



The Current Situation Of The Self-Assessment Of The Early Childhood Education Quality In Locality Based On Sustainable Development Goal No. 4 In Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

This article publishes research results on the current self-assessment of early childhood education (ECE) quality in Vietnam based on sustainable development goal No.4 (SDG4) through a survey of opinions of ECE managers of the Department of Education and Training at level province and districts, managers, teachers, parents in public and non-public ECE facilities, and local communities through a toolkit to survey about self-assessing ECE quality. The results show no regulations or tools supporting provinces, districts, communes and ECE facilities carry out self-assessing the ECE quality in Vietnam based on SDG4 thought action plans for SDG4 have been implemented in Vietnam since 2018. Therefore, localities have yet to identify achieving progress in the SDGs, which makes it difficult for localities to develop policies and plans to improve the elements of ECE quality such as structure quality, process quality, and outcomes. The current research suggests discussion issues on regulations, guidelines, and the development of criteria and indicators consistent with current nationwide ECE quality accreditation and unified tools to help ECE facilities and managers evaluate the quality according to the sustainable development goals conveniently and effectively.

Keywords: Self-assessment, sustainable development goal no.4, quality, early childhood education

Introduction

The United Nations officially approved the 2030 Agenda on sustainable development in September 2015, marking a change in the global economic, social, and environmental development model with 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 Sustainable Development Index. In particular, sustainable education goal No. 4 (SDG4) ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nation, 2015) is an important factor throughout the 2030 agenda to achieve all 17 SDGs.

Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam signed Decision No. 622/QĐ-TTg dated May 10, 2017 on promulgating the National Action Plan to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Prime Minister, 2017); Decision No. 681/QĐ-TTg dated June 4, 2019, promulgating the Roadmap for implementing Vietnam's sustainable development goals until 2030 (Prime Minister, 2019). Implementing Decision No. 622/QĐ-TTg, the Minister of Education and Training issued Decision No. 2161/QĐ-BGDĐT dated June 26, 2017, a plan to implement the SDGs in education and training until 2025 and orientation to 2030 (Minister of Education and Training, 2017) and Decision No. 2257/QĐ-BGDĐT dated August 8, 2019, promulgating the decision to amend and supplement Section 3 of the Plan to implement SDGs in the field of education and training to 2025 and orientation to 2030 issued together with Decision No. 2161/QĐ-BGDĐT dated June 26, 2017 (Minister of Education and Training, 2019). In there, the national goals for early childhood education (ECE) until 2030 are determined:

4.1. By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

4.2. By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education

4.5. By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

4.7. By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

4.a. Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

4.c. By 2030, increase the supply of qualified teachers through international cooperation on teacher training in developing countries, significantly less developed and developing countries

Decision 2161/QĐ-BGDĐT also clearly states that the targets will be specified in all levels and sectors' annual education and training development plans. Provinces, centrally-governed cities are responsible for directing the Department of Education and Training and relevant offices to develop plans and organize implementation; integrate SDGs in the field of sustainable education and training in the process of building and directing the implementation of annual socio-economic development plans; develop local strategies for calling resources for implementation¹.

According to the State Budget Law provisions and current management decentralization, the Government has developed a decentralization policy and provided resources for localities to invest in ECE development. Localities are empowered to be proactive in using the state budget and mobilizing resources from society to ensure the quality of ECE. However, due to the different economic, natural, and social characteristics of each locality, ECE is still facing many difficulties and inadequacies, such as disparities and imbalances in resources, the proportion of investment in ECE, differences in educational quality between provinces/cities, regions, urban areas, rural areas and so on. Therefore, to ensure children access to quality, equitable preschool education, localities need to develop appropriate educational plans and strategies based on evidence from self-assessment of the current state of education quality in the locality in relation to SDGs.

The article is based on the theoretical framework of educational quality and self-assessment of educational quality to study the current of self-assessment of ECE quality about SDG4 at ECE facilities (preschool, center of ECE and care), and Departments of Education and Training in several provinces and cities representing 03 regions including the North, Central, and South of Vietnam to propose several recommendations for the self-assessment of the ECE quality in the locality.

Literature

Early childhood education quality

Education quality is a complex concept considered central to the goal of education for all and educational development. Researchers with different approaches offer different understandings of educational quality. One of the approaches to educational quality is given by Harvey and Green (1993). Quality as fitness for purpose (L. Harvey, & Green, D, 1993). Furthermore, quality education does not only focus on teaching, learning, and the classroom but is understood more broadly from the human rights approach, the education approach for peace and sustainable development (L. Huntsman, 2008; OECD, 2016; UNESCO, 2009).

