

Early Childhood Care and Education Quality Assurance Systems in Africa

Background

High quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) can lead to positive impacts on children's learning and well-being. Quality assurance systems (QAS) are systems that monitor early childhood settings to assess and ensure the quality of children's experiences. QAS play a strong role in promoting early childhood quality. To date, limited systematic information has been available on the status of ECCE QAS in Africa. In 2021, ECD Measure and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) partnered together to [review the status of ECCE QAS in Africa](#) by surveying ministries of education. In 2022, a follow-up survey was conducted to gather additional information about QAS implementation issues.

ADEA distributed the survey to 33 ministries of education in August 2022. We received 18 responses from ministries in Botswana, Djibouti, Ghana, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Swaziland, Chad, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Ministerial representatives, including Assistant Ministers, Directors, ECCE Specialists, and others responsible for ECCE in their respective countries responded to the survey. Due to the intersectoral nature of

early childhood, many respondents consulted with other departments or ministries to complete the survey. This brief summarizes the results from the survey.

Registration

Most countries have registration requirements outlined for pre-primary facilities; however less so for childcare.

One of the first essential steps to establishing QAS is having a complete list of ECCE facilities in a country. As displayed in Table 1, ministries reported on whether different types of ECCE facilities are required to become registered and whether the government has a complete list of the facilities.

Only a few countries have public childcare (ECCE for 0–2-year-olds). For those that do, facilities are included in the government's ECCE registry. Most countries have private childcare, but few countries (39%) have complete registries of all private childcare facilities.

Most countries have public pre-primary (for children ages 3-5) and almost all (both public and private) pre-primary facilities are required to be registered. However, only 67% of countries have all public pre-primary facilities registered and 50% have all private pre-primary facilities registered.

Table 1: Registration requirements in public and private ECCE for 0–2-year-olds and 3–5-year-olds

	Public ECCE for 0–2-year-olds		Private ECCE for 0–2-year-olds		Public ECCE for 3–5-year-olds		Private ECCE for 3–5-year-olds	
	Registration required?	Included on gov't registry?	Registration required?	Included on gov't registry?	Registration required?	Included on gov't registry?	Registration required?	Included on gov't registry?
Botswana	N/A		Yes	All	Yes	All	Yes	All
Djibouti	Yes	All	Yes	All	Yes	All	Yes	All
Ghana	No	All	Yes	Some	No	All	No	Some
Liberia	N/A		Yes	All	Yes	All	Yes	All
Madagascar	N/A		Yes	Some	Yes	Some	Yes	Some
Mauritius	N/A		Yes	All	No	All	Yes	All
Mozambique	No	All	No	Some	Yes	Some	Yes	Some
Nigeria	N/A		Yes	Some	Yes	Some	Yes	Some
CAR	Yes	All	N/A		Yes	All	Yes	All
Rwanda	Yes	Some	Yes	Some	Yes	Some	Yes	Some
Senegal	N/A		No	None	Yes	All	Yes	All
Seychelles	N/A		Yes	All	Yes	All	Yes	All
Somalia	N/A		N/A		N/A		Yes	Some
South Africa	N/A		Yes	Some	N/A		Yes	Some
Swaziland	N/A		Yes	Some	Yes	Some	Yes	Some
Tchad	Yes	All	Yes	All	Yes	All	Yes	All
Uganda	N/A		Yes	Some	N/A		Yes	Some
Zimbabwe	Yes	All	Yes	All	Yes	All	Yes	All

N/A= this type of facility does not exist

Quality Standards

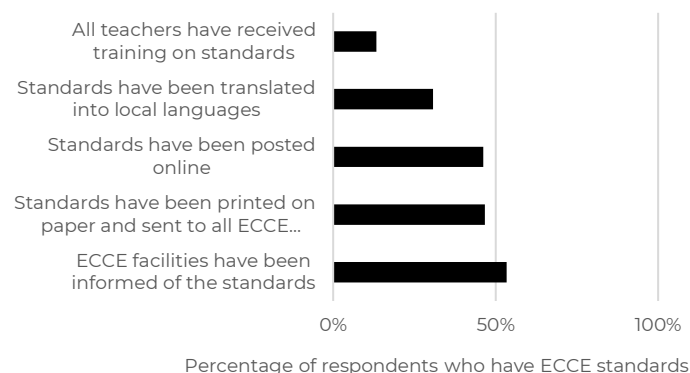
Most countries have some ECCE quality standards in place.

