

Multi-Level, Multi-Stakeholder Frameworks for Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Accountability

Guidelines for use



QAMA

QUALITY ASSURANCE, MONITORING
AND ACCOUNTABILITY



EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

MULTI-LEVEL, MULTI-STAKEHOLDER FRAMEWORKS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE, MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Guidelines for use



The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) is an independent and self-governing organisation. EASNIE is co-funded by the ministries of education in its member countries and by the European Commission via an operating grant within the European Union (EU) education programme.



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the European Commission can be held responsible for them.

The views expressed by any individual in this document do not necessarily represent the official views of EASNIE, its member countries or the European Commission.

© European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education 2025

Editors: Diana Murdoch and Ruta Svarinskaite

This publication is an open-access resource. This means you are free to access, use and disseminate it with appropriate credit to the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. Please refer to EASNIE's Open Access Policy for more information: www.european-agency.org/open-access-policy.

You may cite this publication as follows: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2025. *Multi-Level, Multi-Stakeholder Frameworks for Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Accountability: Guidelines for use*. (D. Murdoch and R. Svarinskaite, eds.). Odense, Denmark



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

You may not modify or translate this publication without EASNIE's approval.

With a view to greater accessibility, this report is available in accessible electronic format on EASNIE's website: www.european-agency.org

ISBN: 978-87-7599-132-7 (Electronic)

Secretariat

Østre Stationsvej 33
DK-5000 Odense C Denmark
Tel.: +45 64 41 00 20
secretariat@european-agency.org

Brussels Office

Rue Montoyer 21
BE-1000 Brussels Belgium
Tel.: +32 2 213 62 80
brussels.office@european-agency.org



CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION TO THE THEMATIC COUNTRY CLUSTER ACTIVITIES	6
OVERVIEW OF THE GUIDELINES	7
RATIONALE AND AIM OF A MULTI-LEVEL, MULTI-STAKEHOLDER QUALITY ASSURANCE, MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK	9
Key messages from the TCCA Literature Review	9
PROPOSED USES OF THE QAMA FRAMEWORK	11
1. To map the whole system of quality assurance, monitoring and accountability	11
2. To focus on more detailed mapping of aspects of the whole system	12
3. To establish the extent and effectiveness of collaboration across different sectors, levels, organisations or stakeholders within the education system	12
4. To establish the extent and effectiveness of collaboration with sectors outside education, within and between system levels	12
5. To support on-going monitoring and evaluation across and within the system to inform system improvement	12
USING THE FRAMEWORK: REFLECTIONS AND EXAMPLES FROM QAMA COUNTRIES	13
Reflections from QAMA countries on using the framework	13
Examples from QAMA countries	16
<i>Aim 1: To map the whole system of quality assurance, monitoring and accountability</i>	16
<i>Aim 2: To focus on more detailed mapping of aspects of the whole system</i>	17
<i>Aim 3: To establish the extent and effectiveness of collaboration across different sectors, levels, organisations or stakeholders within the education system</i>	18
<i>Aim 4: To establish the extent and effectiveness of collaboration with sectors outside education, within and between system levels</i>	23
<i>Aim 5: To support on-going monitoring and evaluation across and within the system to inform system improvement</i>	24
CONCLUSIONS	27
THE QAMA TREE	29
REFERENCES	31
ANNEX – BACKGROUND PAPER: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FRAMEWORK	33



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Six country groups, or ‘clusters’, involving the majority of member countries from the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE), participated in cycle 1 of the [Thematic Country Cluster Activities](#) (TCCA) from early 2024 to mid-2026. The TCCA were designed to transition from broad thematic projects with EASNIE member countries, to more focused clusters of countries, allowing for flexible partnership and tailored support for policy development.

The clusters concentrated on three thematic areas: monitoring and evaluation; cross-sector collaboration; and the development of frameworks for quality assurance, monitoring and accountability.

This Guidelines document provides information on the work of the Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Accountability ([QAMA](#)) cluster, and forms part of a suite of linked resources and a set of outcomes from the QAMA work. The Guidelines have been developed to accompany the *Multi-Level, Multi-Stakeholder Frameworks for Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Accountability: [Background and development](#)* report (EASNIE, 2025) as an output from QAMA’s meetings and activities during TCCA cycle 1.

There were six countries in the QAMA cluster: Austria, Belgium (Flemish community), Greece, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom (Northern Ireland). Their task was to work on the structure of the draft multi-level, multi-stakeholder quality assurance, monitoring and accountability framework presented in the [TCCA Literature Review](#) (EASNIE, 2024). This included discussing the importance and the placement of the different sections within the whole, the flow of information between the parts, and making any necessary changes to the structure or to individual sections.

The aim of a multi-level, multi-stakeholder framework is to support the TCCA work and the development and implementation of an integrated set of policies and procedures in a quality assurance cycle. These policies and procedures consistently build on each other to realise continuous improvement in inclusive education systems.

During the course of QAMA work, the framework was developed into a flexible tool, intended to be adaptable to countries and contexts with different systems and forms of governance. These Guidelines aim to show how policy-makers can use the QAMA framework to explore their systems and approaches to quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation.

There are five main uses proposed for the framework, with additional suggestions for further uses within inclusive education systems and in collaboration with other sectors that interact with or impact on education.

The main proposed uses are:

- To map the whole system of quality assurance, monitoring and accountability
- To focus on more detailed mapping of aspects of the whole system
- To establish the extent and effectiveness of collaboration across different sectors, levels, organisations or stakeholders within the education system



- To establish the extent and effectiveness of collaboration with sectors outside education, within and between system levels
- To support on-going monitoring and evaluation across and within the system to inform system improvement.

Further suggested uses include:

- To identify all stakeholder groups and how to include them in decision-making processes, to ensure shared responsibility and transparency in accountability
- To identify barriers to sharing information in relation to equity, diversity and intersectionality, and the impact on policy implementation for some groups, in relation to equity in access
- For data collection, analysis and use at school level, and to understand the extent of, or barriers to, the impact on stakeholders and policy-makers at regional or national levels
- For capacity building and to understand the effectiveness of opportunities from inter-level learning and collaboration, sharing the impact of the formal continuous professional development system
- To understand the flow of information and findings from data collection in relation to well-being, equity, opportunity and outcomes across different groups, to influence policy for change, improvement and access for marginalised and less visible groups
- To establish unified cross-sectoral approaches within education to develop and implement quality indicators against agreed targets
- To identify areas of challenge or flashpoints that may be encountered in the system.

The Guidelines include the QAMA cluster countries' reflections on and examples of the uses and applications of the framework in relation to their own policy, legislation and practice. These examples indicate the processes used within different contexts, with different systems of governance and with different stakeholders. They also indicate where there may be gaps in quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation processes in some aspects of the education system, or barriers to the effective sharing and use of information to inform progress.

The [QAMA Tree framework](#) enables information for improvement at all levels and capacity building to be integrated into the system, through:

- collaboration between all sectors and actors;
- knowledge exchange and inter-level learning;
- open dialogue;
- formative reflection and feedback processes.

Uses of the framework are not limited to education systems. It may also be applicable to sectors that interact with education, or which operate outside education but impact on it at national, regional, local or school levels.



INTRODUCTION TO THE THEMATIC COUNTRY CLUSTER ACTIVITIES

Six groups, or ‘clusters’, of European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) member countries participated in the [Thematic Country Cluster Activities](#) (TCCA) from early 2024 to mid-2026. The TCCA were designed to transition from broad thematic projects with EASNIE member countries, to more focused clusters of countries, allowing for flexible partnership and tailored support for policy development.

Six country clusters were established, each under the guidance and support of EASNIE team members. These clusters concentrated on three thematic areas: monitoring and evaluation; cross-sector collaboration; and developing frameworks for quality assurance, monitoring and accountability. The activities were organised according to country priorities and placed a strong emphasis on peer learning and experience exchange, with collaborative work forming a core element.

This document provides information on the work of the Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Accountability (QAMA) cluster, and is part of a suite of linked resources, available on the [QAMA activity web area](#).



OVERVIEW OF THE GUIDELINES

These Guidelines have been developed to accompany the *Multi-Level, Multi-Stakeholder Frameworks for Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Accountability: [Background and development](#)* report (EASNIE, 2025) as an output from the QAMA meetings and activities during TCCA cycle 1. The QAMA countries worked collaboratively to discuss and decide on the format and content of these Guidelines through a series of meetings and activities from their own contexts and practices.

