



Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care

HIGHLIGHTS FROM “RESEARCH BRIEF: DATA COLLECTION AND MONITORING MATTER”

Why do data collection and monitoring matter?

- Data collection and monitoring can:
 - Help establish facts and evidence about the ECEC sector.
 - Ensure accountability on quality provision.
 - Contribute more efficient resource allocation for cost-effectiveness.
 - Help inform planning and contribute to evidence-based policy making.
 - Provide feedback on what works and help identify areas of improvement for increased programme quality as well as for better child development.
 - Provide information to parents and help them in making an informed choice.
- Poor or inappropriately collected data can lead to uncertain policy making at the national level and a lack of reliable comparative data on the international level.

Which aspects need to be considered for effective data collection and monitoring?

- The purpose of the data collection (*i.e.*, what it will be used for) should be considered before collection and monitoring mechanisms are being implemented.
- A careful selection of indicators can help improve programmes and workforce, increase access, improve practice and child outcomes, and contribute to increased knowledge.
- Monitoring methods can have different purposes and should be chosen with careful consideration, as different methods result in different information gathering.
- Data collection requires the capability to co-ordinate a large data collection effort and maintain high standards of reliability over time and have multiple data collectors across geographical regions.

Policy implications

- Governments need to define the purpose, scope and critical policy questions. Policy questions determine the purpose of monitoring and consider potential uses for collected data. Without a clear understanding of the purpose and scope, governments run the risk of collecting data for purely compliance reasons instead of tapping into the potential of data to inform continuous improvement.

- Setting up a unified data system and linking data on children, programme characteristics and workforce across multiple programmes and governance structures provides more complete and useful information for policy makers, providers, researchers and other stakeholders. This can be accompanied with national quality monitoring practices.
- Collecting and monitoring financial data helps formulate government objectives and policies for children across various sectors and determine the appropriateness of universal or targeted policies.
- When efforts are orchestrated towards developing cross-national data on quality in ECEC, countries can be compared and best practices shared, which can contribute to improving ECEC internationally.

Research gaps

- Internationally, data is lacking across all areas of ECEC provision, which makes evidence-based policy making difficult to conduct.
- There is no permanent, regular source of information about the quality of provisions, financing or costs of ECEC in particular.
- More research is needed on the impacts of data and data systems on quality and children's learning and development.
- There is a lack of coherent, cross-national information and data for international comparisons of programmes and their outcomes.