



The MENA teacher– readiness gap

Sustainability and future skills

Regional strategies now promise competencies the teaching workforce was never equipped to deliver. This paper separates the three parts of readiness, shows where each is missing, and proposes an index that makes the claim checkable.

The argument in one page

Across the region, sustainability and future skills have moved into national strategies and curriculum documents. The commitments are explicit and dated: Saudi Arabia alone has committed to sustainability training for 250,000 teachers by 2028.¹ What no strategy documents is whether the teaching workforce is ready to deliver what has been promised.

Readiness is not a sentiment. It has three measurable parts: the training that covers the new competency, the time in which a teacher can prepare it, and the materials that survive contact with a real classroom. A system can score well on two and still deliver nothing, because the three multiply rather than add. A zero anywhere is a zero everywhere.

The evidence that exists is not encouraging. Teachers report a preparation budget of minutes per lesson.² The one accredited catalogue audited in full carries no sustainability coverage at all.³ And the Arabic resource shelf remains largely translated rather than authored, which moves words and strands everything else.

The paper closes with a proposal: the MENA Teacher Readiness Index, five dimensions scored from published data and catalogue audits, system by system. Not to rank for its own sake, but because a readiness claim without a readiness measure is a hope.

FIGURE 1 • THE READINESS EQUATION



Multiplicative, not additive: a zero anywhere is a zero everywhere. Dashed means unmeasured until scored.

¹ KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA 2026, VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW, P.154 • ² OECD 2019, TALIS 2018 RESULTS • ³ GBOX 2026, NATIONAL CATALOGUE AUDIT

01 Three shortages, one classroom

Start with time, because it is the best measured. Lower-secondary teachers across TALIS systems, which include Gulf participants, report about 38.8 hours of weekly work and roughly 6.8 hours of individual planning.¹ Spread over a teaching load, that is minutes of preparation per lesson. Any new competency arrives into that budget or it does not arrive.

Training is the least measured. Professional development exists everywhere in the region, but catalogues are rarely audited against the competencies strategies now promise. Where one national catalogue was audited in full, the result was 77 accredited courses and no sustainability coverage.² One measured instance is not a region. It is, so far, the only instance measured, and nothing suggests it is the outlier.

And both shortages sit inside a global one. UNESCO counts 44 million additional teachers needed worldwide by 2030.³ A region that cannot staff its classrooms cannot spend its way out with workshops. Whatever readiness is built must be built into resources teachers already have time to use.

FIGURE 2 • THE THREE SHORTAGES, AS MEASURED

TIME • HOURS PER WEEK



the whole week, and the slice that prepares every lesson in it

TRAINING • ONE AUDITED CATALOGUE

77

accredited courses in the national register

SUSTAINABILITY: 0

WORKFORCE • THE BACKDROP

44M

additional teachers needed worldwide by 2030

SOURCES: OECD TALIS 2018 • GBOX CATALOGUE AUDIT 2026 • UNESCO 2024 • DRAWN AT TRUE PROPORTION

1 OECD 2019, TALIS 2018 RESULTS, VOLUME I • 2 GBOX 2026, NATIONAL CATALOGUE AUDIT • 3 UNESCO 2024, GLOBAL REPORT ON TEACHERS

02 The Arabic materials shelf

The third shortage is the deepest. Arabic is a first language for more than 400 million people, yet it remains dramatically under-represented in open educational resources, and much of what exists is translated rather than authored. Paper 01 in this series prices what translation leaves behind: the examples, the datasets, the equipment assumptions, the belonging that a 40-minute lesson runs on.

For sustainability and future skills the cost compounds, because these subjects are local by nature. Water security in Aseer is not water security in the Alps. A translated shelf does not just read foreign. It measures the wrong things, in the wrong places, with equipment the school does not have.

Any readiness index that ignored language would flatter every system in the region. So the index does not ask how many resources are listed. It asks how many are authored in the language of instruction, coded to the curriculum, and evidenced from the students' own region.

