MAINSTREAMING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION INTO EDUCATION SECTOR PLANNING

COURSE READER FOR **MODULE 2**:
Overview of planning for pre-primary

UNESCO
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

International Institute
for Educational Planning

GLOBAL
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for EDUCATION

unicef
for every child

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October 2019

Module 2

Welcome to Module 2.

As was highlighted in Module 1, by having a specific Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target related to early childhood education (ECE), the international community and governments around the world have acknowledged the cognitive, economic and social benefits of pre-primary provision as part of early childhood care and development. While there are significant short- and long-term benefits for children to attend pre-primary education, the benefits also depend on the quality of the education provided. For accessible, quality service provision of pre-primary to be adequately tackled by national authorities, it needs to be embedded within education sector policies and plans. Therefore, a systematic approach to developing and sustaining pre-primary requires education policy and planning frameworks that include the pre-primary subsector, backed by adequate funding. It also requires coherent national and subnational plans to be informed by evidence and to articulate clear targets, funding, time frames and responsibilities.

Module 2 is an overview to both the key features of the pre-primary subsector and the overall education sector planning process. It introduces the key aspects of educational planning and an integrated education sector planning process that includes the pre-primary subsector.

Content

Intended learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, participants should be able to identify the following:

- The key features of pre-primary as a specific subsector of education

- The main phases of the education sector plan (ESP) preparation process

- Major challenges in the ESP preparation process when addressing pre-primary

Time frame

Module 2 will be held November 4–10, 2019.

The study time needed to complete this module is on average two to four hours depending on your learning profile (i.e. reading/watching the materials, and completing the quiz and activities).

Suggested readings

These key references provide an introduction to the key concepts in pre-primary education and the strategic planning process. They **complement this course reader. Please note that the contents of the suggested readings will not be assessed during the course.**

GPE (Global Partnership for Education), and IIEP-UNESCO (International Institute for Educational Planning–United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). 2015. *Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Preparation*. Paris: IIEP-UNESCO. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002337/233767e.pdf.

IIEP-UNESCO. 2010. *Strategic Planning: Concept and Rationale*. Education Sector Planning Working Paper 1, IIEP-UNESCO, Paris. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001897/189757e.pdf.

UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). 2019. *Conceptual Framework for the Pre-primary Sub-sector*. New York: UNICEF.

These suggested readings can also be found in the bibliography, which lists all the sources cited in this reader. These documents and the further readings recommended below are available by clicking on the link.

Further readings

Depending on your interests, you may want to consider these additional references.

IIEP-UNESCO. 2010. "The Uselessness and Usefulness of Plans." *IIEP Newsletter* 29 (2): 1–2. http://www.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/nl_2010-2_en.pdf.

OECD (Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development). 2017. "The Organisation and Governance of Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary School," 39–72. In *Starting Strong V: Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary Education. Paris:* OECD. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264276253-en.

Shaeffer, S. 2015. "The Demand for and the Provision of Early Childhood Services Since 2000: Policies and Strategies." Background paper prepared for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015, *Education for All 2000–2015: Achievements and Challenges.* Paris: UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232457.

UNESCO. 2012. "Expanding Equitable Early Childhood Care and Education Is an Urgent Need." Policy Paper 3, EFA Global Monitoring Report. Paris: UNESCO. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002160/216038E.pdf.

———. 2016. *Mainstreaming SDG 4–Education 2030 into Sector-wide Policy and Planning: Technical Guidelines.* Paris: UNESCO. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002464/246475e.pdf.

World Bank. 2013. "What Matters Most for Early Childhood Development: A Framework Paper." SABER Working Paper Series 5, World Bank, Washington, DC. http://wbgfiles.worldbank.org/documents/hdn/ed/saber/supporting_doc/Background/ECD/Framework_SABER-ECD.pdf.

GPE, UNGEI, and UNICEF, 2017. "Guidelines for Gender Responsive Education Sector Planning." Washington, D.C.: GPE. https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2018-02-gpe-guidance-gender-responsive-esp.pdf

Virtual platform

On the course platform, you will find the following resources to help you through:

- ▶ Introductory video to Module 2
- ▶ Inspirational video
- ▶ Animated presentation
- ▶ Course reader (this document)
- ▶ Assessment tools (quiz + drag and drop exercises)
- ▶ Activities
- ▶ Poll question
- ▶ Connect forum
- ▶ Glossary
- ▶ Wrap-up session

Need help?

If you have questions or comments on the readings or activities in Module 2, do not hesitate to share them on the discussion forum (on the course platform) for feedback from other participants and the teaching team. We invite participants to help one another on this forum. The course facilitators will follow these exchanges and intervene when necessary.

1. THE PRE-PRIMARY SUBSECTOR: MAIN FEATURES

Module 1 detailed the rationale for investment in pre-primary services. We will now move beyond the treatment of pre-primary as isolated services to examine what it looks like as a coherent educational subsector.[1]

Among the frameworks available,[2] this course focuses on two: the GPE/IIEP-UNESCO *Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Preparation* (2015) and UNICEF's *Conceptual Framework for the Pre-primary Sub-sector* (2019). The former is widely accepted as a definitive source for conducting ESPs, while the latter proposes a system's approach to planning for expansion of pre-primary and strengthening existing provision.[3] UNICEF's framework identifies the essential components of the subsector as well as their dynamics and interactions. This provides a frame of reference for how to move toward a robust and efficient pre-primary subsector that functions as an integral component of a broader education system. The framework identifies some of the significant challenges that make pre-primary a **complex, fragmented landscape**:

a)   **Multiple delivery mechanisms and providers of services** such as state-run programs, private not-for-profit providers and private for-profit providers. Various levels of government may also be responsible for different aspects of pre-primary education, and there is often limited collaboration among them.

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1   While this MOOC chooses to focus on pre-primary, it recognizes that there are also elements of early childhood development that automatically come into play when talking about ECE, namely good nutrition, health and protection.

