

Monitoring and evaluation essential to improving quality in early childhood education and care, says OECD

28/10/2015 - Governments should regularly monitor and evaluate early childhood education and care (ECEC), and monitor staff performance and children's development in order to boost standards, according to a new OECD report.

Starting Strong IV: Monitoring quality in early childhood education and care reveals that monitoring is increasingly practised across the OECD although striking differences occur between countries.

“Without monitoring and evaluation, there can be no guarantee that early childhood education and care services meet the expected standards, aims and goals for quality and early learning”, said Montserrat Gomendio, OECD Deputy Director for Education and Skills at the launch event of the report during an international ECEC policy event on monitoring in Dublin, Ireland.

With increasing public investment in early childhood education and care, it has become critical to ensure that ECEC systems perform well and deliver services of high quality. Monitoring is not only important for accountability purposes, but also for policy design and to identify where services need to improve. Additionally, it can inform parents about the level of service quality, so that they can make informed decisions about their choice of service.

The report emphasises that service quality and staff performance, for instance, are commonly monitored and mainly through inspections complimented with self-evaluations. In Ireland and Finland, self-evaluations of service quality are not mandatory at national level and usually implemented at local level.

External assessors of quality, usually inspectors, are most frequently trained on-the-job or through internal training. In Australia, Chile, Germany, the Netherlands and England, they need to complete a pre-service education programme. Staff or managers are not trained on self-assessment practices in a wide range of countries including Belgium, Finland and Italy while some in-service training is provided in Korea, Luxembourg and Mexico for example.

Further key trends and findings of the report include:

- What tools, such as checklist, interviews, the use of internal documentation or surveys, are used in monitoring service and staff quality is commonly decided at a local level.
- Monitoring approaches or practices are frequently integrated or aligned with primary school, as is the case in France for instance.
- Improved monitoring methodologies through development of national quality frameworks in Ireland and Australia, among others.
- Monitoring service quality focuses on regulatory aspects: whether settings meet the minimum standards for safety, hygiene and structural quality standards (such as staff: child ratios and space requirements) or the caregiver's and teacher's qualifications. Staff performance primarily addresses communication skills and overall staff caregiving and teaching skills.
- The monitoring of child development is mainly done through narrative assessments; observing children's development at regular intervals. Testing is not a standard practice in ECEC, unlike in primary or secondary education.

- The report highlights an increasing need and interest to monitor process quality, which research found to be key in ensuring high quality and stimulating learning environments.
- In response to the demand for greater transparency of public services, a number of other countries have improved access to information on the quality of ECEC services.
- Consequences of monitoring outcomes often include a follow-up inspection, or ensuring that centre and staff address shortcomings through training.

For further information about Starting Strong IV, journalists should contact Miho Taguma (miho.taguma@oecd.org) from the OECD's Education Directorate.

More information on *Starting Strong IV*, including the online version of the **full report**, can be found on: <http://www.oecd.org/edu/starting-strong-iv-9789264233515-en.htm>

Further information about the OECD's work on early childhood education and care can be found on the OECD website: www.oecd.org/edu/earlychildhood