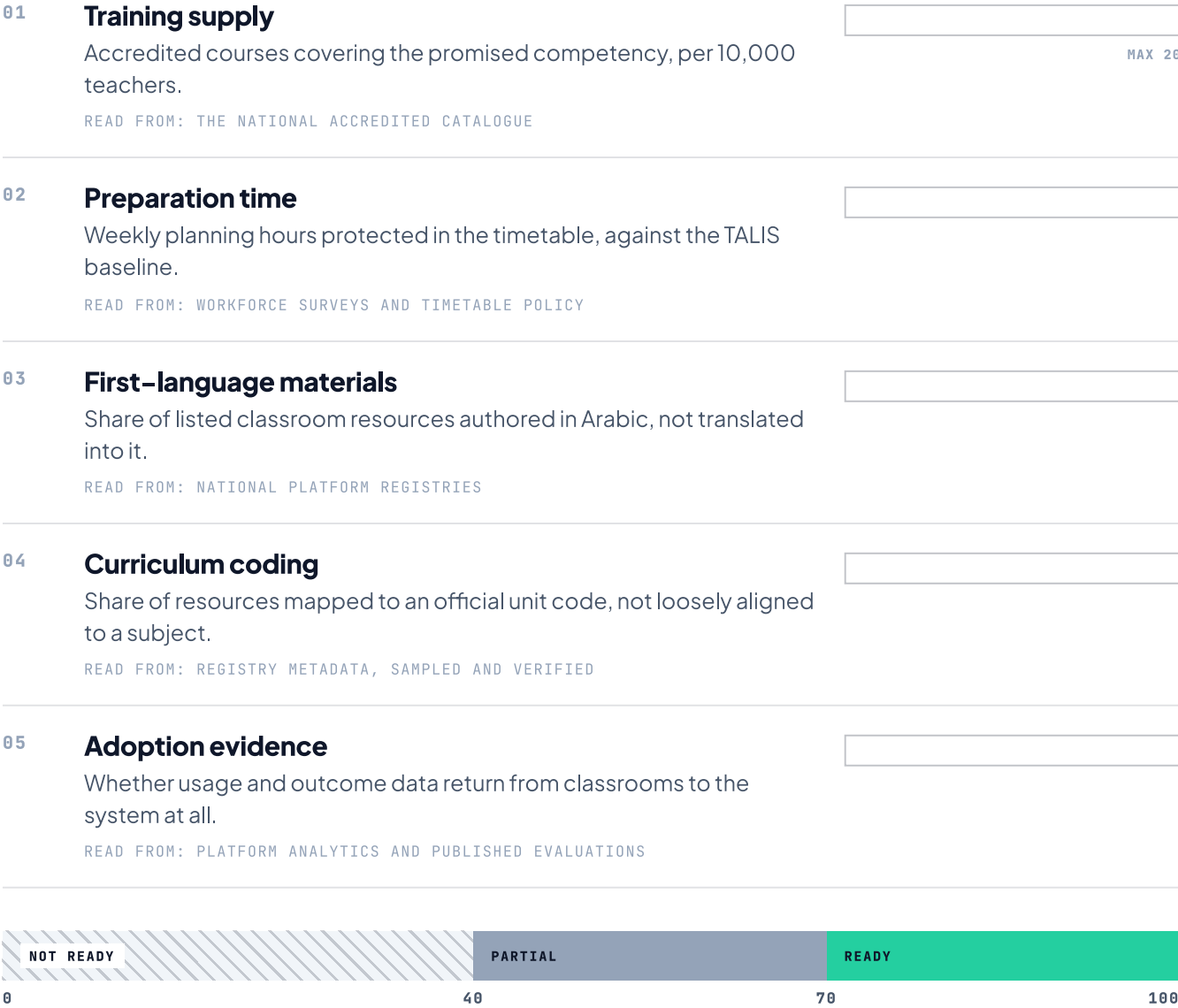
FIGURE 3 • WHAT TRANSLATION CARRIES, AND WHAT IT STRANDS



CONCEPTUAL • THE LAST MILE PAPERS 01, SECTION 4

The MENA Teacher Readiness Index

Five dimensions, 20 points each, scored from published data and catalogue audits. Maximum 100.



The method publishes first. The first edition scores six systems from their own published registers, and every score carries the register it was read from.

03 What the index changes

For ministries, the index turns a readiness assertion into a readiness position: five numbers, each read from a register the ministry already owns, each improvable by a decision the ministry can actually take. The binding constraint becomes visible. Most systems will find it is not training.

For development institutions and foundations, the index prices the difference between funding more of what exists and funding the dimension that is at zero. A grant that lifts the binding constraint moves the whole product, because the equation multiplies.

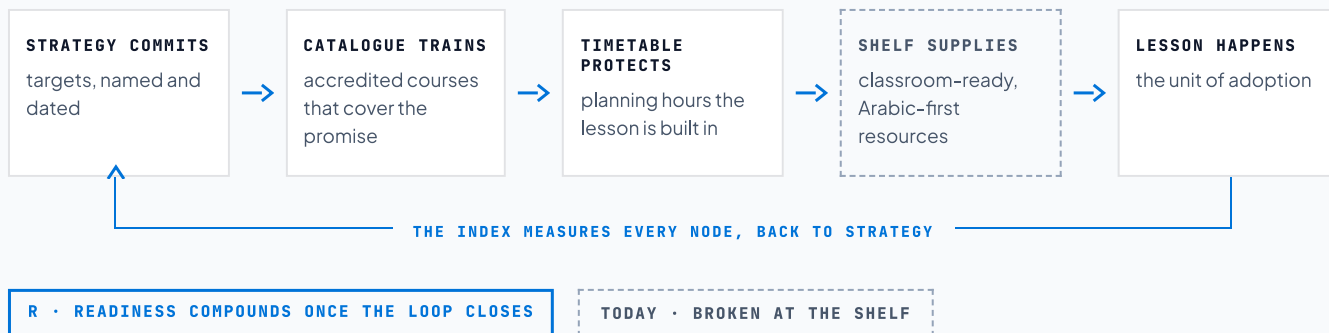
For education providers, the index is a market map. A system scoring low on first-language materials is not a translation opportunity. It is an authoring opportunity, and the difference is the whole subject of this series.