2   See also the frameworks developed by the World Bank (2013), Vegas and Santibáñez (2010) and OECD (2006).

3   Section 1 of this module is adapted from UNICEF (2019a).

b) **Lack of common standards and requirements,** unlike for primary and secondary education, which often have a single set of standards and qualifications. In pre-primary, standards depend on the service provider and on the level of coordination between state and non-state providers.

c) **Diverse program models** as the length and frequency of pre-primary programs can vary greatly. ECE programs sometimes operate only a few hours a day or a few days a week. Some governments may only offer one year of pre-primary education directly before primary school, while others might offer two.

To overcome these and other challenges, and build a coherent subsector, the framework calls for these **key elements:**

- A supportive or **enabling environment,** including (1) strong national policies and legislation, (2) dedicated budgets, (3) ministerial leadership, and (4) public demand for early education services

- Investment and support of **five core functions,** namely (1) planning, (2) curriculum, (3) workforce, (4) family and community engagement, and (5) quality assurance

- The **commitment of and cooperation among partners**, "in the context of wider education sector plans, to ensure the necessary coherence and complementarity of interventions" (UNICEF 2019b, 2).

These features are not specific to pre-primary education—they can also be applied to any other education subsector—but they do have some elements that are distinctly relevant to ECE, which we highlight below. (These areas will be covered in more detail in the following modules.)

The full framework can be found in the reading list above and on the virtual platform. Below, we provide an overview of the key domains contained within the framework and illustrated in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1.

VISUAL SUMMARY OF THE PRE-PRIMARY SUBSECTOR CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK

Source: UNICEF 2019a.

1.1 Key enabling factors that support the development of a sustainable subsector

An enabling environment refers to the conditions that affect the ability to achieve intended goals. As shown in Figure 1, four enabling factors can help leverage the necessary political, public and financial resources to develop an effective pre-primary subsector.

Policies and legislation

Policies and legislation include national regulations, laws, directives and policies that establish pre-primary education as a government responsibility, and that convey the government's vision for and commitment to the pre-primary subsector. This can include, for example, laws that make at least one year of pre-primary education free, multisectoral ECD policies and general education policies promoting pre-primary education.

Why are policies and legislation important? They form the vision of the subsector and inform and support the implementation of pre-primary services. In certain cases, the absence of specific pre-primary policies or directives can result in fragmented and ineffective legislation, making it less likely that human and financial resources are mobilized and directed toward the subsector (Upadhyay and Putcha 2017).

Ministerial leadership and capacity

ECE leadership can include the management of pre-primary services by the central ministry, the division of responsibilities between several national ministries or leadership by a local administrative entity (in the case of decentralized systems). Pre-primary capacity may reside in the lead ministry, related ministries that impact early childhood development and nongovernmental institutions.

Why are ECE leadership and capacity important? ECE leadership can guide the subsector's vision, development and improvement. In the context of devolution, assigning leadership responsibilities to subnational and municipal levels can help enhance responsiveness in ECE service planning and implementation (Vargas-Barón 2013). The potential of pre-primary leadership is unlikely to be achieved without expertise on pre-primary issues. Technical capacity in ECE is critical to develop sustainable plans at central and decentralized levels.

Financing

Pre-primary financing can come from a variety of sources, including national, regional and local government as well as private sources, international aid, public-private partnerships, the pooling of resources and cost sharing (for example, across ministries, social partners and local communities) (OECD 2006). Carving out space for a pre-primary subsector often means competing with other subsectors for limited education resources when additional monies are not available.[4]

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4   Although additional public money could be made available through efficiency gains in the way resources are being used.

Why is public financing important? Adequate public financing is crucial for equitable provision of quality pre-primary services. When public investment in ECE is limited, countries experience serious shortages of quality pre-primary programs and children have unequal access to existing programs, which further advantages children from higher income or more advantaged families (OECD 2006).

Public demand

Demand and public support for ECE services refers to the extent of public interest in pre-primary services and the awareness of their importance.[5]

Why are demand and public support for ECE services important? Without demand and public support for pre-primary, potential leaders may not push for policies, legislation and funds for the subsector. Even if ECE services are established, they may not be utilized and sustained if the public is unaware or uninterested.

1.2   Core functions of an effective pre-primary subsector

Five core functions (or action areas) have been identified as essential to ensure the effective implementation of quality pre-primary services. Below, we describe (a) what each core function entails, (b) the particulars for pre-primary compared to other subsectors, and (c) why it is important.

1. Planning and resource allocation: The ability to coherently plan for the subsector and efficiently use available resources, with coordination between all levels of government

Planning for the pre-primary subsector is often more complex and fragmented than other education subsectors because of the range of service providers, program types and funding sources. Coordinated planning is important to ensure that pre-primary services are prioritized and provided equitably and efficiently, and that resources are used effectively.


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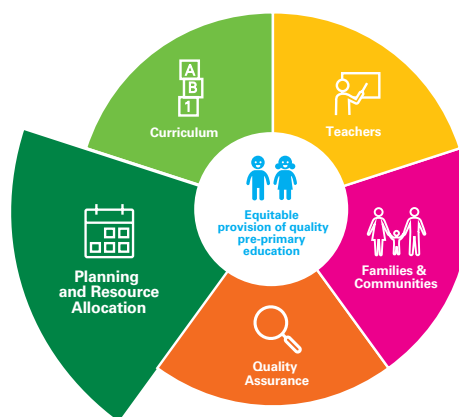
5   "Public" includes national officials, subnational government, civil society, media "champions," educational and health-related institutions, caregivers and families.

2. Curriculum development and implementation:
Establishing and implementing a developmentally appropriate curriculum framework that supports children's holistic development and learning.