Fifteen of the 18 countries reported having national quality standards for ECCE. In most countries, the standards are the same for public and private facilities. In 67% of the countries, the standards are comprehensive, including: quality guidelines for physical environment (materials, equipment, infrastructure, indoor/outdoor facilities, etc.); health and safety (hygiene, toilets, water, safety features, etc.); educator competencies and support (requirements for teaching staff, educational qualifications, training, etc.); program structure (educator-child ratios, opening hours, etc.); curriculum and content (promoting cognitive, language, social-emotional, physical learning and development); interpersonal interactions (relationships among educators and children); family and community engagement (relationships with parents and broader community); and child learning and development outcomes.

While ECCE quality standards exist in most countries, not all ECCE educators and facilities have access to them.

As displayed in Figure 1, only half of the responding countries who have ECCE quality standards report that ECCE facilities have been informed of the standards. In less than half of countries, the standards have been physically printed and shared with all facilities. Thirty one percent of reporting countries indicated that the standards have been translated into local languages. And only 13% of countries report that all ECCE educators have received training on the quality standards.

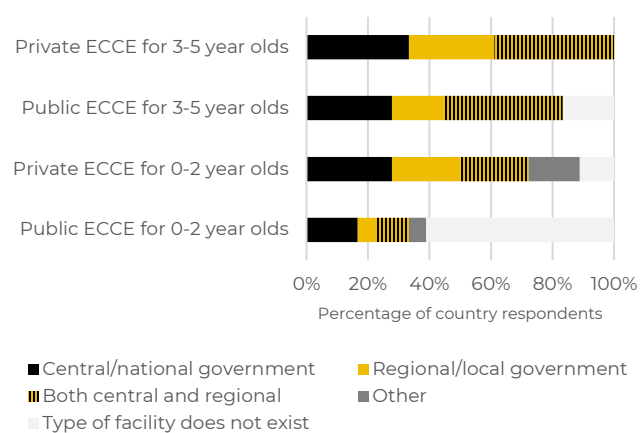
Figure 1: Methods for sharing quality standards with ECCE facilities



Monitoring and Inspection Systems

National and local governments often share the responsibility of quality monitoring. As displayed in Figure 2, the official responsibility for inspecting whether ECCE programs meet quality standards vary by country. It is most common to have a shared responsibility between the central level government/ inspectorate and regional level governments.

Figure 2: Level of government responsible for inspection to verify standards compliance, by type of facility

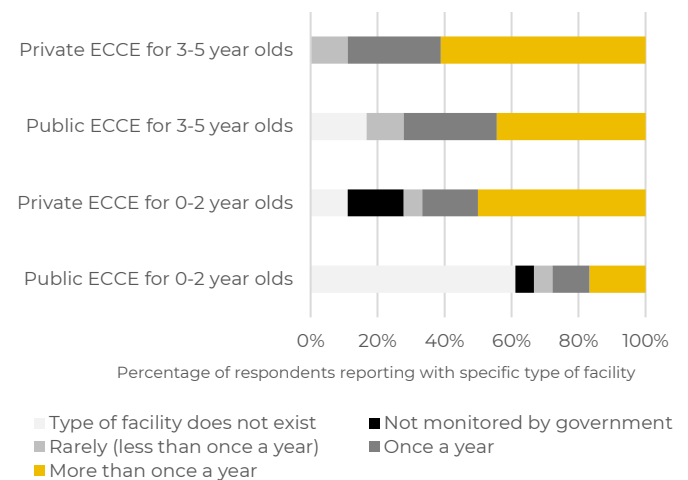


Most governments conduct quality monitoring visits to pre-primary facilities at least once a year.

As displayed in Figure 3, 89% of respondents indicated that governments monitor private pre-primary facilities for ages 3-5 at least once a year and 72% monitor public pre-primary at least once a year. If childcare for ages 0-2 exists in a country, most do governments monitor, but less frequently as compared to pre-primary: 28% reported monitoring public childcare and 67% reported monitoring private childcare at least once a year. Nearly all respondents reported that inspections are comprehensive and monitor all the

following components of quality: physical environment; health and safety; educator competencies and support; program structure; curriculum/content; interpersonal interactions; and child learning and development outcomes.