This cluster comprised six countries: [Austria](#), [Belgium \(Flemish community\)](#), [Greece](#), [Italy](#), [Spain](#) and [United Kingdom \(Northern Ireland\)](#). The countries have different positions on the parameter of exclusionary system structures and different systems of governance, contexts and approaches to inclusive education. These differences enabled rich discussions to develop around the processes inherent within the draft frameworks, addressing issues of challenge, as well as strengths and gaps in existing systems of quality assurance, monitoring and accountability.

The task of the QAMA cluster was to work on the structure of the draft multi-level, multi-stakeholder quality assurance, monitoring and accountability framework presented in the TCCA Literature Review (EASNIE, 2024). This included discussing the importance and the placement of the different sections within the whole, the flow of information between the parts, and making any necessary changes to the structure or to individual sections.

The QAMA countries illustrated different aspects of the framework by providing a range of examples and reflections from their own contexts of how their policy or practice drew on or interacted with the framework. The examples indicate the processes used within different contexts, with different systems of governance and with different stakeholders. These Guidelines include [examples of use and some country reflections](#) around the framework.

The framework is a flexible tool, which can adapt to different systems, contexts and forms of governance, enabling policy-makers and other stakeholders to use it as needed.

These Guidelines aim to show how policy-makers can use the framework to explore their systems and approaches to quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation. The proposed uses are supported by international examples from EASNIE countries. As the countries have different systems and approaches to inclusive education, these examples indicate the adaptability of the framework, and some of the opportunities it offers for system exploration.

These Guidelines do not go into detail about the background and evidence for the framework's structure and format. The *Background and development* report provides more detail about these aspects, indicating the structure and format the QAMA countries used in discussions during TCCA cycle 1 (EASNIE, 2025).

The QAMA work resulted in a redesigned framework, the [QAMA Tree](#). This incorporates the elements from the draft framework in the TCCA Literature Review but presents them in a different way and with additional features, for greater clarity. Most importantly, this newer version places learners at the centre and as the focus of continuous improvement in inclusive education systems.



The *Background and development* report presents the **framework** in full and discusses its development, structure and processes in greater detail (EASNIE, 2025). A series of [further QAMA outputs](#) explore some aspects and processes within the framework in more detail.

These Guidelines include four sections, followed by the [QAMA Tree](#) and an [Annex](#):

- [Rationale and aim](#) of a multi-level, multi-stakeholder quality assurance, monitoring and accountability framework
- [Proposed uses](#) of the QAMA framework
- [Using the framework: reflections](#) and [examples](#) from QAMA countries
- [Conclusions](#).



RATIONALE AND AIM OF A MULTI-LEVEL, MULTI-STAKEHOLDER QUALITY ASSURANCE, MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

The TCCA Literature Review (EASNIE, 2024) concludes with the presentation of a draft framework for a system of continuous improvement. This framework incorporates the main aspects identified as essential to create and sustain an effective and coherent education system. All TCCA cycle 1 processes and outputs contribute towards the development and support of a system that is adaptable to different country contexts and forms of governance.

Key messages from the TCCA Literature Review

- **A multi-level, multi-stakeholder framework is necessary for quality assurance, monitoring and accountability.**
- **International bodies indicate that very few countries have an integrated system for quality assurance, monitoring and accountability.**

The aim of a multi-level, multi-stakeholder framework is to support the TCCA work and the development and implementation of an integrated set of policies and procedures in a quality assurance cycle. These policies and procedures consistently build on each other to realise continuous improvement in inclusive education systems.

To achieve this aim and to be effective, the framework must fulfil these main criteria:

- align with international, European Union (EU)-level and national commitments and EASNIE [key principles](#);
- be built on a fluent dialogue between school- and system-level actors and stakeholders, both internal and external to education;
- be adaptable to different country contexts;
- be applicable to the full range of stakeholders across education and in all other sectors that impact on the provision of high-quality inclusive education for all learners.

The framework's overall purpose is to bring all aspects of the education system into one coherent framework for quality assurance, monitoring and accountability purposes, to inform continuous improvement in inclusive education.

To work towards this broad aim, the QAMA countries addressed the following questions:

- Do all countries agree with the essential elements of a multi-stakeholder quality assurance and accountability framework, as defined in the literature review?
- Which of these elements are currently in place in each country, and to what extent are they effective, in need of development or overlooked?
- How can barriers and gaps be addressed and effective practices shared?



-
- Who are ‘stakeholders’ at different levels, and what processes are needed to establish common goals and indicators?
 - In what ways can countries collaborate to share knowledge and experience in working towards the development of approaches that can be adapted to different education systems?

For a summary overview of the framework’s development, please refer to the QAMA [Background Paper](#) in the Annex.



PROPOSED USES OF THE QAMA FRAMEWORK

Following extensive input from all QAMA countries, including peer learning, study visits, discussions and presentations, five main uses of the framework are proposed. These are discussed in more detail below, and with [examples and reflections from QAMA countries](#). It should be noted, however, that as the framework is a complex, system-wide instrument, countries may use it in other ways. Some additional uses are suggested in the [Conclusions](#).

The framework is presented as a flexible tool, adaptable to different contexts and needs. It is also proposed as graphical communication tool for stakeholders that can be built on in future development, with the later provision of links to the work of other TCCA clusters, and to a range of other resources from EASNIE work and from wider international sources.

The proposed uses for the QAMA framework are:

- To map the whole system of quality assurance, monitoring and accountability
- To focus on more detailed mapping of aspects of the whole system
- To establish the extent and effectiveness of collaboration across different sectors, levels, organisations or stakeholders within the education system
- To establish the extent and effectiveness of collaboration with sectors outside education, within and between system levels
- To support on-going monitoring and evaluation across and within the system to inform system improvement.

1. To map the whole system of quality assurance, monitoring and accountability

Countries can use the framework as a template for a **system mapping tool** to examine their own quality assurance systems, in terms of overall structure, processes and aspects included. This would enable countries to identify areas of strength, as well as gaps or areas where the flow of information may be broken, across sectors and levels or between stakeholders.

A particular strength of this mapping exercise is to **highlight more 'hidden' aspects or barriers** to a coherent, unified system. These might occur in some contexts, for example, where data collection on some learners is not available or is not used to inform overall system improvement or change. The process will also bring to light areas of **challenge or flashpoints** in the system or between sectors and provide clarity about the uses of formative and summative data for different purposes.



2. To focus on more detailed mapping of aspects of the whole system

Framework topics provide opportunities for more **detailed mapping of particular aspects** of the system, such as accountability or data collection, or a **deep dive** into some of the inherent processes, such as formative feedback and reflection or capacity building. This more detailed mapping might follow on from an overall system mapping, where some areas may require greater exploration of structures and processes.

3. To establish the extent and effectiveness of collaboration across different sectors, levels, organisations or stakeholders within the education system

The framework can be used to show **the extent of effective collaboration**, or information sharing, with and between sectors, schools and stakeholders **within the education system**. This can highlight aspects of the quality assurance and accountability system that may act as barriers to equity, or which **support continuous improvement**, for example.

4. To establish the extent and effectiveness of collaboration with sectors outside education, within and between system levels

Used as a whole or in sections, the framework can show **the extent of effective collaboration**, dialogue and information sharing with and between system levels, sectors and stakeholders **beyond** education, but which impact on education. This might include collaboration with health, social justice and welfare, for example, to ensure that the system is integrated and equitable and considers a wider range of factors. The **flow of information** from these sectors beyond education can be incorporated into the framework.

5. To support on-going monitoring and evaluation across and within the system to inform system improvement

The framework can **support monitoring** and evaluation within countries when they establish **on-going procedures** to bring different sectors and processes together over a period of time for continuous improvement.



USING THE FRAMEWORK: REFLECTIONS AND EXAMPLES FROM QAMA COUNTRIES

QAMA countries used the draft framework from the TCCA Literature Review in different ways, to reflect on and explore aspects of the quality assurance and accountability processes and mechanisms within their education systems. This section provides a brief narrative overview of country reflections, followed by some examples of how QAMA countries used aspects of the framework.

Reflections from QAMA countries on using the framework

There were many opportunities for QAMA countries to reflect on different aspects of the framework as a group or internally with their own country colleagues. The reflections relate to topics and areas of development or improvement in quality assurance, monitoring and accountability processes in their own systems.

This section presents some of these reflections and suggests a range of other possible uses for the framework. These are not limited to education systems; they may also apply to sectors that interact with education, or which operate outside education but may impact on it, at national, regional, local or school levels.

Austria

The QAMA framework might offer a valuable source for further policy development regarding the establishment of a comprehensive and coherent quality assurance system with high practicability and usability.