The ECE curriculum is unique in that it calls for a play-based curriculum with a child-centered, engaging pedagogy. The curriculum development also includes alignment with the primary school curriculum to ensure a smooth continuum when children transition to primary school. An appropriate pre-primary curriculum is crucial to achieve the many potential developmental and school readiness benefits of early childhood education.
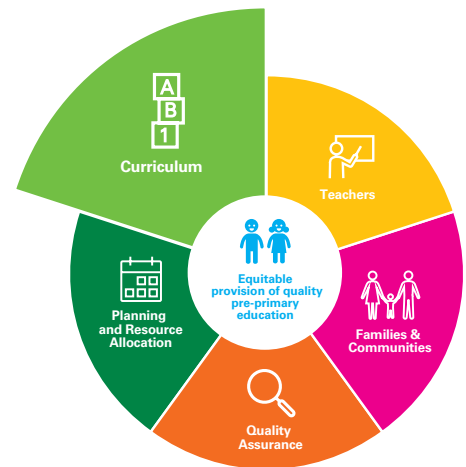
3. Teachers and other personnel:
Improving the supply and quality of pre-primary personnel by establishing appropriate qualifications and standards and providing sufficient initial and continuous training and support.

The range of roles and settings in which pre-primary personnel work, compared with primary and secondary education, makes it more challenging to set common standards and qualifications, and would therefore require increased coordination. Setting common standards and ensuring sufficient training and support is important to ensure a high-quality, dedicated ECE workforce that can deliver quality pre-primary services. Training institutions, inspectorates and colleagues play a critical role as part of a country's workforce development strategy by strengthening professional development opportunities for the pre-primary teachers and other personnel.
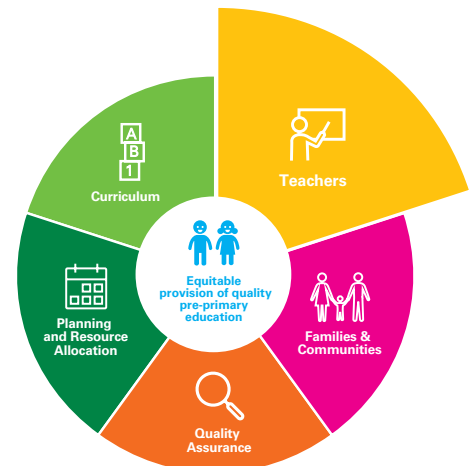
4. Families and communities: Strengthening engagement with families and communities, and supporting them to be active participants in children's learning and development.

Family and community engagement are particularly important for ECE because there are many positive developmental benefits when early learning and nurturing practices are promoted outside of school. In addition, families are a major contributor to the financing of ECE services, through the various user fees charged by ECE centers. In practice, however, coordination between pre-primary programs and home environments often does not exist.
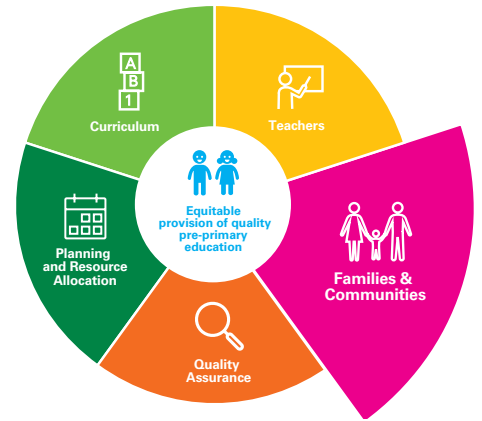
5. Monitoring, regulation and quality assurance: Developing a coherent monitoring and quality assurance system, with defined regulation and standards.

The diversity of ECE settings, providers and regulatory mechanisms makes it all the more complex to monitor and regulate services. Monitoring and quality assurance are crucial to ensure that acceptable pre-primary quality standards are being met; they are also key in supporting the continual improvement of pre-primary policy and practice.

Each core function is a distinct area of focus, but they all connect to and mutually influence and reinforce one another. For example, revision of the curriculum requires that teacher training be updated accordingly, and that there is a plan for its dissemination and implementation. Therefore, when planning policy and programs, it is crucial to establish and maintain coherence and coordination across the various action areas to ensure quality child development and learning outcomes.

For each core function, the framework identifies specific goals and associated measures of progress that governments can focus on to develop or strengthen the functions and to make progress toward efficiently delivering quality pre-primary education at scale. As countries engage in education sector planning, it would be important to ensure that the core functions and their associated goals and measures of progress are considered and reflected so that a comprehensive and robust plan can be achieved. (See the framework, on the virtual platform, for details on the goals for each core function.)

1.3   Coordinating national, subnational and local actions

The activities of the pre-primary sector are carried out at multiple governmental levels—from national/central to subnational (provincial, regional or state) to local—as well as by multiple ministries. It will be important to ensure sufficient coordination and alignment, with clearly delineated roles and responsibilities, as well as adequate capacity across all levels of government, particularly in countries with decentralized systems.

Now that you understand the key components of a strong pre-primary subsector that should be represented throughout the planning process, what exactly is educational planning and the ESP?

2. PLANNING FOR PRE-PRIMARY: CHARACTERISTICS, PHASES, AND PRINCIPLES

An education sector plan is national policy instrument that provides a long-term vision for the country's education system, based on a robust analysis of the current situation.[6] An ESP can fulfill a national vision as well as contribute to international targets. While the process should be led by the government, ESPs are most likely to succeed if they are internalized by all national stakeholders. This is particularly important for ECE given the diversity of actors involved in the provision of services. Thus, ESP preparation should involve a participatory process in which the concerned actors engage in policy dialogues—often mediated by the local education group—to build consensus on the plan's key elements.[7] Plan preparation is itself a form of capacity development, making the process of ESP preparation as important as the final product. Finally, plan preparation is an iterative process, with each step informing the next. The steps (education sector analysis, development of policy priorities and programs, cost and financing, implementation arrangements, and monitoring and evaluation) will be covered in detail in later modules. Here, we provide only a brief overview of the steps, serving as an introduction for the rest of the course.