Huntsman (2008); Ryder et al. (2016); See Scobie, G. and E. Scott (2017) pointed out that the following elements create the ECE quality: (1) **Structural quality**, (2) **Process quality**, and (3) **Outcomes** that is a popular trend in analytical studies (L. Huntsman, 2008; G. Davitt D. Ryder, R. Higginson, and S. Smorti, 2016; G. and E. Scott See Scobie, 2017). Structural quality refers to how the ECE system is designed and organized, including the number of children in the room (class group size), the number of staff per child, the number of professionally trained staff within an ECE setting; the design of the curriculum; regulations associated with the financing of ECE provision; arrangements to ensure all children are treated fairly and by their individual needs and the physical requirements which need to be in place to meet the health; safety requirements of providing care and education for young children (G. and E. Scott See Scobie, 2017; Gina Peterson and Emily Elam, 2020). The process quality, on the other hand, is what children experience in the program. Process quality refers to (classroom) dynamics, interactions between the teachers, children, families, and administrators or the way the children behave in the classroom environment (Sofie Cabusat et al., 2023); activities and learning opportunities for children are essential in ensuring high-quality developmental outcomes for children (L. Huntsman, 2008); Policy levers create outcomes. Outcomes are the results created by the impact of structural quality and process quality on each and social development are grouped under the

sub-heading output and outcomes of education and learning (OECD, 2016; Gina Peterson and Emily Elam, 2020).

The following diagram has helped researchers focus on specific elements of ECE quality for Sustainable Development, making research and analysis at a richer level possible that can be done.

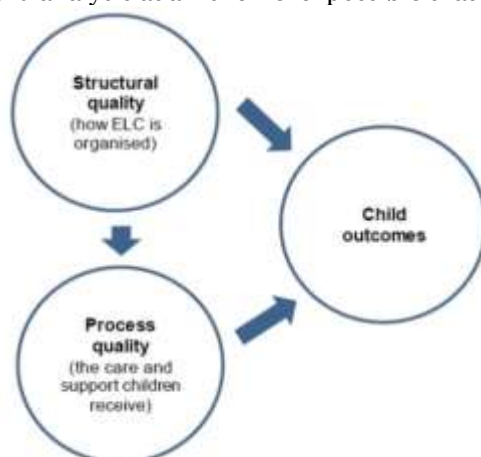


Figure 1: Early Childhood Education Quality Framework

Based on the ECE quality analysis framework (Figure 1) along with the SDGs for 2030 to guide expected outcomes, research and apply a self-assessment framework to analyze the ECE quality. The local level is structured by closely interacting elements, including structural quality, process quality, and practical output results. The elements and aspects of ECE quality in relation SDG4 are described as follows:

I. Structural quality

1. Structure of early childhood education system
 - 1.1. Percentage of children attending ECE facilities
 - 1.2. Number of managers, teachers, and employees
 - 1.3. Number of children at ECE facilities
2. Qualifications of managers, teachers, and staff
 - 2.1. Qualifications of managers, teachers, and staff
 - 2.2. Percentage of managers, teachers, and staff meeting training standards
3. Facilities and infrastructure
 - 3.1. Infrastructure
 - Percentage of ECE facilities with clean water
 - Percentage of ECE facilities with sanitation facilities for children by gender
 - Percentage of ECE facilities with sanitation facilities for administrators, teachers, and staff
 - Percentage of ECE facilities with electricity
 - 3.2. Using the internet in teaching
 - 3.3. Facilities and infrastructure for children with disabilities

II. Process quality

1. Early Childhood Education Program
 - 1.1. The ECE program ensures quality
 - 1.2. The ECE program integrates educational content for sustainable development.
 - 1.3. Ensure a safe, healthy, and friendly educational environment
 - 1.4. The educational program ensures positivity and stimulates children's development
 - 1.5. The ECE program is suitable for children with disabilities and children with special needs
 - 1.6. The program ensures continuity with primary education
2. Professional development
 - 2.1. Percentage of managers, teachers, and staff receiving regular (annual) training and professional development.
 - 2.2. Effectiveness of training courses
3. Assessment in ECE

III. Outcomes

1. Access in ECE
 - 1.1. Percentage of 5-year-old children by gender completing the ECE program
 - 1.2. Percentage of disabled/special children enrolling in ECE facilities
2. Results of ECE and care.

Assessing the early childhood education quality based on SDG4

Evaluation is about gathering a set of information that is sufficiently relevant, valid, and reliable. Consider the degree of compatibility between a set of information and criteria that match the criteria initially set or adjusted during the information adjustment process; “to make a decision” (Tran Kieu, 2006). Many countries are developing comprehensive assessment frameworks for education, with a greater emphasis on standards-based measurement, using results for accountability and development of educational institutions, thereby improving the quality of education (OECD, 2013). Based on the concept of educational quality as conformity with educational goals, assessing the ECE quality according to SDG4 is understood as collecting valuable and reliable information to identify practical problems and forming judgments and conclusions about the level of achievement of SDG4.

When evaluating the ECE quality according to SDG4, in addition to assessing the quality manifestations according to the three elements mentioned above, the assessment also needs to be considered from the perspective of the interconnectedness of the ECE program with the primary education program, learn fairness, equality, and the right to education, building a safe, non-violent, and inclusive educational environment for everyone.

Self-assessment of the local early childhood education quality based on SDG4 is a cycle that provides an opportunity for services to identify and review activities in early childhood settings consistent with ECE goals. The self-assessment cycle allows for determining WHAT was done and WHY was done (Commonwealth of Australia). Self-assessment helps service providers, managers, and educators better understand the practice of child care and education, and existing problems, as well as identify solutions and develop plans. Plan to improve quality for children and families.

