that teaching at the preschool level is an attractive profession, that schools can recruit and retain those who provide excellent early learning opportunities for

young children during the most important phase of their development, and that there is greater alignment among parents, teachers, and school administrators on what their roles are.

Based on the findings of this report, the following are a set of recommended actions for officials within local education departments and at the Ministry of Education and Science in Ukraine to address the challenges surfaced in this study, which build on the momentum from the recently passed *Law on Education, 2017*.

Recommendations that are actionable in the near term and have minimal cost implications are classified as short-term, while those requiring potentially greater resources and a more substantial timeline are considered long-term.

## INITIAL PREPARATION

### FINDING 1:

***While pedagogical colleges and universities are perceived as providing prospective teachers with a strong theoretical foundation in teaching, initial preparation programs offer limited opportunities for practical training and are often unsuccessful in encouraging students to enter the profession.***

Short-Term	Long-Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an onboarding program for college/university graduates that imparts practical skills and orients new teachers to work with young children in preschools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In order to better understand the strengths and areas for improvement of initial preparation programs, carry out further analysis of pre-service training curricula to understand their content and methods. Based on results of review and input from a wide range of stakeholders, develop standards for training programs, including the timing and amount of practical training needed in initial preparation programs.</li> <li>With input from teachers, teacher educators, policymakers, parents, and other relevant stakeholders, develop and introduce pedagogical competences and standards for preschool teachers to cultivate professional identity.</li> <li>Review admission criteria for initial preparation programs and revise to ensure that students who enter programs demonstrate commitment to working with young children (e.g., through previous work/volunteer experience, essays, interviews).</li> </ul>

## PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

### FINDING 2:

*While parents seem to be generally satisfied with the support that their children receive, there appears to be a mismatch between parents' expectations of teachers and the capacity of teachers, which has resulted in growing interest and enrollment in private kindergartens.*

Short-Term	Long-Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage school directors and teacher methodologists to provide guidance to teachers on building strong relationships and partnerships with parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with pedagogical colleges/universities and regional training institutes to review existing course offerings related to working with parents and use results of review to introduce and enhance courses on such topics.</li> </ul>

## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

### FINDING 3:

*It is difficult to recruit qualified candidates to teach in preschool, particularly in metropolitan areas where there are more attractive employment alternatives.*

Short-Term	Long-Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide teachers with more professional freedom by supporting opportunities for peer learning as well as through reducing non-teaching workload by removing any non-essential paperwork requirements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make further increases to teacher salaries. While new salary increases have been implemented for teachers across the country (there were also increases last year in Kyiv specifically) this year, there is a need for more substantive increases to help raise the status of the profession. This was done for secondary school teachers and must be repeated for preschool teachers.</li> </ul>

## ONGOING SUPPORT

### FINDING 4:

*Preschool teachers value access to ongoing support and the opportunity it provides to connect with peers, as well as daily guidance provided by teacher methodologists; however, additional peer learning and practical training opportunities are needed.*

Short-Term	Long-Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide training for teachers, methodologists, and school directors on the concept of inclusive education and how to incorporate it into daily practice.</li> <li>Introduce training courses for teacher methodologists to advance their knowledge on carrying out observations, providing feedback, and incorporating mentoring into their day-to-day work.</li> <li>Given the value derived from peer learning opportunities, encourage local education offices to create professional learning communities where teachers with varying levels of experience can exchange ideas and provide support to one another.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the presence of a dedicated teacher methodologist in every school. In more rural areas or smaller schools, explore the possibility of having one teacher methodologist supporting a small number of schools.</li> <li>Provide scholarships to motivated and strong-performing teacher technical assistants in order to support their advancement to teacher roles.</li> </ul>

# MOTIVATION AND SATISFACTION

## FINDING 5:

*Despite challenging workloads, low pay, and low status, teachers remain in the profession due to their motivation to work with children and few employment alternatives.*

Short-Term	Long-Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify qualification requirements for preschool teacher assistants in order for there to be greater clarity in their role and enable more teacher assistants to support inclusive classrooms</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase the number of preschools and preschool teachers in order to reduce overcrowding and the workload of teachers. Supplement local resources with funds from the <i>oblast</i> or central governments to those areas most in need.</li><li>• Revise staffing standards such that there are specialized staff available to support teachers in their day-to-day work.</li><li>• Develop and launch information campaigns on the importance of preschool education in order to elevate the status of preschool teachers. In addition, provide more opportunities to share information about careers in preschool education to students in high school in order to generate greater interest in the profession.</li></ul>

# Lessons for Policymakers and Program Managers

Ukraine's experience has generated a number of lessons which may be useful for policymakers and program managers from other countries seeking to provide quality universal preschool education. These lessons include the following:



**Carry out human resource planning for the early childhood workforce:** Human resource planning efforts are important exercises for identifying the number of qualified staff needed to deliver preschool services, along with current gaps. Such efforts may help bolster efforts to provide opportunities for motivated individuals within the workforce (including assistants) to gain needed qualifications in order to fill vacancies and address recruitment challenges.



**Take a broad approach to support children with special educational needs:** Stigma and discrimination represent barriers to supporting children with special educational needs. Broadly defining and implementing inclusive education can minimize this stigma and also enable adequate staffing to provide more individualized attention to children with diverse needs, ranging from support for children affected by conflict with psychosocial support needs to supporting children with developmental delays. Support staff can be as important as primary teaching staff in this regard, and their training, support, and working conditions deserve policy attention.



**Ensure the relevance, accessibility, and career advancement potential of professional development:** Preschool teachers value professional development opportunities which can help connect them with peers and also provide a refresh from challenging day-to-day roles. These opportunities are most valued when they are relevant to daily practice, accessible, and linked to career advancement.



**Explore and address how teachers and parents view preschool education:** Addressing discrepancies between teacher and parent views on preschool education can help to ensure complementary home and school environments that support a child's development. Positive engagement with parents helps teachers to feel effective in their roles and also improves how they perceive their status.

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