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6   Much of the text from this section has been taken and sometimes adapted from GPE and IIEP-UNESCO (2015) and IIEP-UNESCO (2010c).

7   Annex 1 is an example of a generic ESP outline.

VIDEO

WHAT IS EDUCATIONAL PLANNING?

CLICK ON THE LINK BELOW to meet Malia. She explains how educational planning impacts her life and why educational planning helps create stronger education systems that foster a brighter future for all children and youth.

http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/malia-explains-what-educational-planning-4350

2.1 What is education planning? Rationale and overview of basic ESP features and planning process

In general, strategic planning is about determining a desired future outcome and then identifying what steps to take and how to manage resources to reach this desired outcome. In other words, strategic educational planning guides governments in how to organize and manage their resources to achieve their objectives for the education sector. The process of educational planning has evolved over the years from a simple, technically focused, top-down exercise to a political, participatory process that brings together diverse stakeholders in dialogue.

It can be said that strategic planning is basically about systematically answering four key questions. Each question corresponds to a set of specific planning activities (Table 1).

TABLE 1.

BASIC STRATEGIC QUESTIONS AND CORRESPONDING PLANNING ACTIVITIES

QUESTIONS	PLANNING ACTIVITIES
Where do we stand today?	**Diagnosis:** Analyzing the current situation in the sector and its environment
Where would we like to be in the future?	**Policy formulation:** Selecting overall goals and strategies
How shall we get there?	**Plan preparation:** Defining precise objectives and balancing objectives and means
How shall we know we are moving in the right direction?	**Monitoring:** Measuring progress and taking corrective action

Source: IIEP-UNESCO 2010a.

Basic ESP features

An education sector plan can be referred to by a number of names: education strategic plan, national education strategy, education sector development plan and more. The duration of a plan can vary, usually covering a period of five or 10 years.[8] In situations of crisis or instability and when the development of a longer-term plan is not feasible, a transitional educational plan (TEP)—usually for three years—may be prepared.

As a national policy instrument, the ESP is strongly influenced by national development priorities and international commitments made by the government. Thus, it is important that the ESP policy priorities be adequately aligned to long-term national policies and plans (for example, National Development Plans, Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSP), Vision 2030, and so on) for issue of coherence and support.

ESP preparation process

The plan preparation process itself may take from eight to 18 months, depending on factors such as existing information, the depth and coverage of the sector analysis, the level of participation of actors and the level of country commitment. Usually, an ESP is developed at the national level; however, in some highly decentralized countries, such as Nigeria and Pakistan, state-level ESPs are being developed. In the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (which includes the small island nations of Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) a regional ESP based on common priorities was designed in addition to national plans.

As stated earlier, the ESP is a political process, in the sense that it gathers a sizable number of stakeholders from various backgrounds. The main actors in the ESP process will vary depending on the administrative and political organization of the country, but they can include the education ministry and other related ministries, such as of children and family welfare, and finance; subnational administrative units in charge of education, such as provincial and district education offices; schools; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); and private sector representatives. Ultimately, *stakeholders* include all those who are concerned by the educational process, such as education personnel, including teachers and their representatives; parents; community associations; trade unions, members of civil society, such as representatives of faith organizations; and development partners, who in certain cases are principal players in the planning process.

For the organizational structure of the plan preparation process, see section 2.4.

ESP development and the full planning cycle

While we focus in this course on the *preparation process of the education sector plan*, the full planning cycle extends well beyond this (Figure 2). Once developed, the ESP needs to be appraised by an external evaluator (to assess its robustness) and then endorsed by development

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8   ESPs may also be characterized as medium term (generally three to six years, but usually five years) or long term (generally 10 years or longer).

partners before being adopted by the government. The implementation phase then follows, during which there is regular monitoring and sector reviews. At the end of the plan period, more in-depth evaluation occurs, which will feed into the sector analysis for the next plan.

FIGURE 2.

THE FULL PLANNING CYCLE


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          SECTOR-LEVEL PROCESS  →  EDUCATION SECTOR ANALYSIS

                                                          EDUCATION
                                                          SECTOR PLANNING

               GOVERNMENT-OWNED
  EVALUATION          PROCESS
                                                          EDUCATION
  ESP MONITORING                                          SECTOR PLAN
  AND SECTOR                                              (ESP) ADOPTED
  REVIEWS

                        ESP IMPLEMENTATION
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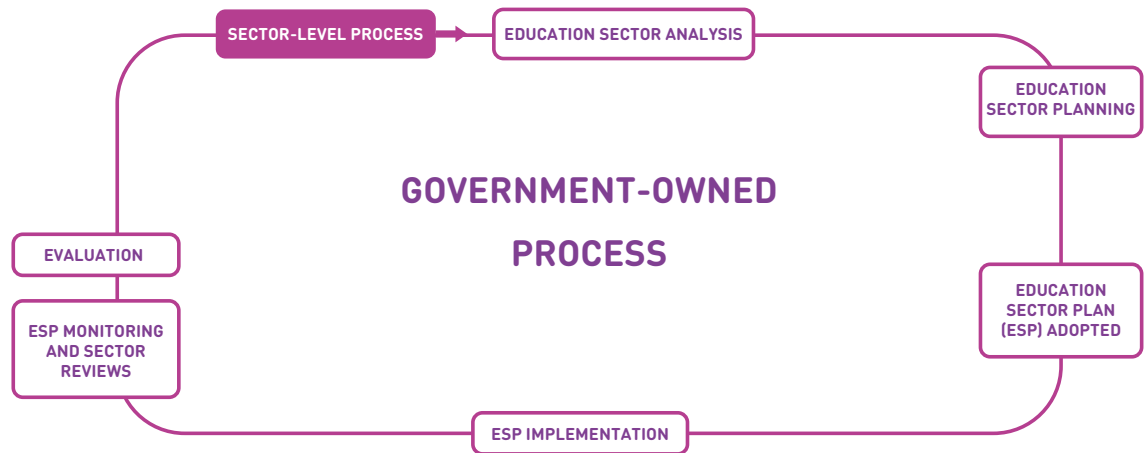
Source: GPE 2019.