Belgium (Flemish community)

The framework helps to reflect on how to build a shared vision and a shared understanding to work towards more inclusive education at different levels. It provides supports in jointly interpreting the available data and understanding how these insights indicate ways to strengthen inclusion.

Because schools and support teachers approach situations from different perspectives, each actor sees things differently. The framework shows how important it is to exchange these views and give clear meaning to the words that are used.

The framework also makes a complex process more accessible. By making it possible to zoom in on specific elements of collaboration and practice, it helps to break complexity down into manageable parts and focus on what truly matters.



In addition, it encourages users to consider how to make things more objective by using data and monitoring, also at local and school levels. Overall, the framework contributes to stronger collaboration, greater objectivity and a clearer grasp of a challenging process.

Italy

Italy has a system of school inclusion that is considered advanced, thanks to legislation that, since the 1970s, has paved the way for the abolition of special classes and led to the awareness that inclusion is something that concerns everyone. Inclusion does not only concern learners with special educational needs, nor does it only concern support teachers, but every learner and every teacher. Inclusion can only be achieved if all members of the school community contribute to its implementation, including support staff and management.

However, in Italy, it is necessary to recognise that there is still a long way to go in mastering the tools needed to assess the quality of school inclusion, which derives from validated monitoring activities that should be shared and recognised at national level and involve all stakeholders.

Assessing quality means moving away from a logic based solely on cold quantitative data and embracing a methodology that evaluates results based on the achievement of set objectives, while being aware of the resources that have been deployed to achieve those objectives.

Quality educational inclusion is a prerequisite for long-term social inclusion, which is why the work being done is considered so important.

Spain

The framework provides a valuable basis for reflecting on how monitoring, evaluation and collaboration work in different education systems. It offers a common structure and language that help to interpret data collectively, identify strengths and weaknesses, and better understand where co-ordination, dialogue or feedback loops can be strengthened to support continuous improvement.

By making complex processes more accessible, the framework allows a focus on specific elements – such as multi-level collaboration, stakeholder engagement or data usage – without losing sight of the system as a whole. It helps to highlight areas that are working effectively, as well as areas that may be fragmented or less visible.

Overall, the framework offers significant opportunities to establish or strengthen comprehensive and coherent quality assurance systems. Its structure provides a useful and adaptable basis for supporting multi-level governance, shared



responsibility and evidence-based decision-making, making it a valuable tool for promoting more co-ordinated, inclusive and sustainable approaches to monitoring, evaluation and accountability.



Examples from QAMA countries

Aim 1: To map the whole system of quality assurance, monitoring and accountability



Spain: Mapping a decentralised governance model

Spain has a complex and multi-level system of evaluation and accountability, reflecting its decentralised governance model. The use of the QAMA framework proved valuable in providing a coherent overview of the multiple actors, processes and data flows involved, and in identifying both areas of strength and aspects that require further development to ensure coherence across levels and sectors.

The Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December, amending the Organic Law of Education (LOMLOE) establishes the principles of quality, transparency and accountability within non-university education. It defines responsibilities for the evaluation of schools, external assessments and mechanisms for public accountability. The law explicitly promotes equity and inclusion as guiding principles and mandates regular evaluation and improvement of educational provision.

Evaluation mechanisms cover multiple dimensions. These include learner outcomes and competencies through national and international assessments, contextual factors such as resource allocation and equity indicators, processes and operations such as curriculum implementation, leadership and organisational practices, equity and inclusion, analysing data by socio-economic background, gender and territory.

Applying the QAMA framework made it possible to visualise how the different components of Spain's system interact across national, regional and school levels. It highlighted clear strengths, such as:

- a comprehensive legal and policy foundation for evaluation and accountability;
- multiple levels of oversight ensuring checks and balances;
- a [data infrastructure](#) providing transparency and comparability;
- a systemic focus on equity, supported by disaggregated data and national targets.

However, it also revealed some challenges, consistent with the framework principles relating to the effectiveness of measures to promote inclusive education and attention to diversity proposed by the LOMLOE and procedures that measure school success.

Spain is currently developing a School Vulnerability Index, designed to strengthen data-driven equity policies and resource allocation. This initiative can reflect the QAMA framework's emphasis on using evaluation results for system-wide improvement and supports greater coherence between policy design, monitoring and inclusive educational outcomes.



Aim 2: To focus on more detailed mapping of aspects of the whole system



Belgium (Flemish community): Using the framework to reflect on the process to evolve towards 'schools for all' in 2040

Sometimes partners assume that inclusion should be implemented from the outside. However, inclusion only works when it is built on shared responsibility. Belgium's Flemish community is investing in developing a common vision. A policy process is in place to evolve towards a more inclusive education system, with 'schools for all' in 2040. A plan –with a vision, a strategy and a timeline with concrete measures – has been developed and is discussed in a participatory process with all stakeholders involved. The plan consists of nine key principles to work towards. Together with all stakeholders, a system change is being prepared and will be gradually executed.

The QAMA framework focuses not only on creating shared vision and values, but on ensuring attention to strategy. The government will further translate the nine principles into concrete actions to work towards system change.

This approach can also be applied within schools, together with other partners, enabling them to take joint responsibility and accountability. A shared strategy naturally leads to shared ownership and accountability. The framework helps by offering a comprehensive view.

The [policy plan for the evolution towards 'schools for all' in 2040](#) is available in English and Dutch.



Spain: Using the framework to generate ideas to strengthen the Strategic Plan for Inclusive Education by highlighting its fundamental elements

The Strategic Plan for Inclusive Education is conceived as a comprehensive framework for action that aims to consolidate an inclusive, equitable and high-quality education system throughout Spain.

With this in mind, elements of the framework will be further developed in plans that build on this strategic plan.

Consider the fundamental elements of the framework:

- System vision and goals – does the plan state inclusion as a core value?
- Legislation/policy – does the Education Act support inclusion?
- Family and community engagement – are parents, learners and communities actively involved?



Check whether the elements of the framework are reflected in the general objectives and their development:

- Curriculum and pedagogy
- Teacher training and professional development
- Accessibility and resources
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Aim 3: To establish the extent and effectiveness of collaboration across different sectors, levels, organisations or stakeholders *within* the education system



Austria: Using the framework to highlight gaps

There is no obligation for learners with special educational needs (SEN) to take part in quality assessment procedures in the current quality management system for schools (QMS). The current QMS does not address the topic of inclusion. Using the framework can increase knowledge and understanding of this gap among all stakeholders across the education system.

Stakeholders currently involved in the education system's QMS (excluding learners with SEN and special schools) are:

- School management
- School quality co-ordinators
- Teachers and teaching teams
- Regional quality co-ordinators
- School quality managers.

Regional teams or specialist staff engage in QMS work.

University colleges of teacher education are responsible for QMS-specific further education and training. QMS-specific teacher training is the responsibility of the universities and university colleges of teacher education within their respective areas of competence.

School development advisors at the universities of teacher education support schools in their development.

Overall co-ordination of QMS is the responsibility of Department III/5 – Quality Development and Assurance at the Federal Ministry of Education.



Belgium (Flemish community): The framework offers a way to reflect on where the focus of collaboration should be, helping partners develop a shared sense of responsibility

In Belgium (Flemish community), the Learning Support Model is established by decree. This decree is designed to provide high-quality education and support for all learners, including those with special educational needs. The decree explicitly stipulates that schools are required to engage in structured consultation with the Pupil Guidance Centre, the Pedagogical Guidance Service and the Learning Support Centre. These partners, in collaboration with the school, contribute to developing and implementing the learner guidance policy.

The purpose of these consultations is to clarify the respective roles of all parties, identify needs and ensure the alignment of responsibilities. This process guarantees high-quality learner guidance and fosters a culture of shared responsibility. The framework draws attention to monitoring, evaluation and data analysis. Within the collaboration, it is important to reflect on the types of data each party holds – as this data is not always shared, it can be valuable to bring to the joint discussions. Joint reflection fosters mutual understanding and enables the partners to draw conclusions based on the data. In this way, the process helps to guide and steer the collaboration.

Shared responsibility can also be achieved by ensuring that the respective quality frameworks explicitly refer to and align with one another. Each partner has its own quality framework: the Reference Framework for Educational Quality for schools, the framework for the Pupil Guidance Centres, and the framework for the Learning Support Centres. It is essential that these frameworks are aligned and interconnected. The education inspectorate explicitly assesses the quality of collaboration with all relevant partners.

On the one hand, the required structured consultations facilitate shared responsibility and effective co-ordination. On the other hand, inspections reinforce the principle that the quality of education and learner guidance depends on the active involvement of all partners. In this way, the system works towards sustainable and shared responsibility for educational quality.