Figure 3: Frequency of government inspections, by type of facility



Sharing, reporting, and using data

After monitoring data are collected, the data are used in a variety of ways.

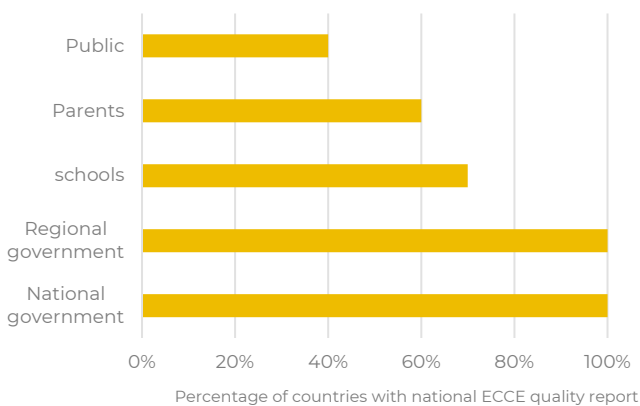
Most countries (89%) report that monitoring data are collected on paper and then entered into a computer, but 2 countries report that data are on paper only. Once inspections are completed, 83% of reporting governments produce program- or school-level reports from inspections. However, only 60% of governments share the reports with schools and 13% make these program/school-level reports publicly available.

Some countries produce national reports on ECCE quality every year to summarize national monitoring data.

Our survey revealed that 59% of countries

have a national annual report that summarizes data on ECCE quality. All reports include information on the physical environment/infrastructure, health/safety, educator competencies, and program structure. In 80% of countries, reports include information on the curriculum or content taught in classrooms and the interactions between educators and children. As displayed in Figure 4, in countries with national reports, only 40% of the reports are accessible to the public, 60% are accessible to parents, and 70% are accessible to schools.

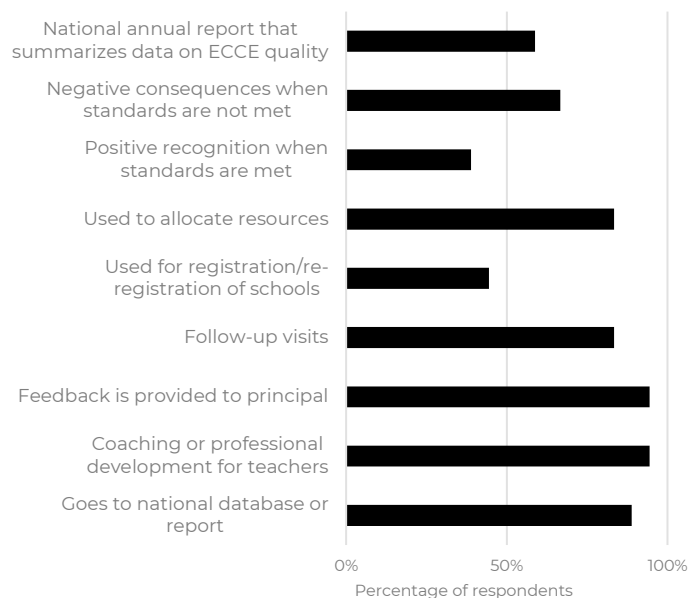
Figure 4: Access to national annual report on ECCE



Other uses of monitoring data vary by country. Figure 5 displays how countries use data once they are collected. In nearly all countries (94%), feedback is provided to principals and used as coaching or professional development for educators with the goal of making improvements in classroom or school quality; in 83% of those countries, follow-up visits are made to schools. Other common uses of data include making resource allocations based on data and maintaining a national database on ECCE quality. In 39% of reporting countries,

governments use the data for positive recognition such as awards or promotions. Similarly, in 39% of countries, governments impose negative consequences, such as sanctions, when quality standards are not met.