The self-assessment process requires the evaluators to prepare, review, and modify the contents to be evaluated by the goals and practical conditions in the locality; prepare tools, and organize a strict assessment process. The self-assessment process can involve many members, such as preschool education managers, supervisors, teacher assessment experts, staff, children, families, and relevant communities. Self-assessment of local ECE quality according to SDG4 can be influenced by many factors, including:

Local priorities in implementing SDG4: Although SDGs have a global approach, SDG4 is a common issue for humanity in the 21st century, but implementation actions to achieve goals take place differently in each country and each locality. That leads to the quality of SDG4 tending to depend mainly on the priority level and individual policies in each country and locality. In Finland, the national steering agency only promulgates an evaluation model and stops at the index level; localities and early childhood education facilities must concretize the index themselves into criteria to determine the level of implementation. They implement ECE goals at local and school levels (D. Rad, Redeş, A., Roman, A., Ignat, S., Lile, R., Demeter, E., ... & Rad, G, 2022).

Clarity and uniformity of the national database system: The quality of ECE is reflected through unified and synchronized standards from the central/ government and development, making the standards expandable and adaptable to each locality. National assessment data on ECE are jointly developed by actors at many levels and widely published for evaluators, experts, policymakers, and consulting service providers. Individuals and people can use it when analyzing and evaluating the ECE quality.

Compatibility between standards for assessing the ECE quality with SDG4: To evaluate the quality of ECE according to SDG4, it is necessary to ensure compatibility between standards in the assessment model: ECE quality assessment and ECE goals according to SDG4. Thus, the new assessment results can be compared to conclude the level of implementation of SDGs.

The evaluation team's capacity: The capacity of the evaluator (understanding, skills, subjectivity) can affect how they perceive and evaluate the service and the quality of the ECE service's performance.

The above factors are also found in the Vietnamese context when self-assessment of the quality of ECE increasingly shows its essential significance for improving the quality of child care and education, especially in the sector of non-public or groups of children operating under a high-quality model.

Inclusion, some issues related to local priority in implementing SDG4, consistency in assessment content, criteria, standards/ indicators, tools, and capacity requirements of assessment teams need to be further researched and discussed more deeply when organize self-assessment in local ECE quality.

Method

Objectives of this study

Researching the current situation of self-assessment of ECE quality in the locality based on SDG4 aims to answer the following research questions:

- What regulations on self-assessment of local ECE quality according to SDG4 have been issued since 2015? Are there any guidelines and tools for localities when implementing and evaluating the ECE quality based on SDG 4? What are the contents of the assessment?
- How was the evaluation process carried out? What were the forms and methods for collecting data? What resources and objects were involved in the self-assessment process? What types of tools were used for self-assessment? How used the results?

- What advantages, disadvantages, and causes affected self-assessment of the ECE quality based on SDG4?

Data collection methods

To ensure the reliability of the research, we collect information from different sources such as in-depth interviews, group discussions, and questionnaires and use secondary information reports from early childhood education management units. Preschools at provincial, district, and commune levels, ECE establishments. Each discussion or in-depth group interview lasts 45-60 minutes, focusing on clarifying the content that the questionnaire did not get all the information about the information portal of the government and the Ministry of Education and Training; regulatory documents related to implementation and assessment of the ECE quality provided by localities.

Data analysis methods

Using Excel and SPSS software to input data, clean, code, classify, synthesize, and evaluate to identify and clarify issues with or without management agency regulations on self-assessment of local ECE quantity according to SGD 4.

Data from questionnaires will be cleaned, encrypted, and connected into a single data file. Data from in-depth interviews and group discussions were typed and coded according to topics in the interview and discussion forms. In addition, codes were also developed by the researchers before analysis to clarify the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire.

Data and information obtained from state management agencies are classified, synthesized, and evaluated to identify and clarify issues with or without management agency regulations on self-assessment of local ECE quantity according to SGD 4.

Instrument

The study used tools including outline reports, questionnaires, in-depth interview questions, and group discussions for management staff representing the Department of Education and Training at the level of provinces, districts, ECE establishments, teachers, parents, and members of communities to collect objective, reliable, and multi-dimensional information; Website: <https://wheelofnames.com/vi/> is used to support sample selection to participate in the survey by random sampling method in survey areas.

+ The questionnaire includes a set of questions based on a theoretical framework to evaluate the quality of ECE about SDG4. The questionnaire is converted into an online questionnaire before being sent to the managers, teachers, and parents, communities to response. After receiving feedback through questionnaires, the research used in-depth interviews and group discussions, including edited questions and issues, to get in-depth information about the current of self-assessment implementation; the advantages and disadvantages of organizing a self-assessment of the quality of ECE in the locality.

+ The outline report on self-assessment of the ECE quality in the locality is sent to information providers at level the province, district, and ECE facilities to report on the implementation status of documents: Decision, Resolution, other legal documents, and instructions/ guidelines for ECE quality self-assessment according to SDG4.

Data Collection and Analysis

Research sample: The study's design randomly selected 03 provinces: Vinh Phuc provinces representing the Northern provinces, Nghe An provinces representing the Central provinces, and Can Tho provinces representing the Southern provinces. Each province selects a survey sample at the Department of Education and Training, randomly selects 01 district from the list of all districts in the province, 02 ECE facilities from the list of all public ECE facilities, 01 preschool from the list of all non-public ECE facilities via using the Spinning tool, of which: 01 facility represents public ECE facilities in an urban area, 01 facility represents public ECE facilities in a rural area; 01 facility representative of non-public ECE facilities participated in the survey directly. Management staff of other ECE facilities in the district participated in the survey indirectly (answered questionnaires).