Greece: Example of how the elements of the framework are already in place

The [MySchool platform](#) has been designed to operate on a daily basis. MySchool is an information system designed to manage school data in Greece, including learner records, attendance and grades. Its implementation aims to streamline administrative processes and improve educational outcomes. It also facilitates communication between teachers, learners and parents.

MySchool offers various features, such as attendance tracking, grade management, timetable scheduling and reporting tools. These features are designed to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of school administration. It also provides valuable statistical data that is used to monitor the effectiveness of educational policies and appropriate resource distribution.



Italy: Using the framework to establish collaboration in data collection across the education system for equity, inclusion and improvement

At national level, the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research ([MiM](#)) uses data on learners with disabilities in the following ways:

1. Organisation of classes and staffing

Example: Data on the number of learners with disabilities in a single school is used to determine staffing levels and the number of support teachers needed to facilitate the inclusion process.

2. Access to teaching tools and technologies

Example: MiM collects data to finance National Operational Plan (PON) projects or specific funds to equip schools with compensatory tools (software, digital devices, technological aids). An institution with a high number of learners with visual impairments may receive grants for Braille printers or tactile displays.

3. Monitoring and evaluation of school policies

Example: The data is used to draw up the Annual Report on School Inclusion (for example, with the Italian National Institute of Statistics – ISTAT – and the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and Training System – INVALSI).

The number of learners with disabilities participating in INVALSI tests and the compensatory tools they use are analysed to assess the effectiveness of inclusive measures.



4. Allocation of funds

Example: MiM uses the data to distribute resources from the Fund for the Inclusion of Learners with Disabilities.

Schools report the number of learners with an official decision of SEN and, on this basis, receive grants for communication assistants, school transport or integrative activities.



Spain: Using the framework to provide structure to evaluate current mechanisms

Spain's decentralised education system operates through multi-level governance, with shared responsibilities among national, regional and local authorities. This complexity requires strong mechanisms for collaboration, co-ordination and shared accountability. Applying the QAMA framework provided a structured lens to picture consolidated mechanisms of co-operation and less visible areas.

Spain has institutionalised collaboration through formal bodies and procedures that promote inclusive decision-making and ensure stakeholder participation at all governance levels. The Sectorial Conference on Education, the State School Council, the Territorial Cooperation Programmes and the Forum for the Educational Inclusion of Students with Disabilities exemplify the principles of transparency, participation and shared responsibility embedded in the framework.

The framework's emphasis on multi-level dialogue, coherence and shared accountability has been particularly useful for:

- identifying effective examples of shared responsibility that could be scaled across regions;
- revealing variations in collaboration between territories or groups of actors that were not previously apparent;
- supporting reflection on how information and learning circulate between governance levels.



United Kingdom (Northern Ireland): Using the framework to explore similarities and differences with current practice

The SEN [Reform Agenda](#) and [Delivery Plan](#) identify collaboration across the education system as a foundational principle for successful reform. They outline the roles of key delivery partners, including the Department of Education, Education



Authority, Boards of Governors, school leaders and educators in delivering inclusive, learner-centred support.

Structured around four strategic pillars (Right Support, Right People, Right Place and Right Time), the Plan sets out over 120 actions to be implemented through co-ordinated efforts across system levels. This aims to strengthen school-level leadership and ensure consistent communication with the Education Authority and the Department of Education, enhancing coherence and accountability.

In line with the QAMA framework, the [SEN Policy Statement](#) clarifies governance arrangements and expectations for shared responsibility. It emphasises the importance of coherent planning, professional development and inclusive practice as collective responsibilities across the system.

A key element of the QAMA framework is the visibility of stakeholders and stakeholder voices. Aligning with this, engagement is embedded throughout the SEN Reform Agenda. Developing the [Special Educational Needs/Disability \(SEN/D\) Reform Outcomes Framework \(2025–2030\)](#) involved extensive consultation with parents, carers, educators and service providers. This demonstrates (as per the QAMA framework) a shared vision and shared understanding between all stakeholders, as well as the collective responsibility of all stakeholders in contributing to improved outcomes for learners with SEN. This participatory approach ensures that reform is informed by lived experience and supports continuous improvement through feedback mechanisms.

These approaches reflect the principles of the QAMA framework, which emphasise:

- fluent dialogue between school and system-level actors;
- shared responsibility across stakeholders;
- inclusive governance structures that support continuous improvement.

When evaluating the SEN Reform Agenda against the QAMA framework, challenges remain in embedding collaborative practices consistently across all schools and regions, including:

- aligning school-level initiatives with strategic goals;
- building capacity for collaborative planning and data use;
- sustaining engagement and accountability across diverse stakeholders.

Nonetheless, the SEN Reform Agenda represents a significant step toward a more integrated and collaborative education system, in line with the QAMA framework's emphasis on system coherence, multi-level engagement and inclusive accountability.



Aim 4: To establish the extent and effectiveness of collaboration with sectors *outside* education, within and between system levels



Austria: Clear evidence of the lack of inter-sectoral collaboration

Using the framework showed that collaboration between sectors outside education was not formally established.



Italy: Examples of data sharing between services/ministries

MiM has made the Information System of the Ministry of Education (SIDI) available, which is the central platform for consulting:

- learner master data;
- diagnosis and official decisions of SEN/disability;
- frequencies, grades, transitions from one grade to another;
- integration with the health system (such as digital individual education plans provided for by Ministerial Decree 182/2020).

For example, the experimental (2023–2025) learner electronic file within SIDI allows educational, health and social data to be shared between school, local health authorities, municipal social services and families.

Regional school offices (USRs) and Territorial Ambit Offices

USRs provide direct support to schools in analysing data, drafting self-evaluation reports and planning inclusive interventions.

Concrete example: The Municipality of Milan, in collaboration with local schools and the Agnelli Foundation, has developed the ‘Equity in the classroom’ project, which monitors educational fragility in neighbourhoods with the highest risk of drop-out. It does this by cross-referencing school data (absences, failures, INVALSI tests), social data (economic indicators, social housing, social reports) and health data.



Spain: Example of alignment and interaction of the framework with internal country developments

Cross-sector collaboration in Spain aims to ensure that education policy and practice are integrated with health, social welfare and community development systems, creating coherent responses to learners’ diverse needs. In line with the objectives of the QAMA framework, these collaborations support a holistic,



equitable and inclusive education system in which learners' well-being and success are shared responsibilities across sectors.

The framework helps raise awareness of the interdependence between education and other public sectors. Its emphasis on dialogue, shared goals and feedback loops aligns with Spain's participatory governance culture.

Spain has developed a range of formal inter-ministerial and inter-institutional mechanisms that exemplify the multi-level and multi-stakeholder structure of the QAMA framework. Key initiatives include, for example:

- the State Consensus for the Improvement of Early Intervention, jointly co-ordinated by the Ministries of Social Rights, Health and Education, which establishes a common national quality framework for early childhood care and inclusion (ages 0–6);
- the School Health Promotion Programme (2024–2028), an agreement between the Ministries of Health and Education to promote healthy, sustainable and inclusive school environments.

The Spanish model shows clear aspects aligned with the QAMA principles of system coherence and shared accountability:

- Improved equity and early intervention, ensuring that social and health factors influencing educational outcomes are addressed collectively
- Enhanced data co-ordination through joint analysis of territorial and sectoral indicators on attendance, well-being and socio-economic vulnerability
- Informed policy-making, where evidence from local and cross-sector initiatives feeds into national strategies for inclusion
- Stronger community partnerships, linking municipalities, schools and social services to promote social cohesion and learner well-being.

Aim 5: To support on-going monitoring and evaluation across and within the system to inform system improvement



Spain: Using the framework to reinforce current practice

Spain's approach strongly reflects the QAMA framework's vision of a multi-level, multi-stakeholder system that prioritises continuous improvement and inclusiveness. The integration of diagnostic and general evaluations, alongside school and teacher appraisal, exemplifies QAMA's emphasis on shared accountability, formative feedback and cross-level communication.

Spain's monitoring and evaluation system, established under Organic Law 3/2020 (LOMLOE), is designed to ensure continuous improvement, transparency and equity across all levels of education. The framework embeds evaluation as a tool for



system-wide reflection and reform, driving innovation and ensuring that all learners have access to high-quality, inclusive education.

Monitoring is underpinned by the State System of Education Indicators (SEIE), which integrates data from national assessments, regional evaluations and school self-evaluation. The SEIE provides a comprehensive set of macro-, meso- and micro-level indicators, enabling both vertical (school to national) and horizontal (across sectors and regions) analysis.