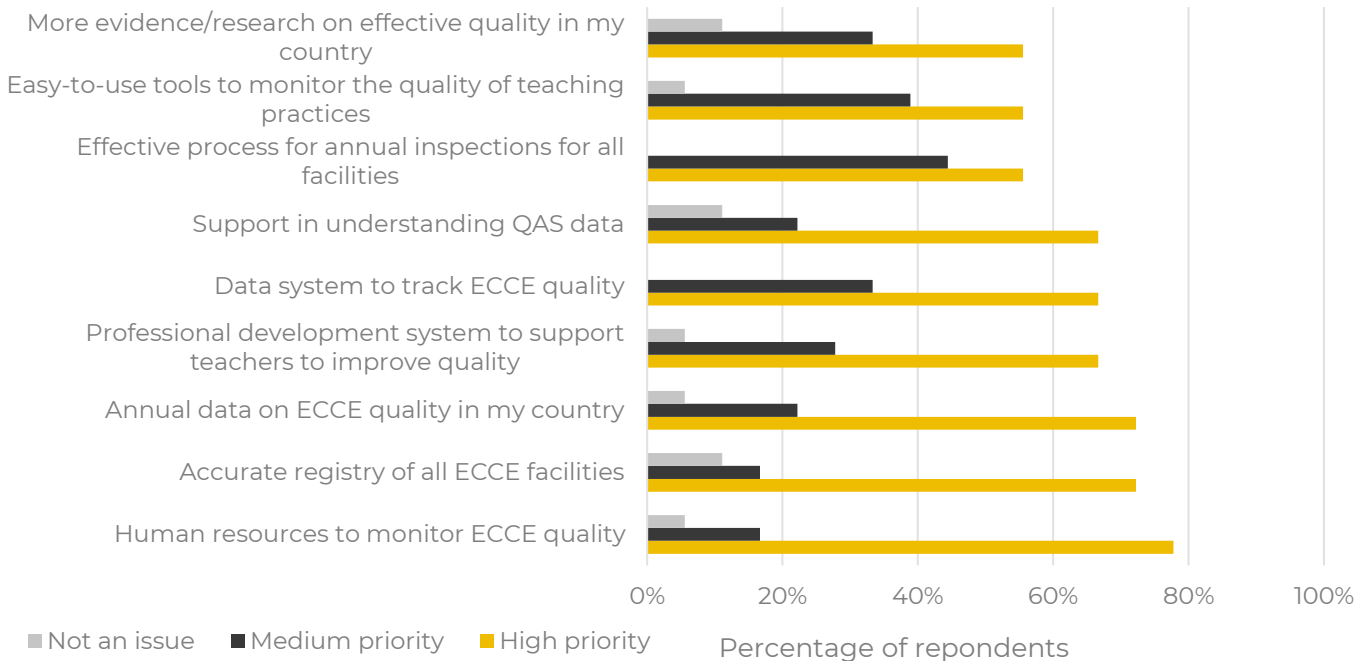
Figure 5: Use of ECCE monitoring data



Priorities for QAS

Human resources, accurate registries, and annual data are top priorities that governments want to address in their QAS. As displayed in Figure 6, survey respondents indicated which areas are most critical for their governments to address in their QAS. The highest reported priority was human resources to monitor ECCE quality, with 78% of countries indicating this was a high priority that urgently needs to be addressed and 17% of countries indicating this was a medium priority. Other top priorities include having accurate registries of all ECCE facilities, annual data on ECCE quality, and professional development for educators.

Figure 6: Government priorities for QAS areas



Conclusions

We are grateful for the inputs from the ministries of education across Africa for helping ADEA and ECD Measure depict the current situation of ECCE QAS across the region. Our survey reveals that many pieces are in place to monitor and assure the quality of ECCE. Yet, there remains much to be done to reach all ECCE facilities and ensure that monitoring processes lead to quality improvements in early childhood programming.

Some potential ways forward include:

1. Systematically address quality assurance through: a) developing comprehensive registries of all public and private facilities (across ages); and b) ensuring standards are available and shared with schools and educators.
2. Share and use data collected through QAS by a) providing data and school-level reports to schools and educators, with guidance on how to improve; and b) making national reports on ECCE quality publicly available to facilitate improvements and investments in the system.
3. Build capacity and the quality assurance workforce by equipping inspectors with knowledge on early childhood quality and building capacity for data analysis, data visualization, and communicating data.
4. Build effective data systems that are comprehensive and align across different ministries.