

Building a team of skilled trainers in Jordan



For teachers in Jordan, gaining new skills has gotten a whole lot easier. With the establishment of a comprehensive professional development system, building teacher capacity is now more efficient, and more successful.

Thanks to a partnership between the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the USAID-funded Education Reform Support Program (ERSP), a cadre of trainers has emerged equipped with skills to develop qualified and confident teachers for years to come. The MoE uses these skilled trainers to support a robust professional development system for teachers, supervisors, principals and directorate staff.

Using a Training of Trainers (TOT) approach, highly-skilled trainers from ERSP lead future MoE trainers through a series of phases to develop their skills in training facilitation, mentoring and coaching.

Khaleel Shahadeh, a Ministry Trainer, was one of the first trainers designated through the joint MoE and ERSP training program. He has been a teacher for more than ten years, and he is currently a supervisor for English language instruction within the Ministry. With strong skills and motivation, he was selected for the program; after 272 hours of training, he is now a Ministry Trainer.

“In my experience, there are many different factors that can make a school successful,” Shahadeh says. “In Jordan, we have focused on leadership, school culture, the skills of teachers, and communication channels between parents and teachers.”

Once prepared as a Ministry Trainer, these individuals assist the MoE in delivering its extensive in-service whole school development program to the Kingdom’s teachers and principals. The program has prepared more than 486 Ministry Trainers over the last five years, who have reached more than 3,795 educators in 217 schools with professional development training.

“The program helped teachers change their mindsets from a glass half empty to a glass half full.”



Trainers work together during a TOT session. The first phase includes 80 hours of class time.

The path to Ministry Trainer

Individuals who enter the training program are chosen based on highly selective criteria: end-of-year performance appraisals, previous training experience, active participation in earlier ERSP workshops, and high scores from an interview panel comprised of an ERSP trainer and officials from the MoE.

Once accepted into the program, participants follow a three-phase training program: direct training, shadowing, and mentoring.

Phase One: Direct Training

Each TOT program session begins with a short exercise meant to review content and encourage collaboration; the sessions always conclude with a reflection, and each one incorporates ideas solicited from participants. This model is not only used for these trainings, but for the trainees to replicate when they become trainers.

Mohammad Hawamdeh, an ERSP Trainer, has noticed a significant change in attitude, even at this first phase: “The program helped teachers change their mindsets from a glass half empty to a glass half full.” The training generated confidence and assured each participant of his ability to train.

Ministry Trainers are evaluated on their performance and learn from their evaluation results as they advance. After 20 intensive sessions of improving their facilitation

skills – totaling 80 hours of class time – the trainers are ready for phase two.

Phase Two: Shadowing

Unlike many other professional development programs that end their support after the direct training workshops are finished, this TOT model continues support for two academic years. Ministry Trainers often refer to the shadowing phase of the TOT program as “the time when we learn by doing.” For two semesters, Ministry Trainers shadow professional ERSP Trainers in workshops with teachers, principals and supervisors throughout Jordan.

Mohammad Hawamdeh again notices a change. “Trainers are now saying, ‘I can do this,’” he notes. “They are becoming more receptive to feedback, not as a personal criticism, but as constructive opinions of others.”

The shadowing phase aims to empower trainees with the needed skills to implement training programs in the field. ERSP and the MoE believe that to build a cadre of qualified trainers requires time, practice and constructive feedback. The idea is to create a pool of highly qualified teachers to sustain the model for years to come.

“We are learning how to manage and champion change within the schools,” says Hawamdeh. “We are agents of change.”

3-phase training:

Classroom Learning
Shadowing
Mentoring

Phase Three: Mentoring

“By this phase, everything becomes easier,” says Shahadeh. “You apply all that you’ve learned but you’re still not alone. ERSP Trainers are there to coach you.”

The mentoring phase of the training allows for Ministry Trainers to run professional development workshops on their own, but still under the guidance of ERSP Trainers. The ERSP Trainers conduct four field visits for each trainer to ensure the quality of the training and provide additional support.

A system for long-term results

By the end of the three-phase training, Ministry Trainers are equipped with the skills and confidence they need to train others. The fleet of trainers then becomes a resource for the Ministry of Education to improve the skills and abilities of teachers nationwide.

In a 2012 study supported by USAID, schools performed significantly better after the implementation of this school-based development program. The schools whose principals participated in all phases of the program showed greater improvement in performance. Similarly, when the number of actively participating teachers was high for a particular school, the impact of the training on that school increased.

Quality professional development opportunities are now envisioned as more than one-off workshops. The Ministry is now equipped to deliver robust, comprehensive programs that go well beyond the former cascade training model. As ERSP nears its end, it is clear the Ministry is serious about maintaining this qualified cadre of professional trainers.



With ERSP staff’s assistance, participants complete a group activity.

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Participants consult their material during an interactive classroom activity.