The sample participated in a direct survey including 06 managers representing 03 Departments of Education and Training at level province, 06 managers representing 03 Departments of Education and Training at level district, 18 managers representing 06 public preschools and 03 non-public preschools, 45 teachers, 45 parents and 45 community representatives at 09 ECE facilities participated in the survey. In particular, each province includes:

02 management officers representing the Department of Education and Training.

02 managers of the Education and Training Department

02 administrators representing public ECE facilities in urban areas

02 managers representing public ECE facilities in rural areas

02 Management Boards representing non-public ECE facilities

Each ECE facility included 05 teachers, 05 parents, and 05 local community representatives in the survey area.

The research sample participated in indirect survey form via questionnaire:

Table 1. Statistics of survey samples through questionnaires

		Management staff		Teacher		Children's parents		Total	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Area	City	50	53.8	61	63.5	58	63.0	169	60.1
	Countryside	43	46.2	35	36.5	34	37.0	112	39.9
Unit	Public	83	89.2	66	68.8			149	78.8
	Non-public	10	10.8	30	31.3			40	21.2
Conscious	Vinh Phuc	27	29.0	31	32.3	23	25	81	28.8
	Nghe An	30	32.3	30	31.3	24	26.1	84	29.9
	Can Tho	36	38.7	35	36.5	45	48.9	116	41.3
Total		93	100.0	96	100.0	92	100	281	100.0

The number of documents reviewed includes 04 national documents issued by the government, 02 documents issued by the Ministry of Education and Training, resolutions, decisions, and plans/projects for education development. Education includes 03 documents in Vinh Phuc province, 02 decisions in Nghe An province, and 05 documents in Can Tho province.

Results

Regulations on self-assessment of the early childhood education quality at the local level based on SDG4

The results of reviewing current documents show that there are 05 regulatory documents related to implementing SDG goals at the national level (Government, Ministry of Planning and Investment, MOET) issued after five years of a national action plan to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including decisions with roadmaps, action plans to implement the agenda with indicators to monitor progress in implementing SDG 4 in 2020, 2025 and 2030 but there are no regulations on assessing the quality of local preschool education according to SDG 4.

Survey results from in-depth interviews, group discussions, and reports in the three provinces show that provinces rely on the national action plan to advise management at the level of the province to issue decisions, plans, or projects for ECE development, including sustainable development indicators as goals to strive for by 2030, with a vision to 2045 as Decision 2124-QD-UBND; Decision No. 2767/QD-UBND and Decision 147/QD-UBND they included reports on progress in implementing sustainable development goals. ECE establishments and ECE management units at district, provincial/city levels need to conduct a self-assessment of education quality according to sustainable development goals. According to a report from the Department of Education and Training of Can Tho, the Department of Education and Training reports on the implementation of SDGs with the results of monitoring and supervision indicators according to Plan No. 1900/KH-SGDDT to the Committee every year. The City People's Committee reports on the results of implementing the Resolution of the City People's Council on the economy - society, national defense, and security (Education and Training in the Field of Culture - Society) (Education and training Department, 2018). Data collected according to reporting sources, aggregated by affiliated units, does not conduct direct assessment to collect data and evidence for SDGs.

Thus, in the documents regulating and directing the implementation of SDG4 from the national to the local level, there needs to be documents regulating self-assessment of the ECE quality according to SDG4.

Table 2. Statistics of regulatory documents on implementing and assessing SDG 4 in ECE from the national level to the local level

No	Document	Implementing		Assessing	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	National level				
	Decision 681/QD-TTg (Prime Minister, 2019)	x			x
	Decision No. 622/QD-TTg (Prime Minister, 2017)	x			x
	Decision No. 2158/QD-BKHDT (Minister of Planning and Investment, 2019)	x			x
	Decision No. 2161/QD-BGDDT (Minister of Education and Training, 2017)	x			x
	Decision No. 2257 /QD-BGDDT (Minister of Education and Training, 2017)	x			x
	Circular 19/2018/TT-BGD&ĐT (Minister of Education and Training, 2018)		x		x
2	Provincial and district levels				
2.1	Vinh Phuc Province				
	Resolution No. 10/NQ/TU (Prime Minister, 2021)	x			
	Plan No. 22/KH-UBND (People's Committee, 2023)	x			
2.2	Nghe An province				
	Decision 147/QD-UBND (People's Committee, 2022a)		x		x
	Decision 2124-QD-UBND (People's Committee, 2022b)	x			x
2.3	Can Tho province				
	Plan No. 27/KH-UBND (People's Committee, 2018)	x			x
	Plan No. 1900/KH-SGDDT (Education and training Department, 2018)	x			x
	Resolution No. 34/NQ-HDND (People's Committee, 2020a)	x			x
	Decision No. 2767/QD-UBND (People's Committee, 2020b)	x			x

	Plan No. 110/QD-UBND (People's Committee, 2022c)	x			x
3	Commune, ward level, ECE facilities				
	06 communes, wards, 09 ECE facilities (No documents)		x		x