A readiness claim without a readiness measure is a hope.

We invite ministries and platform owners to open their registers to the first scoring round, and we will publish our own instrument, criterion by criterion, exactly as we published the Classroom-Readiness Standard in Paper 01. Scores nobody can check are scores nobody should trust.

The system the index measures

Five stocks, one measurement loop. The system is only as ready as its weakest node.



THE SYSTEM IN NUMBERS

6 in 10

children in MENA cannot read and understand a simple text by age 10

WORLD BANK, LEARNING POVERTY IN MENA

44M

additional teachers needed worldwide by 2030

UNESCO 2024, GLOBAL REPORT ON TEACHERS

77 / 0

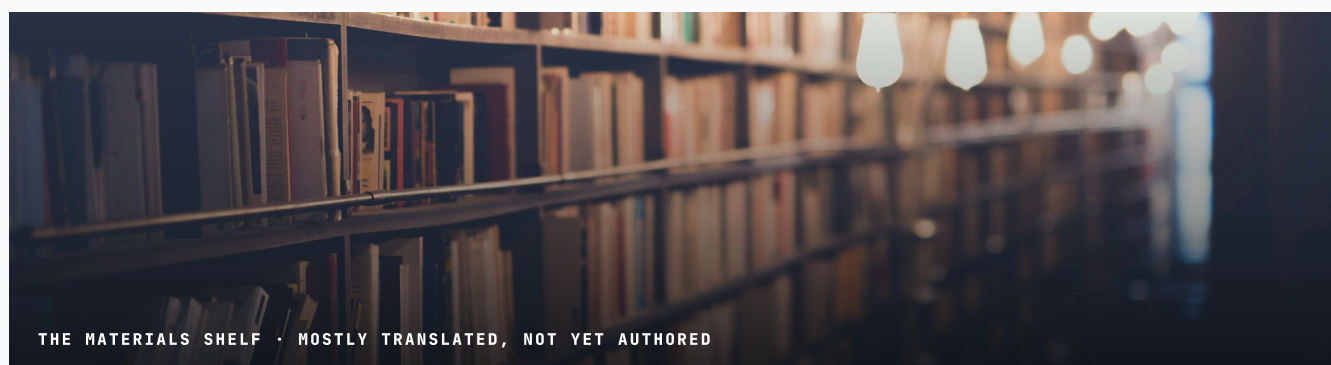
accredited courses in the one fully audited catalogue / with sustainability coverage

GBOX CATALOGUE AUDIT 2026

About this series

The Last Mile Papers are published by The Green Box (GBOX), a sustainability capability-building organisation founded at Cambridge Judge Business School in 2018, working across 16 countries with delivery hubs in Cambridge, Riyadh, Al Khobar, and Lahore. The series argues one idea from six directions: education priorities only create impact when teachers have practical resources, contextual capability, and measurable outcomes. Paper 02 takes up the regional readiness gap; the Classroom-Readiness Standard it builds on is published in full in Paper 01.

[GREENBOX.WORLD/NTRP](https://greenbox.world/ntrp)



Sources

- 01 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (2026). Voluntary National Review, p.154.
- 02 OECD (2019). TALIS 2018 Results, Volume I: Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners.
- 03 UNESCO (2024). Global Report on Teachers: Addressing Teacher Shortages.
- 04 GBOX (2026). Audit of the national professional development catalogue: 77 accredited courses, sustainability coverage.
- 05 The Green Box (2026). The Last Mile Papers 01: The last mile of education innovation.
- 06 World Bank (2021). Advancing Arabic Language Teaching and Learning: A Path to Reducing Learning Poverty in MENA.

Positions, stated and revisable

The Last Mile Papers are opinion pieces. They present the positions The Green Box holds at the date on the cover, formed from the sources named in each paper and argued so they can be checked.

Positions can change. Where new evidence, corrected data, or a better argument arrives, the position moves and a revised edition says so. Later editions supersede earlier ones; the edition date on the cover is the record.

Internal figures are labelled internal. Modelled figures are labelled modelled and are never presented as evidence of outcome. Nothing in this series constitutes professional, legal, or investment advice.

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Readiness is measurable.

Five dimensions, read from registers the systems already own.

NEXT IN THE SERIES • 03 • LEARNING FOR AN ARID FUTURE