2.2   What are the essential characteristics of a credible education plan?

A credible education plan has the following characteristics:[9]

a)   **It is guided by an overall vision.** A mission statement is often the best way of indicating overall direction: It states, for example, (a) the government's development policy, (b) the approach the government will take to reach the goal, and (c) the principles and values that will guide the mission, and often including how the vision feeds into the SDGs.

b)   **It is strategic.** It identifies the strategies that have to be implemented to achieve the vision, taking into account the human, technical and financial capacities required. A plan that is strategic sets priorities.

c)   **It is holistic.** The plan covers all education subsectors (including pre-primary) and should include formal and nonformal education. It recognizes the need for balance between the different subsectors and reflects awareness that education takes place throughout life.

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9   Text adapted from GPE/IIEP-UNESCO (2015).

d)   **It is evidence based.** It starts from an education sector analysis that provides recent good quality data, on which it bases strategy and program development.

e)   **It is achievable.** An achievable plan is based on an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the current situation and of previous trends and well-argued hypotheses. Sufficient thought is given to how to overcome possible financial, technical and political constraints so that the plan can be implemented effectively and efficiently.

f)   **It is sensitive to the context.** It includes an analysis of risks, vulnerabilities and capacities specific to a country or its regions. The plan must find ways to incorporate preparedness, prevention and mitigation to reduce risks by decreasing vulnerabilities and increasing capacities.

g)   **It pays attention to disparities.** It recognizes the disparities and inequalities that exist within a country (gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity and so on) and how these factors affect a child's education, in both participation and quality. The plan responds to the particular needs of different groups, with strategies and programs to address disparities.

h)   **It is coherent.** A clear link exists between the goals/objectives, targets, strategies and programs/activities. The targets reflect correctly the goals/objectives and are "measurable." The achievement of the programs will help achieve the goals/objectives.

2.3   What are the main phases of an ESP preparation process?

Preparing a strategic education sector plan involves several phases (Figure 3), each of a different duration and complexity, depending on the context.[10] Regardless of the plan type (that is, five- or 10-year plan, TEP) and the time required to design it, the same process usually applies.

The process requires the **active participation of all stakeholders** (as we will stress below) and is **iterative,** so new information and the results from implementation feed back into future planning processes. Additionally, steps like the costing and financing feed into the development of other steps, such as the policy priorities and program design phases. The planning process is the same for all subsectors; however, the content for each subsector is context specific.

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10   Much of the text for this section has been taken and sometimes adapted from GPE and IIEP-UNESCO (2015), and IIEP-UNESCO (2010c).

Below, we briefly outline the main phases. The core planning phases of the ESP preparation process and the pre-primary specific content are discussed in the next course modules.

FIGURE 3.

MAIN PHASES OF AN ESP PREPARATION PROCESS
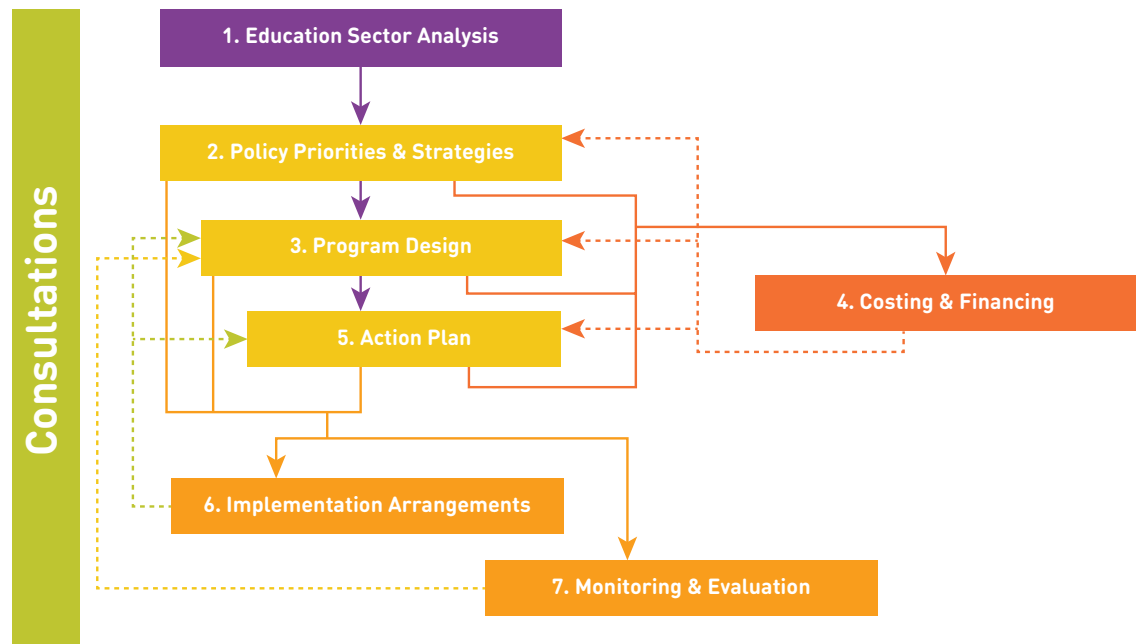
Source: GPE/IIEP-UNESCO 2015.

Note that the last three phases might be organized in a different sequencing, depending on the country ESP development process.

1. **Education sector analysis:** The preparation of an ESP begins with a diagnosis of the entire education sector, including the pre-primary subsector. The education sector analysis (ESA) is a critical analysis of the state, functioning, results and performance of the education system with a view to identify strengths and weaknesses, and pockets of inefficiency. The ESA is often a separate document developed prior to the ESP, but it is nonetheless considered the first step of the ESP development process because it is the basis for the ESP. The ESA uses existing data from the education management information system (EMIS) as well as additional surveys and studies; if existing information is not sufficient, additional data can be collected. A robust sector analysis determines the quality and credibility of the strategic plan. It is the basis for identifying relevant policy goals and objectives and for selecting appropriate priority programs for improved efficiency and equity in the use of resources.