The results of these evaluations are publicly reported and used to inform policy decisions, guide educational planning and promote accountability to society. Data is disaggregated by gender, socio-economic status and territory, among other factors, ensuring that equity considerations are systematically embedded in decision-making.

Key challenges include ensuring coherence and comparability of data across the territories and strengthening the feedback loops between evaluation results and policy implementation. These issues are fully in line with the vision of the QAMA framework, which promotes a coherent, multi-level system based on shared responsibility, evidence-informed dialogue and continuous improvement.



United Kingdom (Northern Ireland): Supporting on-going monitoring and evaluation across and within the system

Northern Ireland's [SEN/D Reform Outcomes Framework \(2025–2030\)](#) embodies the principles of the QAMA framework.

The SEN/D Reform Outcomes Framework was developed as part of the [SEN Reform Agenda](#) and is designed to monitor progress across four strategic outcomes:

- Children with SEN enjoy the benefits of inclusion and have the same opportunities as their peers without SEN.
- Parents and carers are assured and confident in the SEN processes and delivery approach.
- Staff and schools are confident in, and capable of, meeting needs.
- Services are child- and young person-centred, high-quality, timely, effective and efficient.

These outcomes are supported by population indicators and performance measures, enabling both granular and system-wide monitoring and evaluation. The Outcomes Framework is structured to allow at least annual review cycles, fostering adaptive learning and policy refinement.



Outcomes-based accountability approach

The Outcomes Framework is underpinned by outcomes-based accountability, a methodology that shifts the focus from inputs (activity) and outputs, to change and outcomes/impact. At performance accountability level, it asks critical questions, such as:

- How much did we do?
- How well did we do it?
- Is anyone better off?

This approach aligns with the QAMA framework's emphasis on formative feedback, shared responsibility and data-informed improvement. It ensures that monitoring is not merely procedural but purpose-driven, focusing on the lived experiences of learners and families. Most importantly, monitoring data is used and built into governance structures.

Design and integration

The SEN/D Reform Outcomes Framework was designed following extensive stakeholder engagement, including with parents, educators and service providers. It draws on the findings of the End-to-End Review of SEN, the Independent Review of Education, and the Towards Inclusion analysis. These reviews highlighted fragmentation, lack of transparency and inconsistent accountability mechanisms – issues the Outcomes Framework seeks to address.

The Outcomes Framework is embedded within a broader SEN reform agenda, which includes over 120 actions under four key pillars (Right Support, Right People, Right Place and Right Time).

Monitoring and evaluation strategy

The Outcomes Framework supports multi-level monitoring, from classroom practice to strategic policy. It incorporates:

- disaggregated data collection to track equity and inclusion;
- feedback loops between schools, education and health partners, and the Department of Education;
- participatory evaluation involving learners and families.

Challenges remain in embedding the Outcomes Framework fully into practice. These include:

- building data literacy across the system;
- ensuring coherence between different monitoring tools and data systems;
- sustaining political and institutional commitment to long-term reform.

However, the Outcomes Framework represents a significant step towards a coherent, inclusive and accountable education system for learners with SEN, in line with QAMA's vision for continuous improvement through shared responsibility.



CONCLUSIONS

An effective system for continuous improvement should place learners at the centre. All improvement is focused on the experience and outcomes of all learners in the education system.

The QAMA Tree framework enables **information for improvement** at all levels and **capacity building** to be integrated into the system, through:

- collaboration between all sectors and actors;
- knowledge exchange and inter-level learning;
- open dialogue;
- formative reflection and feedback processes.

To be effective, all sectors within education must work together and engage with sectors beyond education. This is particularly important to ensure that system, regional, local and school improvement is equitable and for all learners.

Information for improvement in the education system derives from many processes and is reliant on the open and effective collection, analysis, sharing and use of data. Data sharing across school and regional/national levels enables formative feedback and reflection, to generate and receive information for improvement.

The following provides an indicative list of further potential uses of the framework, at any level, within and outside education, for reflection, exploration, mapping or improvement purposes:

- Identifying all stakeholder groups and how to include them in decision-making processes, to ensure shared responsibility and transparency in accountability
- Identifying barriers to sharing information in relation to equity, diversity and intersectionality, and the impact on policy implementation for some groups, in relation to equity in access
- Data collection, analysis and use at school level, and to understand the extent of, or barriers to, the impact on stakeholders and policy-makers at regional or national levels
- Capacity building and understanding the effectiveness of opportunities from inter-level learning and collaboration, sharing the impact of the formal continuous professional development system
- Understanding the flow of information and findings from data collection in relation to well-being, equity, opportunity and outcomes across different groups, to influence policy for change, improvement and access for marginalised and less visible groups
- Establishing unified cross-sector approaches within education to develop and implement quality indicators against agreed targets



-
- Identifying areas of challenge or flashpoints that may be encountered in the system.

Discussions around the placement, hierarchies and links between processes within the framework were a constant theme throughout the QAMA meetings, reflecting the contexts, needs and priorities of countries with different systems of governance, centralised or de-centralised systems and approaches to inclusive education. The framework's terminology is also a consideration, as this may differ in use and interpretation across countries or jurisdictions.

These on-going discussions are an important aspect of building and developing an effective and coherent system for quality assurance, monitoring and accountability, under a shared vision and where responsibility and accountability are genuinely shared by all stakeholders.



The QAMA Tree

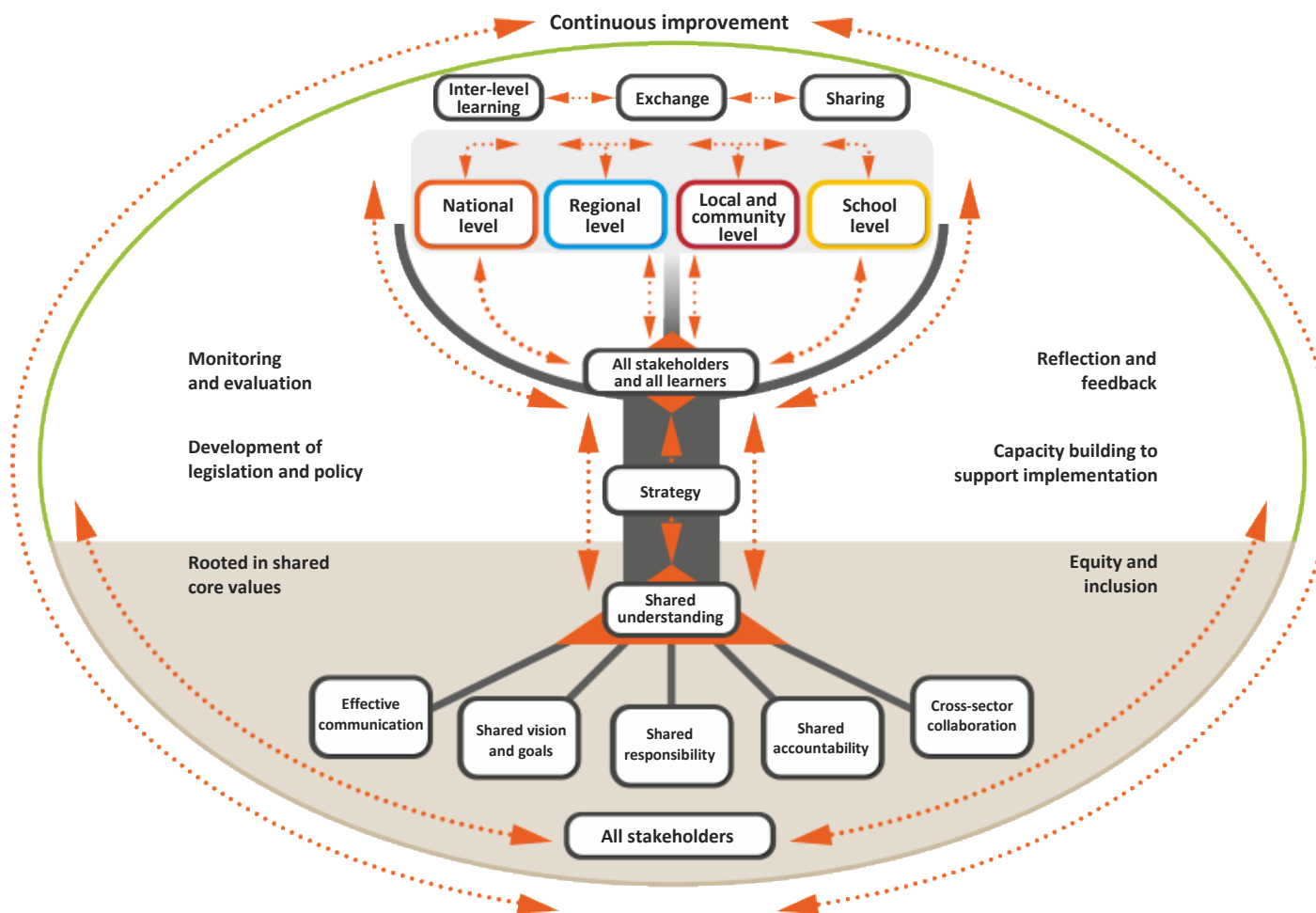


Figure 1. The QAMA Tree – a framework for continuous improvement in inclusive education systems