Contents of assessing the early childhood education quality in locality based on SDG4

At the commune level, ECE facilities: Self-assessment of the quality of preschool education at current educational establishments is carried out according to the provisions of Circular No. 19/TT-BGDĐT (95.7% of total managers and teachers agree), including several indicators under the sustainable development goal of SGD 4 such as Percentage of children attending preschool; percentage of 5-year-old children completing the Early Childhood Education program; qualifications of managers, teachers, staff; percentage of managers or teachers meet training qualifications; some results achieved in children in terms of physical development (Percentage of malnutrition, obesity and stunting) have been integrated in the assessment (rate of agreement from 85.1% to 100%). Aspects of the ECE quality in relation to SDG4 have not been evaluated, such as the number of teachers attrition by educational level, average income of teacher compared to other occupations requiring equivalent qualifications, amount of spent per child, proportion of investment in early childhood education of government; The ECE program integrates SDG4 content; an optimistic and stimulating home educational environment for children's development has not been included in the evaluation criteria system. At the provincial and district levels, several indicators assessed according to Decision No. 681/QĐ-TTg include performance targets integrated into local socio-economic development goals, including indicators under target 4.2: (1) Percentage of children under five years old who have appropriate health, learning and psychosocial development; (2) Percentage of enrolling 5-year-old children in kindergarten; indicators under target 4.7: (1) Percentage of teachers meeting training qualifications or higher, target 4.8: Percentage of ECE facilities with: (1) Clean water, (2) Sanitary facilities students, (3) Hand hygiene education, (4) Having electricity, (5), Using the internet for teaching, (6) Using computers for teaching and (7) Percentage of ECE facilities with infrastructure and materials suitable for students with disabilities. These evaluation indicators are updated statistically and reported annually by the ECE facilities on the database at the beginning and end of the school year. Other aspects of educational quality have yet to be assessed annually. Thus, the content and criteria for self-assessment of the ECE quality according to SDG4 are not to be synchronized and consistent with the content and criteria for assessing the ECE quality according to the education quality accreditation framework for ECE facilities. Some contents, criteria, and indicators must be included in the local self-assessment process.

Organizational self-assessment process

According to the opinion of 96.6% of managers, the process of self-assessment of the quality of early childhood education facilities is one of 3 steps in the process of recognizing national standard schools implemented according to Decision No. 2108/QĐ-BGDĐT dated June 24, 2021, of the Ministry of Education and Training on the announcement of a set of standardized administrative procedures within the scope and management functions of the Ministry of Education and Training (procedure code 1.000715 - Field of educational quality accreditation) (Minister of Education and Training, 2021). The process of implementing self-assessment of the quality of early childhood education at early childhood education facilities includes five steps:

- Step 1: The principal establishes a self-assessment council;
- Step 2: Plan and organize self-assessment activities;
- Step 3: Council members collect, process, and analyze evidence;
- Step 4: Evaluate the levels achieved according to each criterion, advise the principal on measures to maintain and improve the quality of school activities;
- Step 5: Supplement, complete, and publish the self-assessment report.

At the provincial and district levels, self-assessment of the quality of local education in general and assessment of the quality of early childhood education, in particular, has not been carried out, so there is no specific process for self-assessment of the quality of early childhood education at the provincial and district levels. The Provincial and District People's Committees annually prepare reports on the local socio-economic situation. Subordinate units, including the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Education and Training, compile statistics and report some data on preschool education according to management requirements.

Subjects participating in the evaluation

Subjects collected and processed data to evaluate the current quality of ECE facilities mainly include the Board of Directors, professional team leaders, and representatives of teachers of each class. External assessment experts and other subjects hardly participate in collecting and processing data to self-assess the quality of ECE facilities (Figure2).