2. **Policy formulation: Policy formulation/Setting policy priorities and strategies:** This step consists of determining and prioritizing long-term policy goals, and the strategies to achieve those goals, based on the challenges identified from the ESA as well as on

existing national policies and international commitments. Setting policy priorities and strategies relies on understanding the underlying causes of the system weaknesses, by creating an explicit causal chain that is then used to identify programmatic responses in the next phase of ESP development (phase 3).

3.   **Programs design:** The identification of the main strengths and weaknesses from the sector diagnosis (phase 1) together with the broad policy orientations retained during the policy formulation (phase 2) serves as the basis for setting the main medium-term plan objectives and for selecting the priority programs and associated activities (phase 3). The expected results, or outcomes/outputs, are measured through indicators that are included in a results framework (phase 7).

4.   **Plan costing and financing:** The costing and financing process within an ESP is about testing the financial viability and sustainability of the proposed policy options and targets. A financial simulation model can be used to make cost estimates covering all expenditures required to achieve the plan results, while estimating the expected available resources. These costing projections will occur at regular intervals throughout the plan preparation process. Various scenarios and associated trade-offs can be demonstrated, which can lead to the adjustment of program and policy targets until an optimal scenario is reached and agreed upon by stakeholders.

5.   **Action plan:** To operationalize the plan over the medium term, the ESP is translated into a *multiyear* action plan (generally two to three years), sometimes referred to as an implementation plan or operational plan (that is further translated into annual operation or action plans). It should be consistent with the policy priorities and programs of the ESP. It outlines the detailed activities for a specific period of the plan, with information on timing, roles, responsibilities and costs, and it should be linked to the national budget process (Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and annual budgeting). The multiyear action plan could be a separate document from the more strategic ESP document, or be part of it.

6.   **Implementation arrangements and capacities:** This step consists of defining the implementation arrangements and ensuring that the necessary capacities are available. This includes designating who is responsible for overall implementation of the plan as well as for specific programs. Designated responsibilities should be as close as possible to the usual structure of the ministry and departments. Sometimes new structures will have to be created, such as a joint steering committee. The plan should also be reviewed against management capacity factors within the ministry and, when necessary, objectives adjusted or capacity constraints addressed.

7.   **Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms:** These mechanisms are critical for ensuring that the plan remains on track to achieve its targets. An essential tool in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is the system of indicators designed to follow up on plan objectives and monitor program-specific processes. The M&E indicator system, or results framework, is aligned with the structure and organization of the goals, programs and activities that make up the strategies of the ESP (see phase 3). Indicators are used to measure progress and achievement of established targets at the various levels by assessing the outcomes of the goals, intermediate outcomes of the programs and outputs of the activities.

Box 1 showcases an example of the main phases of the plan development process in Iraq.

After the preparation of the ESP

The finalization of the ESP is not the end of the planning work. A new phase then starts: **plan implementation.** The role of the educational administration during this stage shifts from the development of the ESP to preparing for and supporting its implementation. This takes the form of different activities, in particular the following:

- **Translation of the ESP into annual operational plans and budgets:** The original medium-term plan is not prepared once and for all but has to be translated into short-term operational plans, aligned with the budget cycle and derived from the multiyear action plan.

- **Regular monitoring of the plan's implementation,** through the collection of data and the analysis of indicators, the drafting of reports, and the organization of regular review meetings, such as joint sector reviews.

- **Support to the decentralized levels,** which could include assistance to the preparation of regional and district plans and budgets.

2.4 What are the essential principles of plan preparation?

During the preparation and appraisal of the plan, attention should be paid to both the quality of the process and the quality of the final product. A quality process is one that follows these principles:
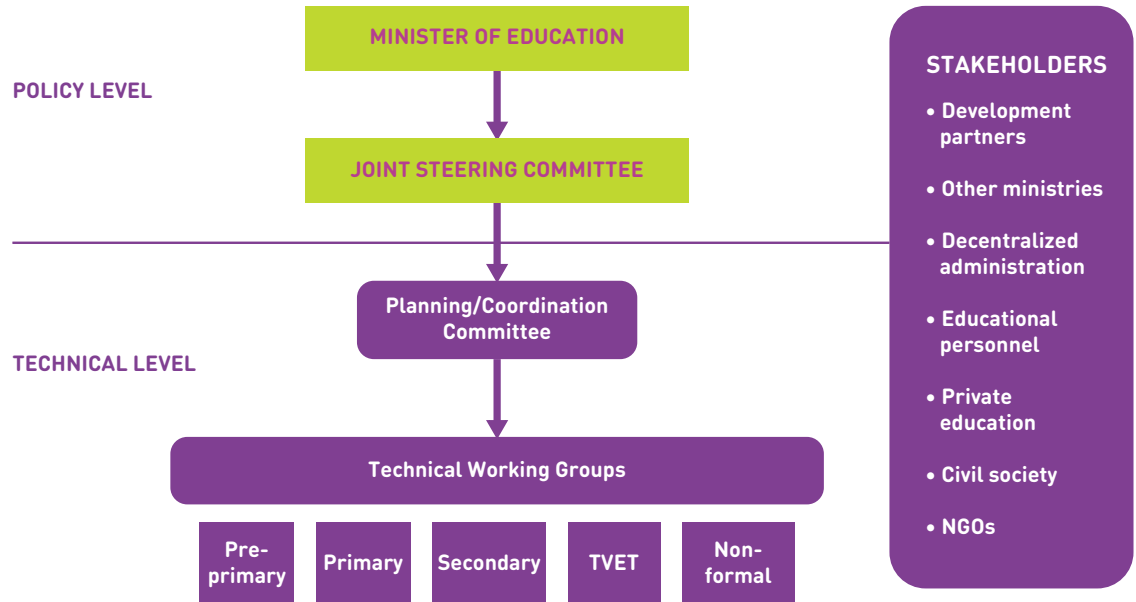
a)   **It is participatory.** The plan preparation process must be fully participatory and include a range of stakeholders (such as civil society, teachers unions, and ministries other than education) as well as the partners who will be in charge of implementing the plan at the local level. For pre-primary, for example, this can include ministry departments in charge of ECE at both national and subnational levels, local and international NGOs and private sector service providers, ECE experts, and other supporting partners such as the ministries of health, labor or social welfare or women and child's welfare. This process allows political leaders and technical experts to maintain a balance between political ambitions and technical constraints while also raising awareness and gaining commitments from stakeholders. Participation is easier to organize when consultative structures are in place. Most countries have local education groups and/or pre-primary sector working groups (ECE/PPE SWG). These structures are typically chaired by the education ministry and consist of in-country stakeholders.