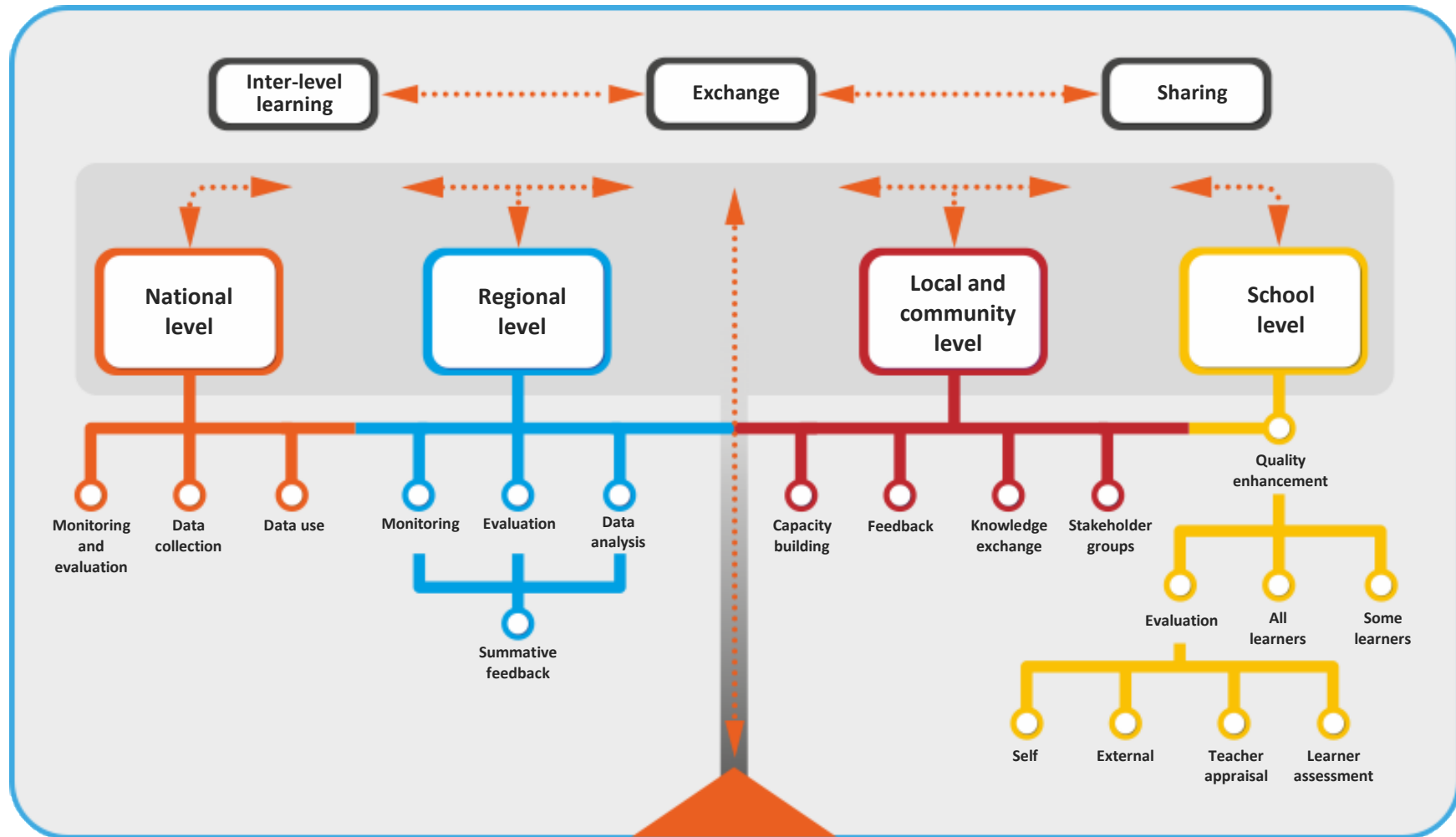


Figure 2. Detail of the upper section of the QAMA Tree



REFERENCES

Adams, D., Harris, A. and Jones, M. S., 2016. 'Teacher-Parent Collaboration for an Inclusive Classroom: Success for Every Child' *Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 4 (3), 58–71. eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1106456 (Last accessed October 2023)

Capano, G., 2015. 'Federal strategies for changing the governance of higher education: Australia, Canada and Germany compared', in G. Capano, M. Howlett and M. Ramesh (eds.), *Varieties of Governance*. Studies in the Political Economy of Public Policy. London: Palgrave Macmillan

Education Evaluation Centre/Te Ihuwaka, 2021. *Measuring Change in Education Systems: A Review*. Education Review Office: New Zealand. ero.govt.nz/our-research/measuring-change-in-education-systems-a-review (Last accessed October 2023)

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2016. *Financing of Inclusive Education: Background Information Report*. (A. Mangiaracina, ed.). Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/financing-inclusive-education-background-information-report (Last accessed October 2023)

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2021a. *Key Principles – Supporting policy development and implementation for inclusive education*. (V. J. Donnelly and A. Watkins, eds.). Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/key-principles-supporting-policy-development-implementation (Last accessed October 2023)

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2021b. *Country Policy Review and Analysis: Key messages for working with and for countries*. (A. Watkins, V. J. Donnelly, S. Symeonidou and V. Soriano, eds.). Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/CPRA-key-messages (Last accessed October 2023)

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2022. *EASNIE Position on Inclusive Education Systems*. Second edition. Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/easnie-position-inclusive-education-systems-second-edition (Last accessed October 2023)

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2024. *Towards a Multi-Level, Multi-Stakeholder Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Accountability Framework: Thematic Country Cluster Activities Literature Review*. (V.J. Donnelly, ed.). Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/tcca-literature-review (Last accessed December 2025)

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2025. *Multi-Level, Multi-Stakeholder Frameworks for Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Accountability: Background and development*. (D. Murdoch and R. Svarinskaite, eds.). Odense, Denmark. www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/qama-framework-background (Last accessed December 2025)



European Commission, 2015. *Comparative study on quality assurance in EU school education systems – Policies, procedures and practices: Final report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/422920 (Last accessed October 2023)

European Commission, 2017. *Commission Staff Working Document Accompanying the document Communication on school development and excellent teaching for a great start in life*. eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52017SC0165 (Last accessed October 2023)

Golden, G., 2020. 'Education policy evaluation: Surveying the OECD landscape', *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 236. Paris: OECD Publishing. doi.org/10.1787/9f127490-en (Last accessed October 2023)

Hudson, A., 2016. *Simpler, clearer, more stable. Integrated accountability for integrated care*. London. The Health Foundation. www.health.org.uk/reports-and-analysis/reports/simpler-clearer-more-stable (Last accessed October 2023)

Mourshed, M., Chijioke, C. and Barber, M., 2010. *How the world's most improved systems keep getting better*. McKinsey and Company

OECD, 2015. *Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making Reforms Happen*. Paris: OECD Publishing. doi.org/10.1787/9789264225442-en (Last accessed October 2023)

Save the Children, 2016. *Inclusive Education: What, Why and How. A Handbook for Program Implementers*. London: Save the Children. resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/inclusive-education-what-why-and-how-handbook-program-implementers (Last accessed October 2023)

UNESCO, 2016. *Designing effective monitoring and evaluation of education systems for 2030: A global synthesis of policies and practices*. (Draft version). Paris: UNESCO

UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. *Handbook on measuring equity in education*. Montreal: UIS. unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000262806 (Last accessed October 2023)

Weidman, J.C. and DePietro-Durand, R., 2011. *Equip2 State-of-the-Art Knowledge in Education: Decentralization. A Guide to Project Design Based on a Comprehensive Literature and Project Review*. Washington, DC: USAID EQUIP2 and FHI 360. DOI: [10.13140/RG.2.1.5168.8801](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.5168.8801) (Last accessed October 2023)



ANNEX – BACKGROUND PAPER: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FRAMEWORK

This Background Paper on the Development of a Framework was drafted during the initial phases of the QAMA activity and shared with the QAMA cluster countries. It was shared with the wider group of EASNIE member countries in May 2025.