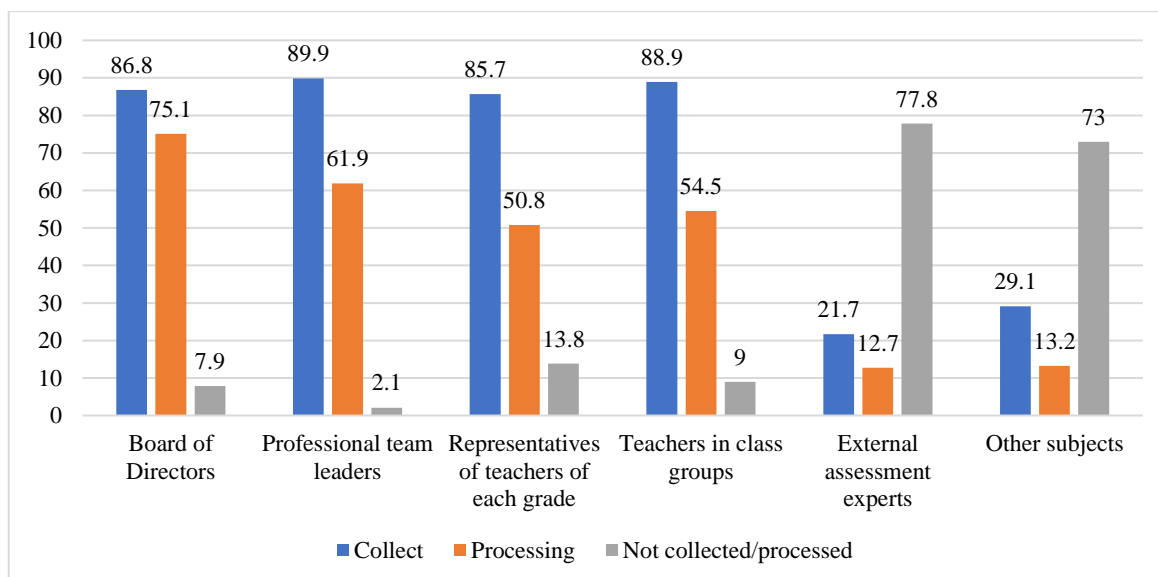


Figure 2. Subjects collecting and processing data to assess the quality at ECE facilities

In addition, we also interviewed parents about their participation in assessing the quality of ECE facilities. As a result, some contents in which many parents participate include: (1) Organizing child care and education activities; (2) Nutrition and health care outcomes; (3) Educational results; (4) Coordination between the representative board, teachers and parents. Parents in the provinces participating in the assessment vary widely. Most young parents rarely participate in content related to the school, administrators, teachers, and staff, such as strategic directions for school development, school organizational structure, administrative and management departments, etc. The parent group discussion in Vinh Phuc, Nghe An, and Can Tho provides further evidence that parents hardly participate in evaluating the quality of early childhood education, except for the content approved by the parents as school requests include providing information about children at home or participating in evaluating some content during the education quality accreditation process or evaluate the level of satisfaction of parents with the capacity to organize care and education, the interaction and communication of teachers with children and parents, and the results in some non - public ECE facilities. Other parents were not involved in the self-assessing process in the remaining facilities.

Evaluation tools and means

The types of tools used at ECE facilities in descending order are:

- Questionnaires for relevant assessed subjects (accounting for 81.5%) and document templates;
- Evaluation results report templates, data forms, evaluation criteria, ratings, etc. (accounting for 79.4%).
- Recording results of child assessment (accounting for 79.0%).
- Documents guiding self-assessment and instructions on using assessment tools (accounting for 75.8%).

Some tools are rarely used by GSMN facilities, such as Software for storing, analyzing, and processing data... (accounting for 59.1%) and discussion and interview tools (accounting for 54.4%).

Managers and teachers use the tools given in similar ways. However, parents only use a few tools related to children, such as Profile forms, assessment results report forms, digital form materials, evaluation criteria, and grading... Questionnaire for relevant assessed subjects; Recording results of child assessment.

Group discussions and depth interviews with managers at the Department, Division, and preschool levels and representatives of the commune People's Committee revealed that, in reality, there is no separate set of tools; some indicators are assessed according to the criteria. Decision No. 681/QĐ-TTg is used by ECE facilities to statistically report and update through the Industry Database software at the beginning and end of each school year.

The types of tools that have been used to self-assessing the quality of ECE facilities are listed in the chart below:

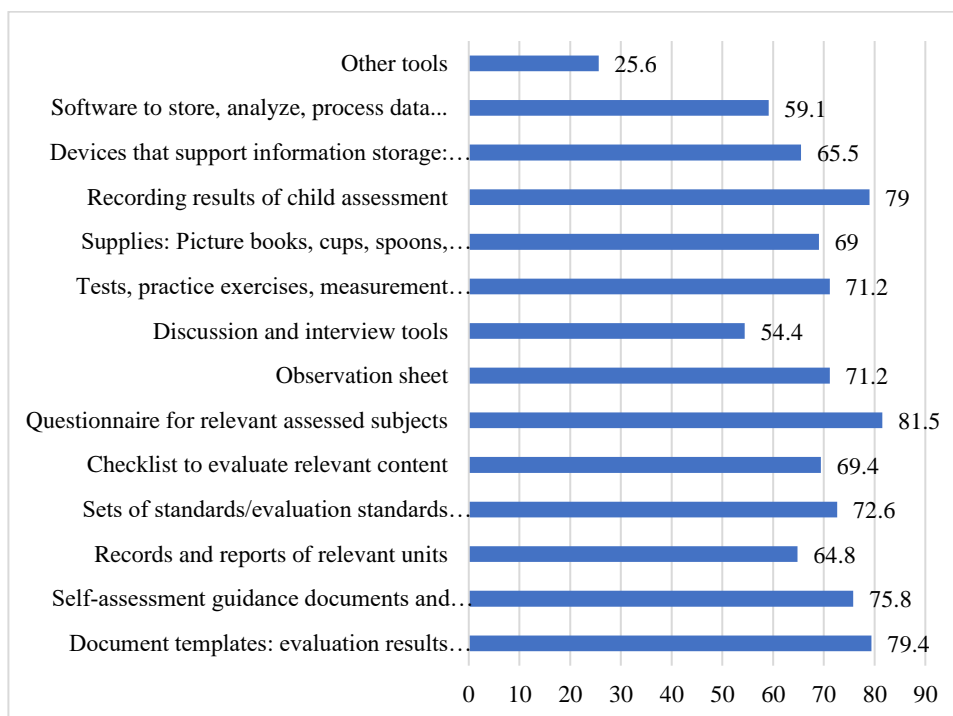


Figure 3. Type of tool used to self-assessing the quality at ECE facilities

Managers and early childhood teachers who responded to questionnaires and group discussions were given tools for self-assessing the quality at ECE facilities and localities have the consensus was that most of them were provided by superiors (accounting for 76.5%). Administrators and teachers jointly develop a few tools, such as exercises and pictures (accounting for 59.4%). The number of tools developed by the school's Board of Directors and referenced by the school from other units is smaller (36.4% and 31%); Most ECE facilities do not hire outside experts to develop tools (only 2.7% of ECE facilities hire experts to develop assessment tools) (Figure 4).