b)   **It is well organized.** For a participatory process to run smoothly with a wide range of actors involved, it needs to be well organized, with clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the different actors, especially those who lead and coordinate (Figure 4). The following structures can be particularly useful:[11]

- **A joint steering committee,** which has the mandate to oversee and guide the plan preparation process, and to serve as a linking mechanism between the ministry and other major stakeholders. It essentially is composed of senior ministry personnel, with participation from other relevant ministries (for example, finance, planning). It could also include development partners.

- **A planning/coordination committee,** which coordinates the technical work of the ESP drafting and brings all ministry directorates and departments together. It is usually led by the director of planning.

- **Technical working groups,** which focus on specific themes or subsectors (for example, teacher education, adult education, finance, M&E, pre-primary) and may be asked by the planning committee to draft specific sections of the plan. They primarily are staffed by central-level technical experts from the education ministry. Development partners, including civil society organizations, can also participate.

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11   In many ministries, such committees and groups may already exist, even if they have other names. Other types of structures can be considered, depending on the context.

FIGURE 4.

ESP PREPARATION ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
POLICY LEVEL        │   MINISTER OF EDUCATION      │        │   STAKEHOLDERS       │
                    └─────────────┬───────────────┘        │                      │
                                  │                        │ • Development        │
                                  ▼                        │   partners           │
                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐        │                      │
                    │  JOINT STEERING COMMITTEE    │        │ • Other ministries   │
                    └─────────────┬───────────────┘        │                      │
                                  │                        │ • Decentralized      │
                                  │                        │   administration     │
                                  ▼                        │                      │
                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐        │ • Educational        │
                    │   Planning/Coordination     │         │   personnel          │
                    │        Committee            │         │                      │
TECHNICAL LEVEL     └─────────────┬───────────────┘        │ • Private            │
                                  │                        │   education          │
                                  ▼                        │                      │
                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐        │ • Civil society      │
                    │   Technical Working Groups   │        │                      │
                    └─────────────────────────────┘        │ • NGOs               │
                    ┌──────┬──────┬──────┬─────┬────┐      └──────────────────────┘
                    │ Pre- │Primary│Second│TVET│Non-│
                    │primary│      │ary   │    │formal│
                    └──────┴──────┴──────┴─────┴────┘
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Note: Technical working groups may also be organized by theme, such as access, quality, management cost and financing.

c)   **A capacity-development process.** Plan preparation is a form of capacity development. Plan implementation depends on a wide range of actors within the administration, from central to school levels, and it is important that capacity at all levels be addressed. Actual work on drafting a plan and involvement in consultations are of great value to developing capacities, strengthening motivation and creating a common understanding of the issues at stake within the education sector and the pre-primary subsector and the potential solutions. Capacity includes setting up dynamic and problem-solving systems for sustained consistency in management. Where external technical support is needed, it must be delivered through the government, supporting ministerial planning officers and in collaboration with the local education group.

3. CHALLENGES TO PRE-PRIMARY ESP DEVELOPMENT

Several challenges relate to ESP preparation in general and to planning for pre-primary in particular. Because pre-primary is a complex subsector, established implementation arrangements and/or M&E frameworks may not be sufficiently well developed. Other challenges pertain to issues concerning coordination, time for both designing the plan and building consensus, and ensuring that pre-primary is well articulated and reflected in the action plan and budget, data needs and technical needs. While ESP preparation is the ideal moment for properly mainstreaming pre-primary issues, there are other entry points throughout the ESP cycle to mainstream ECE. For example, annual joint sector reviews or the midterm review provide opportunities to influence and integrate results from a new analysis and make revisions to the plan.

a) **Coordination** of the planning process has to take place at both the technical and policy levels. Because plan preparation is a participatory process, the inclusion of pre-primary will involve the coordination of additional stakeholders and actors. It implies coordination between not only different ministries that might be involved in provision of services for ECE (including the representatives from technical working groups), but also various stakeholders such as the private sector and NGO pre-primary implementers, faith-based organizations, ECE teachers, parents and community members who may also be involved in pre-primary provision and donors.

An additional consideration relates to coordination between the national and decentralized levels of planning and implementation of the education sector (including the pre-primary subsector), as well as coordination between relevant departments from other sectors, where appropriate. While the process represents an interesting opportunity to build a common understanding at the country level, and to promote individual and global learning by bringing relevant expertise and insights, it raises

many coordination challenges. This is further compounded by poor communication and collaboration across relevant ministries or departments within one ministry and more generally among the various actors.

b)   **Time to design the plan and build consensus.** Given the complexity of coordination, this process takes time not only to establish the relevant structures but also to ensure the consensus between the various stakeholders engaged in the process.