1. Introduction

EASNIE's [Key Principles](#) indicate that one of the five key requirements of the single legislation and policy framework of inclusive education systems is:

A comprehensive quality assurance and accountability framework for monitoring, review and evaluation that supports high-quality provision for all learners, with a focus on equitable opportunities for those at risk of marginalisation or exclusion (EASNIE, 2021a, p. 16).

Education systems are increasingly complex and incorporate many different levels and sub-systems. Research shows that while many countries have processes in place for monitoring, evaluation, quality assurance and accountability of some aspects of their education systems, few countries have a coherent system **to map information gathered against system-wide objectives**, in order **to plan future data collection** (UNESCO, 2016). Even fewer follow up their education reforms with **an evaluation of their impact** (OECD, 2015). Existing elements in the legal frameworks in many countries have developed over time and can lead to different types of evaluation (European Commission, 2015).

EASNIE's [Country System Mapping](#) activity found that the parameter of quality assurance and accountability frameworks is the one in which the highest number of its member countries (24 of 34) were at the stage of '**developing integrated quality assurance and accountability plans**'. In some countries, monitoring and evaluation units operate in silos, where management and information systems work independently of policy analysis. Disparity also occurs at regional and local levels through data collection by different agencies and service providers (Golden, 2020).

Multi-level, multi-stakeholder frameworks enable **each element and strand to be approached systematically**. They bring together data from, and create synergies between, all sectors and levels of the system, creating a rounded picture of system and school development. A coherent system framework is needed to realise **continuous improvement** through consistency of approach and clarity of communication of the goals, procedures and measures used, and the expected outcomes. This type of model requires **input from sectors other than education** to ensure **an integrated approach to accountability**, which is appropriate for **cross-sector working** (Hudson, 2016).



1.1 Overall aim

The aim of a multi-level, multi-stakeholder framework is to support the implementation of high-quality inclusive education policy and practice, in a system of continuous review and development.

To achieve this aim, and to be effective, the framework must fulfil these main criteria:

- align with international, EU-level and national commitments and EASNIE principles;
- be built on a fluent dialogue between school and system-level actors and stakeholders, both internal and external to education;
- be adaptable to different country contexts;
- be applicable to the full range of stakeholders across education and in all other sectors that impact on the provision of high-quality inclusive education for all learners.

1.2 Developing the framework

The essential starting point for developing policy and practice for monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance is **stakeholder agreement on the underlying values and principles of inclusive education**. Research evidence indicates that where accountability and quality assurance mechanisms are based on shared responsibility and stakeholder engagement, they are more likely to support real gains in education. This is particularly true of inclusive education, where ‘the process of collaboration itself reflects what inclusion is all about’ (Adams, Harris & Jones, 2016, p. 67), and where **all aspects** of the underlying processes of monitoring, evaluation, quality assurance and accountability should themselves be inclusive.

1.3 An overarching vision

To develop a model for a coherent framework for quality assurance and accountability across the whole inclusive education system, an overarching long-term vision for inclusive education, shared with stakeholders, to inform system goals must be in place. This means developing a ‘common language’ across the whole system, as a basis for dialogue across sectors and stakeholders.

This vision should be in line with international and European definitions or, for EASNIE member countries, it may align with the [EASNIE position paper](#), where the ultimate vision for inclusive education systems is to ensure that:

All learners of any age are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers (EASNIE, 2022, p. 1).

What is meant by ‘meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities’ must be clarified with all stakeholders, in every sector, alongside agreement that ‘all learners’ includes all those who may have previously been marginalised from aspects of those educational opportunities. In a multi-stakeholder system, there must also be agreement on ‘who’ stakeholders are, in terms of individuals, groups or organisations, within and external to education systems. The European Commission (2015) recognises the importance of the



national and local context and suggests that countries need to explore the role of different stakeholders and the processes followed at different system levels.

Every aspect inherent in quality assurance and accountability processes across all sectors of the education system must align with the vision and the stated goals. This includes all stakeholders at every level within the education system and, where there is cross-sector collaboration, with stakeholders outside education. If a vision and goals are not in place, different sectors and levels will continue to work in silos, towards different ends.

1.4 Sections of the framework

Following agreement with all stakeholders on the vision and goals, countries need to develop the following areas, to implement a coherent model:

- Legislation and policy to support an inclusive education system, aligned with the agreed vision to ensure consistency across policies and a coherent approach to quality assurance and accountability, agreed with stakeholders
- Strategic implementation plans to enact the vision, clarify roles and responsibilities across stakeholders at different system levels and provide meaningful indicators to support the monitoring of progress
- Coherent quality assurance activity in schools, including self-evaluation, external evaluation, staff appraisal, learner assessment (formal/informal) and collaboration and consultation with stakeholders (from all sectors and across the local community)
- Supportive networks at local level between schools, municipality/local area support staff, cross-sector teams, etc., focused on developing the community's capacity to share and use data and information and take action for improvement
- Effective national-level monitoring and evaluation drawing on school- and local-level summative data to examine fulfilment of learners' rights and issues around equity and inclusion, and feed back into the policy and legislative review cycle, sharing responsibility with other sectors and ministries (EASNIE, 2024, p. 65).

[Figure 3](#) suggests a draft plan to indicate how these different areas might be brought together in a single framework.

Each of these areas can be the subject of more detailed discussions around the processes inherent in developing a model framework within the context of different countries, to enable them to work from within their existing systems.

1.5 An inclusive framework

Any framework for quality assurance and accountability within inclusive education systems **must itself be inclusive** (Save the Children, 2016). To this end, monitoring and evaluation should be functionally, methodologically and operationally inclusive:

- Functionally inclusive: collect information about the inclusiveness of policy and practice with inclusive indicators and disaggregated data.
- Methodologically inclusive: allow people usually excluded from monitoring and evaluation processes to participate.



-
- Operationally inclusive: a data collection process that contributes to fostering inclusion (for example, information from participatory assessments on school inclusiveness is shared back to the community to increase awareness of exclusions).