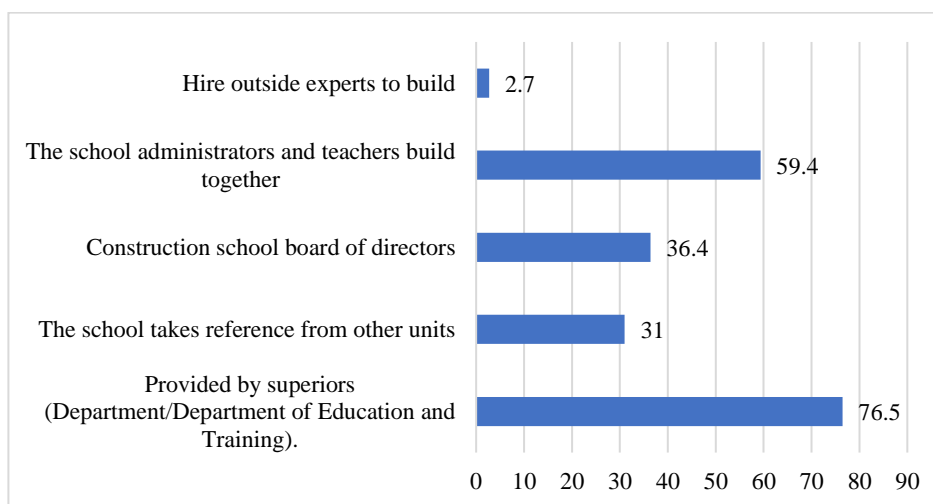


Figure 4. Source of tools for assessing the quality at ECE facilities

Frequency of self-assessment of early childhood education quality

ECE facilities are evaluated on a cyclical basis once or twice a year. The number of facilities evaluated three times/year or every 2-5 years is small (less than 10%) (Figure 5).

The frequency of evaluation of ECE facilities in urban and rural areas, public and non-public, and ECE facilities in the three provinces participating in the survey is quite similar. However, according to direct surveys, non-public facilities only evaluate the quality of ECE facilities according to circulars regulating the organization and operation of non-public ECE facilities and early childhood charters, no applying the criteria for quality accreditation of ECE facilities according to Circular 19/2018/TT-BGDĐT.

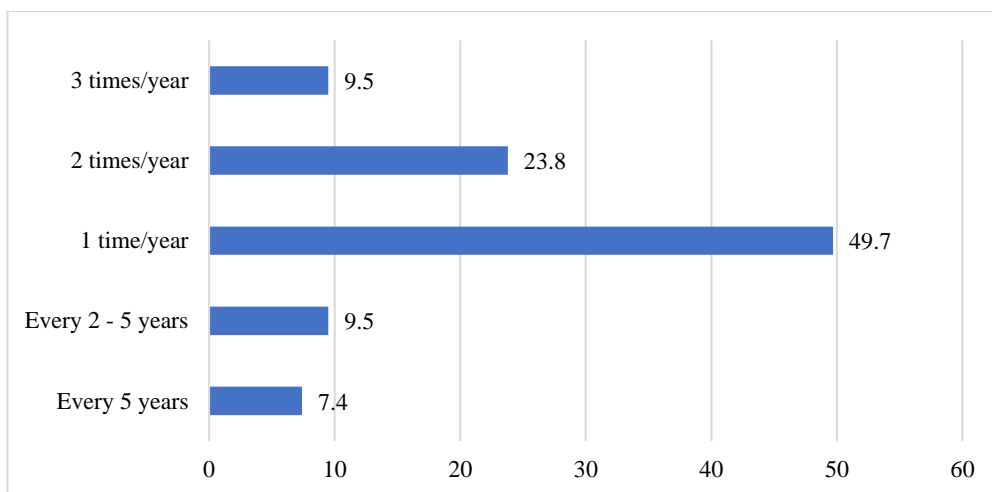


Figure 5. Frequency of self-assessment of the ECE quality

Using the self-assessing results.