With the need for extended and broad societal consultations comes the imperative of a clear structure to avoid overly lengthy processes and keep deadlines. Establishing an authoritative steering committee and key technical working teams, with clear roles and responsibilities and timelines, agreed by all, is helpful in bringing government, nongovernment, other key stakeholders and donor expertise into the process.

c)   **Budget.** Increased budget may be required for the additional ECE stakeholders and actors who will be involved in the participatory planning process of preparing the ESP. There may also be additional costs for the ESA to go into a more in-depth analysis of pre-primary issues (discussed further in Module 3).

d)   **Data** issues are often considerable in relation to pre-primary, where data are often either absent from national education database systems or limited in scope. At the country level, the lack of robust data for pre-primary in many countries makes effective planning more difficult. While most plans include the gross enrollment ratio (GER) or number of children participating in ECE, information on the quality of the teaching and learning environment and family engagement, data related to ECE management and financing, and more detailed disaggregation of data that can guide effective equity strategies may be absent.

e)   **Technical expertise** is required to support the development of the process, as ESAs and ESPs are technical exercises. But many countries may not have the right expertise available for these tasks. This outside support can be costly, especially if the right expertise is not available at the country level.

f)   **Lack of ministerial leadership** challenges the planning process by limiting coordination, participation and consensus building. This can occur in particular settings marked by long-term political instability, such as war-torn countries.

4. MOVING FORWARD

The process of planning for pre-primary is essential to ensure that it is planned as a subsector and integrated into the overall planning process for the education system. This entails (a) considering the important features of the pre-primary subsector as outlined in section 1, (b) following the key phases of the plan preparation process, and (c) applying the essential principles of plan preparation with a view to minimizing the likely challenges that may emerge during the process.

As explained in Module 1, adequately mainstreaming the pre-primary subsector into education sector plans provides governments with the basis of how to organize and deliver desired objectives and is a powerful mechanism for building consensus, coordinating partners and mobilizing resources. Globally, pre-primary is grossly underfunded and lacks coordination, coherence and regulation. Thus, the widespread availability of quality, inclusive ECE services depends on pre-primary being sufficiently planned and resourced as a coherent subsector within the overall education system. Achieving this begins with the ESP.

Modules 3–5 will introduce the key ESP phases with respect to how to successfully ensure pre-primary is mainstreamed throughout the process:

- Education sector analysis (Module 3)

- ESP development (policy formulation/program prioritization) and cost and financing (Module 4)

- Implementation arrangements, monitoring and evaluation (Module 5)

FIGURE 5.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION SECTOR PLANNING PROCESSES

Source: UNICEF 2019a.

GENERIC ESP OUTLINE

As IIEP-UNESCO (2010) suggests,

"There is no blueprint for preparing a strategic plan. But some lessons can be learned from different country experiences. One of the lessons is that, when a country has to prepare a strategic sector plan for the first time and because political decision-makers are generally in a hurry, the temptation is always strong to follow the old ways of doing things. This means calling in a team of national and/or international experts to actually write up the plan as quickly as possible (a few months), rather than to support a much longer (at least 8 to 12 months), participatory, national plan preparation process."

Therefore, as every context is different, so there will be variation in the format and style of the plan. However, there are common elements within an ESP process, so most ESP documents would include the following components/chapters:

1. **The development/external context** of the country: This includes geography, population, issues relating to the political or economic situation/stability of the country, if the country suffers from conflicts or crises of any kind, and what the implications would be for the education sector of any or all of these factors. Information for this section comes from the education sector analysis phase of the ESP process.

2. **The education context** of the country: This includes the various subsectors of the education system, such as ECE, basic education, TVET, higher education, nonformal education and more. Each country might have different subsectors, and their plan might focus more heavily on one subsector than another, depending on the context. Information and data on the achievements of the various education subsectors comes from the ESA phase, and most often focuses on analyses related to access, quality, equity and internal and sometimes external efficiency.

3. **Cross-cutting issues:** Sometimes these issues are mainstreamed across the analysis and framework of the plan and other times they are given a separate subsection. The section should always include gender and crisis and/or conflict sensitivity (sometimes referred to as education in emergencies); it varies whether it includes other cross-cutting issues such as HIV and AIDS, water and sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and so on. Information and data come from the ESA phase of the ESP preparation process.

4. **Education policy framework:** This typically includes the policy landscape that education sits within, both internationally and nationally, and includes policies for the education sector and subsectors to help guide the overall vision for the sector. An overall goal for the education sector is set here. Information for this section comes from both the ESA phase and the policy formulation phase of the ESP process, where existing policies are tested against the analysis, and if necessary, policies are reformulated or new ones developed.

5. **The ESP priority programs:** This section includes the programs necessary to implement the overall vision and goal of the education sector. The programs include components relating to each of the subsectors relevant to the ESP, and aim to address the issues that have been highlighted in the ESA process. The prioritization of these also depends on available resources, so the targets relating to the programs in this section (such as increased access to ECE, or improvement of learning outcomes in primary education) need to be tested against the simulation model developed to determine the cost of implementing the plan. This section is developed during the programming phase of the ESP process.

6. **Financing the plan:** This section includes results from the ESA phase on the finance review of the sector. It also includes the criteria for the cost calculations to assess the cost of the implementing the plan. This uses the simulation model in order to fully cost the plan. Based on the simulation model, the priority programs may need to be adjusted before the plan is completed. Finally, the government budget is calculated and the financing gap estimated. This can help with future resource mobilization. This section is developed during the costing and financing phase of the ESP process.

7. **Implementation arrangements:** This section outlines how the program will be implemented and monitored and includes committees similar in structure to those established during the plan preparation phase. These structures need to coordinate at different levels, and ensure the technical capacity to develop and monitor annual operational plans, key performance indicators and so on. This section is developed as part of the M&E phase of the ESP process.

8. **Monitoring and evaluation framework:** This section outlines the sources of data (EMIS and other sources) as well as the process by which routine M&E will be conducted at different levels (national, regional, district and school). It indicates the timing for the joint review missions and annual review process. This section also includes the key performance indicators that will form the basis for the monitoring and the results framework. This section is developed as part of the M&E phase of the ESP process.

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