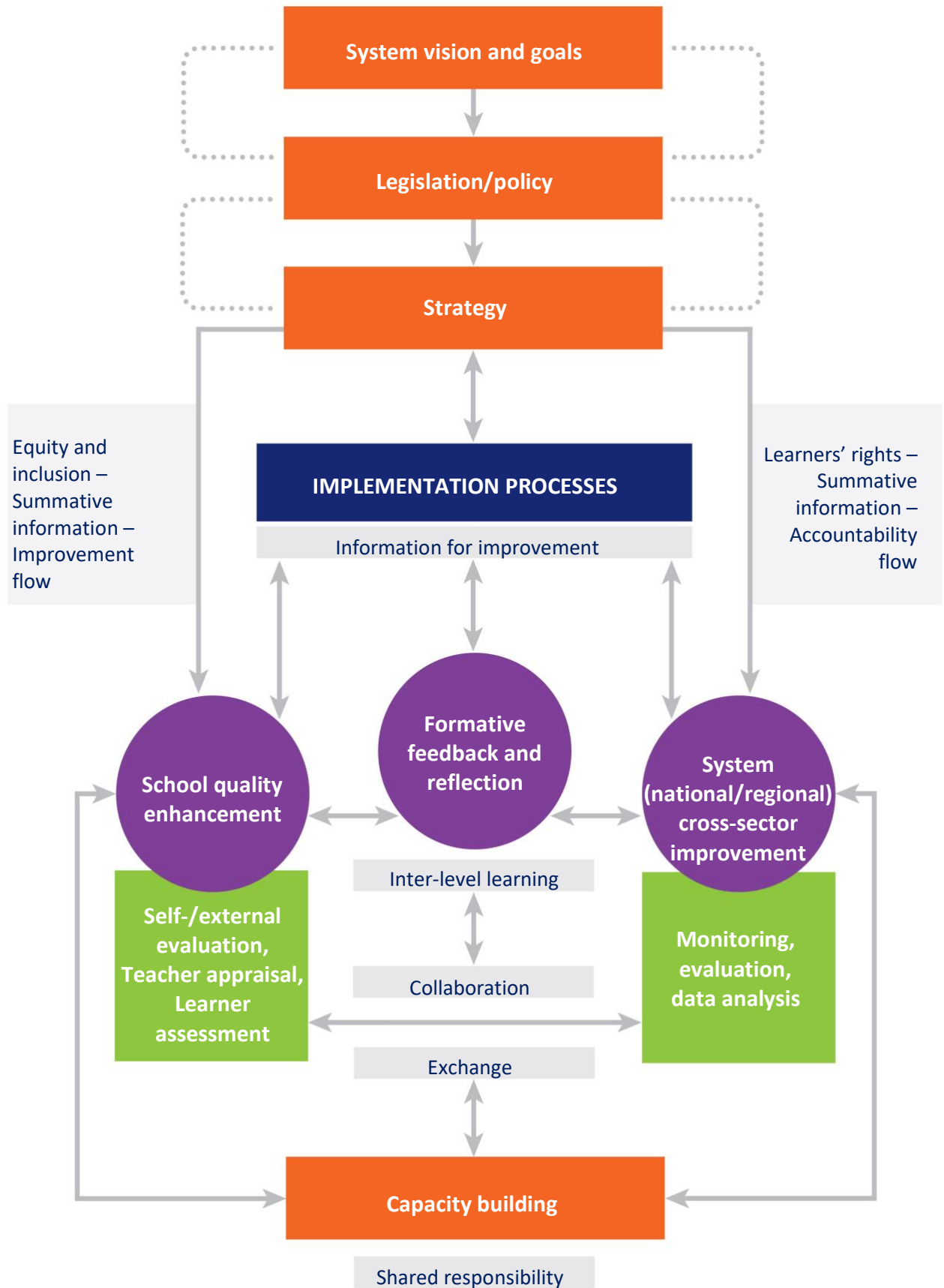


Figure 3. A working model for a multi-level, multi-stakeholder quality assurance, monitoring and accountability framework



1.6 Working within the draft plan

While the framework indicates how the different elements of the education system may be drawn together into a coherent whole, there are aspects within the system that may require further detailed attention. Some of these are indicated below and highlight the importance of working with other TCCA clusters. These aspects may be further developed into short individual concept papers.

1. *Multi-stakeholder and cross-sector working*

Recent world events, such as the disruption caused to education systems by the COVID-19 pandemic, have indicated the importance of bringing a range of services together, such as health, education, social work, housing and justice. This requires joint working from ministerial level to regional and local services to ensure effective decision-making to support schools to address these key areas. This approach also emphasises the need for structures and processes that enable policy and practice to transfer effectively between system levels (EASNIE, 2021b). Local-level stakeholders must include all stakeholders (community members, families, teachers, learners) in quality assurance, accountability and evaluation processes.

To achieve cross-sector and multi-level participation, the framework requires three essential elements at every stage: co-ordination, coherence and collaboration.

Barriers to the effectiveness of the framework will occur where these three elements are not in place in relation to **all sectors**. It is essential that processes, checks and structures are in place to anticipate and address any issues and challenges within the framework itself. On-going review and evaluation are necessary to ensure that the processes and outputs from all sectors have a positive impact on continuous system improvement.

Moving away from hierarchical (vertical) relationships between schools and national government and towards greater decentralisation and multi-level governance has, however, led to increased complexity. It involves a wider range of stakeholders at local level, while still holding the central level –that is, national ministries of education – responsible for ensuring high-quality, efficient, equitable and innovative education. Changes to new ways of working collaboratively and across sectors may pose challenges to more centralised systems. These countries will need to identify factors leading to co-ordination mechanisms based on mutual learning in education policy, such as more informal and trusting relationships and flexible modes of co-operation that occur between stakeholders (Capano, 2015).

EASNIE (2016) suggests that more decentralised systems appear to create a greater opportunity for developing innovative forms of inclusive education. This transfer of responsibility can result in increased accountability and efficiency due to the shorter distance between parent and policy-maker or between policy-maker and school (Weidman & DePietro-Durand, 2011). Strong local co-ordination has been identified as critical in mediating between school delivery and central government (Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010).



2. *Monitoring and evaluation*

UNESCO (2016) suggests the following elements are required for monitoring and evaluation. These can be ‘mapped’ onto the model to support the development of effective links and information exchange – and, ultimately, use of information for school and system improvement.

- **School record-keeping system:** supports school management, covering input, process and output.
- **Statistical data system/education management information system:** input for policy and programmes at different administrative levels with a focus on input.
- **Resource management systems:** ensuring efficient investment in education with a focus on input.
- **Performance evaluation system:** measuring results of education provision with a focus on process.
- **Learner evaluation system:** measuring results of education provision with a focus on output.

Within each of these elements, attention needs to be paid to equity and inclusion, as few (if any) countries can track the progress of the most disadvantaged groups. Information management systems, therefore, need to be improved to include **disaggregated data** and information on learners’ socio-economic and demographic characteristics. It is also important to consider ‘how intersecting disadvantages may hinder progress towards access and learning’ (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018, p. 128).

3. *The ecosystem model*

The ecosystem model is particularly suitable in the context of inclusive education, as it places the learners at the centre and considers the micro, meso, exo and macro levels that work together to shape holistic learner development. These levels correspond to the individual/person, class/school/community and regional/national levels. While particularly effective in exposing the seen and unseen aspects of schools, ‘the ecosystem model can serve to examine the wider policy context in which schools operate – and which influences the experiences of learners and their families’ (EASNIE, 2024, p. 46).

The ecosystem model can be used within the overall system framework, to develop and monitor collaboration across levels and across sectors to:

- ensure the systematic inclusion of all stakeholder groups in structures and processes influencing school policy and practice and quality assurance for accountability and improvement;
- support leaders/decision-makers to study the potential of the wider community in quality assurance;
- consider where responsibility for key quality assurance structures and processes might lie;
- realise the potential channels for communication and feedback within and between system levels regarding quality assurance activity, ensuring that



information is used to inform on-going improvement (including reviews of the policy context at national level) within a culture of trust;

- set work within the context of the wider social, cultural and legislative context, including EU and international commitments.

The ecosystem model has the potential to be further developed to address some of the challenges, by improving policy and practice in setting goals and measuring progress at both learner and system levels and ensuring the transparency of information and data, while avoiding the pressure of high-stakes approaches (European Commission, 2017).

4. Data collection

The processes involved in collecting and using quantitative and qualitative data must also be inclusive. Multiple types of data are needed to develop a rounded picture of system and school development, with quantitative data to provide more uniform and comparable measures of outcomes and statistical correlations and qualitative data to examine the processes underlying such hard data (Education Evaluation Centre/Te Ihuwaka, 2021). These processes allow the impact of policies on different stakeholders in schools, communities and families to emerge, placing the learner at the centre of the framework.

1.7 Conclusions

- The multi-level, multi-stakeholder framework must be inclusive – in function, methodology and operation – to ensure that work across sectors and levels has common goals and indicators, co-ordinated plans and clear outcomes, agreed with stakeholders who share responsibility within a continuous improvement culture.
- A resilient system requires real connections between stakeholders and a focus on all learners with their multiple and intersecting identities, giving them and their families a voice through accessible decision-making structures and processes.
- Inputs from a variety of professionals must be valued to ensure that a range of data and information is used to provide a balanced view of schools' development as well as a holistic picture of learners.
- The framework must support lifelong learning with co-operation between all sectors of education to prepare all learners for full participation in the community and opportunities for continuing education and employment.

2. Initial proposals for cluster outputs

As part of the collaborative work undertaken during cycle 1 of TCCA, EASNIE's QAMA team proposed working towards a 'draft framework' as an output for December 2025, agreed by all QAMA countries. This would be developed from and based on the draft framework, outlined in the TCCA Literature Review and above in [Figure 3](#), but would incorporate any changes and additional features that QAMA countries consider necessary to make it widely adaptable for countries with different systems or contexts.

To make the framework as useful and flexible as possible for all countries, the EASNIE team would develop some guidelines for different sections, for discussion and agreement



by the cluster countries. These guidelines might be in the form of drop-down menus, for example, leading to different forms of information or with links to more detailed examples on different aspects. Additional information on specific topics, which the cluster has discussed and explored in meetings, might also be included, such as stakeholders' involvement, cross-sector collaboration, data collection or adapting aspects of the framework to different political landscapes. These aspects are very much for the cluster countries' consideration and input, as they identify and explore areas of strength and challenge over the course of this phase.

During this phase, the cluster also plans to involve an expert and to foster further opportunities for knowledge exchange with other clusters. Information arising from these encounters can be brought into the draft framework, together with input from other activities and initiatives from each individual QAMA country, or from participation in wider EASNIE work.

Secretariat:

Østre Stationsvej 33
DK-5000
Odense C
Denmark
Tel: +45 64 41 00 20
secretariat@european-agency.org

Brussels Office:

Rue Montoyer 21
BE-1000
Brussels
Belgium
Tel: +32 2 213 62 80
brussels.office@european-agency.org