According to the opinions of managers participating in the survey, the purposes of using the self-assessing results of the quality at ECE facilities (ranked in descending order) include:

- + Make plans to improve quality, maintain, and enhance the quality of child care and education activities.
- + Determine the level of ECE quality accreditation, adjusting according to the quality accreditation framework so that state management agencies can evaluate and recognize early childhoods that meet educational quality accreditation/national standards.
- + Encourage investment and mobilize resources for education, creating conditions to ensure schools continuously improve the quality and effectiveness of education.
- + Determine the level of meeting educational goals in each stage.
- + Publicly notify state management agencies about the school's current educational quality status.
- + Inform parents about assessment results

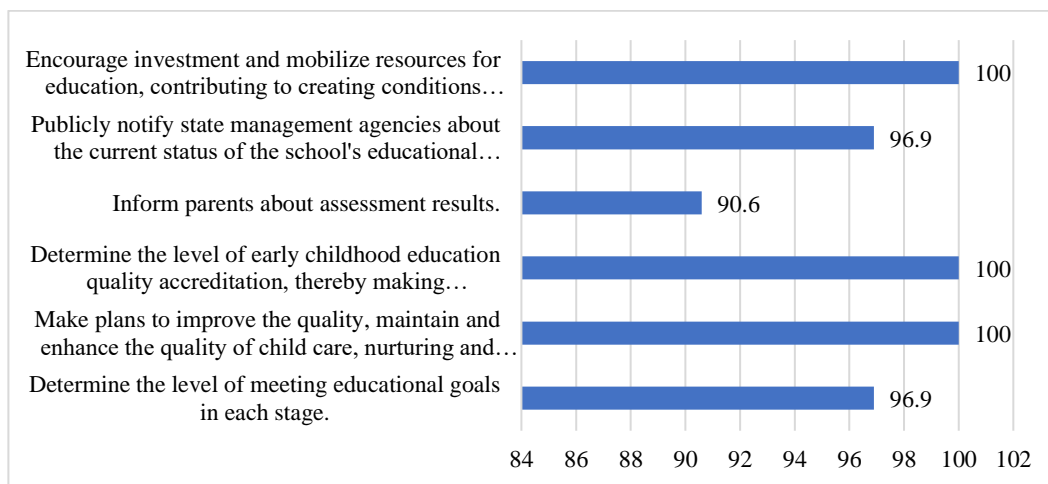


Figure 6. Purpose of using the results of self-assessing the quality at ECE facilities

Advantages and disadvantages in carrying out self-assessment of the quality of early childhood education at the local level according to SDG4

Advantages

Based on regulatory documents of the Government, the Ministry of Education and Training, the People's Committees of provinces, Departments, and Offices of Education and Training have issued several documents directing the implementation of sustainable development goals in the education sector in which, Sustainable development goals are integrated into target programs, plans, projects for ECE development, universalization work.

Disadvantages

Self-assessment at the provincial/district/commune and ward levels has not become a regular activity; only when ECE facilities register for education quality accreditation do they have plans to coordinate with agencies and social organizations that participate in evaluation.

There is not a nationally unified toolkit to support self-assessment of local ECE quality according to SDG4. SDGs and solutions are being implemented in the update step of the development orientations of provinces

and cities, including resolutions, master plans, or plans for socio-economic development in the new period, leading to difficulties in mobilizing resources to meet the needs of implementing as well as evaluating the ECE quality according to current educational goals and in the coming years.

- Reasons

The COVID-19 pandemic occurred in 2 years (2020, 2021), negatively impacting the socio-economic development process in general and the progress of implementing SDGs. Many goals in the Roadmap to 2025 and 2030 have yet to be implemented at the local level or have been implemented but only at the level of propaganda and awareness raising, with no instructions or direction for ECE quality assessment, leads to unspecific implementation results.

Discussion

The survey results have shown that the Vietnamese government has issued SDG4 with a roadmap and implementation plan along with tracking and monitoring indicators at the national level and in the education sector. Provinces advised management levels to issue decisions accompanied by implementation plans or ECE development projects incorporating sustainable development indicators as goals to strive for until 2030, with a vision to 2045 based on the national action plan and the sectors. However, there are no regulations or instructions for self-assessment of progress in achieving the goals, as well as there are no unified regulars, guidelines, and tools to support ECE facilities and management units at district and province levels to carry out ECE quality self-assessment according to SDG 4 in localities. The current survey results also show that only ECE facilities participating in the national ECE quality accreditation system self-assess the quality of education at their establishments every 2 - 5 years with the set of criteria and indicators are not to be consistent and synchronized with the set of criteria and indicators to evaluate the ECE quality according to SDG4, leading to the goals and indicators of SDG4 not being evaluated. At the provincial and district levels, annual reports are made on the local socio-economic and development situation, including information on ECE based on data collected indirectly from reporting sources and aggregated by the unit; collecting data, analysis, and assessing based on evidence for SDG4 is not carried out. From the above facts, the study raises several discussion issues as follows:

- (1) The Government, Ministry of Education and Training, and provincial and district management levels issue regulations and guidance documents on assessing the quality of local ECE in detail for each subject and management level that participate in the evaluation. Especially for the process, time, methods, and tools, how to carry out data collection, analysis, and making accurate judgments to serve planning to improve ECE quality in each local.
- (2) Researching and developing a set of criteria and indicators to self-assess the ECE quality. In particular, the content and evaluation criteria must ensure compatibility between the standards and criteria in the ECE quality assessment model and the goals of ECE quality according to SDG4. Thus, the assessment results can be compared, and conclusions can be drawn about the level of implementation and progress in achieving sustainable development goals. The set of criteria and indicators needs general criteria and indicators that allow localities to choose or adjust according to local practice.
- (3) Developing a simple, easy toolkit with guidelines to use for subjects participating in the assessment.

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