

THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP, AND MONITORING IN PRODUCING QUALITY LEARNING OUTCOMES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

This brief is a summary of the chapter of the same name written by Iram Siraj, Violeta Arancibia and Juan Baron, in Bendini, Magdalena, and Amanda E. Devercelli, editors. 2022. *Quality Early Learning: Nurturing Children's Potential*. Human Development Perspectives. Washington, DC: World Bank.

The importance of effective leadership and monitoring for quality ECE

Recent evidence demonstrates that effective management, leadership, and monitoring are crucial for the delivery of quality early childhood education (ECE).¹ Good leaders and managers impact children's learning, health and well-being through several key mechanisms: supporting and motivating ECE teachers, fostering positive learning environments, and promoting strong partnerships with families. In turn, monitoring provides crucial information for decision making at the school and system levels and promotes accountability.

Yet leadership responsibilities in ECE are not clearly defined in many Low- and Middle-Income countries (LMIC)— a problem that is compounded by its multidisciplinary nature.² Teachers frequently end up taking on the role of leaders despite lacking the necessary qualifications and training to do so. Most LMICs lack the “top down” infrastructure, management training, operational resources, and practical administration and finance skills to run efficient and effective ECE services. In these contexts, monitoring mechanisms are typically neither common nor robust.

Strategies to promote effective ECE management and leadership

To improve the quality of early childhood education, countries can adopt *strategies that promote good management and leadership, policies that support effective management, and make investments in quality assurance systems.*

Good management and leadership. To promote effective management, it is first necessary to clearly define the specifics of the expected role and responsibilities of the ECE leader. Given the wide-ranging set of responsibilities inherent in this role, ECE leaders require multiple competencies, including administrative, pedagogical and socio-emotional skills. The ability to efficiently plan and manage resource allocation is particularly crucial, as the majority of a school leader's time is spent on

these tasks. Pedagogical training is also needed to help teachers adapt a curriculum, use assessment appropriately, and support children's transitions.³ School leaders should also understand how to balance system-wide challenges with local issues to help foster positive school and family partnerships, which can provide both financial support as well as external accountability.

Policies to support effective management. ECE management policies help improve the selection and preparation of ECE leaders. These policies should promote the recruitment of appropriately qualified leaders, as well as the provision of adequate opportunities for professional development that foster the necessary capacities for the job such as effective teacher support and evaluation.

Quality assurance of service delivery and data. Robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms are essential to improving the quality of ECE. This involves the development of comprehensive and localized standards, the establishment of a quality assurance system, the efficient use of data to promote compliance mechanisms, and the empowerment of school committees. These monitoring and accountability mechanisms provide important feedback about school functioning, teacher performance, and child learning at different levels of the education system.

Putting strategies into practice to enable effective leadership

To support ECE management and boost the effectiveness of ECE leaders, governments can prioritize the following three steps:

Diagnose. It is important to understand the current policies and situation on the ground in order to identify opportunities to improve quality. This includes having a clear understanding of how institutions operate, how school leaders spend their time, what training programs exist for school leaders, and how technology, tools, and data are used to monitor and evaluate performance.

Implement. Implementation should be driven by two factors: data from diagnostics, and the objectives of the system the country seeks to put in place. Governments should also consider funding availability and a time horizon for implementation. Improving the quality of management and leadership in ECE centers requires planning to ensure political support for reforms, standard setting, evaluation and monitoring quality assurance, as well as training in both management and educational leadership.

Monitor. In the same way that school leaders require clear roles and responsibilities, it is crucial that the implementation of reforms is supported by the right resources, planning and path correction. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential to mapping progress and improving services. While the process undertaken in each country varies, the foremost challenge is to carry out a rigorous implementation process that includes mobilizing the necessary human resources, funding, and political will.

ECE leaders fulfill the crucial roles of managing centers, supporting educators, and engaging with families. They recruit educators and staff, monitor whether curricula and pedagogical approaches are adequately implemented in the classroom, and provide instructional support. They also make key decisions about a school's physical environment and resources, and serve as important links to families and the broader community. Strong ECE leader training programs must be developed accordingly, focusing on leadership, pedagogical and administrative management, and coordination with the rest of the educational system.

References

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