September 2025

Report on primary education curricula, textbooks and assessments in Africa with bias on literacy and mathematics

Introduction

The survey targeted 37 African countries these include: : Benin; Botswana; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cameroon; Chad; Congo (Republic of the); Côte d'Ivoire; Democratic Republic of Congo; Djibouti; Egypt; Eswatini; Gambia; Ghana; Guinea-Bissau; Kenya; Lesotho; Liberia; Lybia , Madagascar; Malawi; Mauritania; Namibia; Niger, Nigeria; Rwanda; Senegal; Seychelles; Sierra Leone; South Africa; South Sudan; United Republic of Tanzania (including Zanzibar); Togo; Tunisia; Uganda; Zambia; Zanzibar; Zimbabwe. However, African Curriculum Association (ACA) was able to conduct the survey in 35 countries These include: Benin; Botswana; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cameroon; Chad; Congo (Republic of the); Côte d'Ivoire; Democratic Republic of Congo; Djibouti; Egypt; Eswatini; Gambia; Ghana; Guinea-Bissau; Kenya; Lesotho; Liberia; Madagascar; Malawi; Mauritania; Namibia; Nigeria; Rwanda; Senegal; Seychelles; Sierra Leone; South Africa; South Sudan; United Republic of Tanzania Togo; Tunisia; Uganda; Zambia; Zimbabwe of which Madagascar wasn't responsive.

Across the 35 participating countries, questionnaire completion is high with 100% return , as the threshold marked as completed in the questionnaire data. Availability of core reference documents varies: The countries shared a National Curriculum Framework (NCF) document; indicated the countries meeting threshold as 12 / 15 (80.0%) which are officially validated and in use. : 5 With the Syllabi (86.7% indicate the availability of the Literacy and Mathematics syllabuses. Weakest domains were National Assessment Framework (26.7%) and Language Policy (40%) as many countries were missing standalone, validated documents. The summary is below

Background information

Countries included: 35

Key coverage figures:

Metric	Count
Questionnaires completed	35
NCF document shared	28
Syllabuses shared	33
Assessment framework shared	20
Language policy shared	18

At the country level, the number of document types shared ranges from 0 to 4 (counting NCF, syllabuses, assessment framework, and language policy). Countries with higher counts demonstrate a more complete policy and curriculum documentation package, which supports stronger quality assurance and implementation readiness.


Summary from 'ACA 1 - DOCUMENTS'
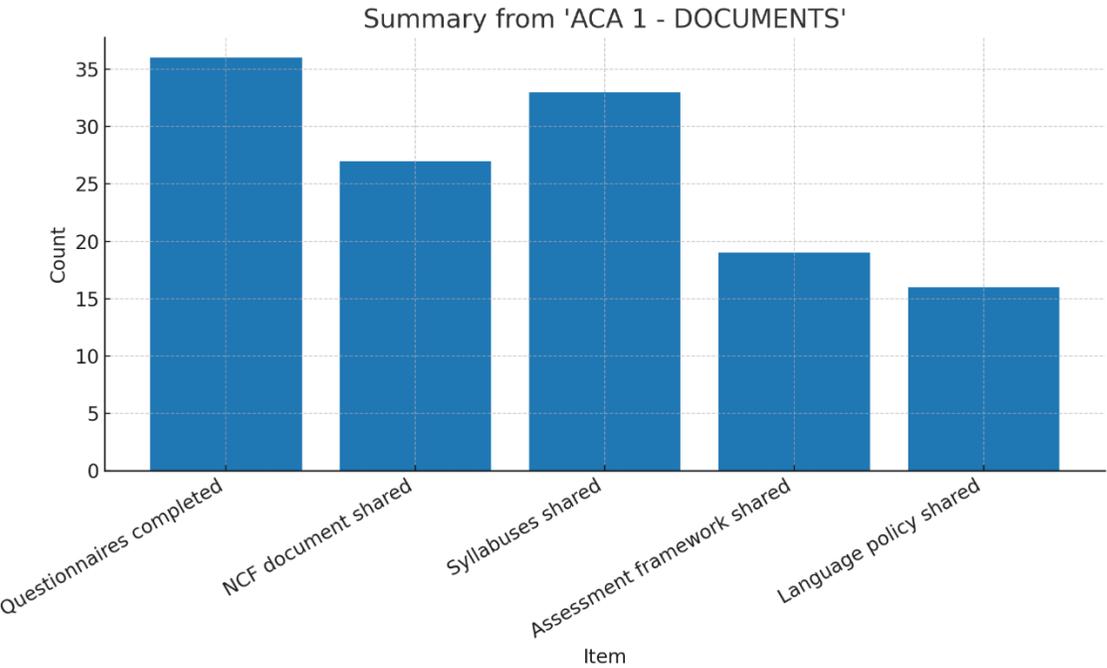
From the graph above 36 countries are indicated as having completed and sent back the questionnaires and other documents, while Libya and Niger were left out as they never participated in the survey. .
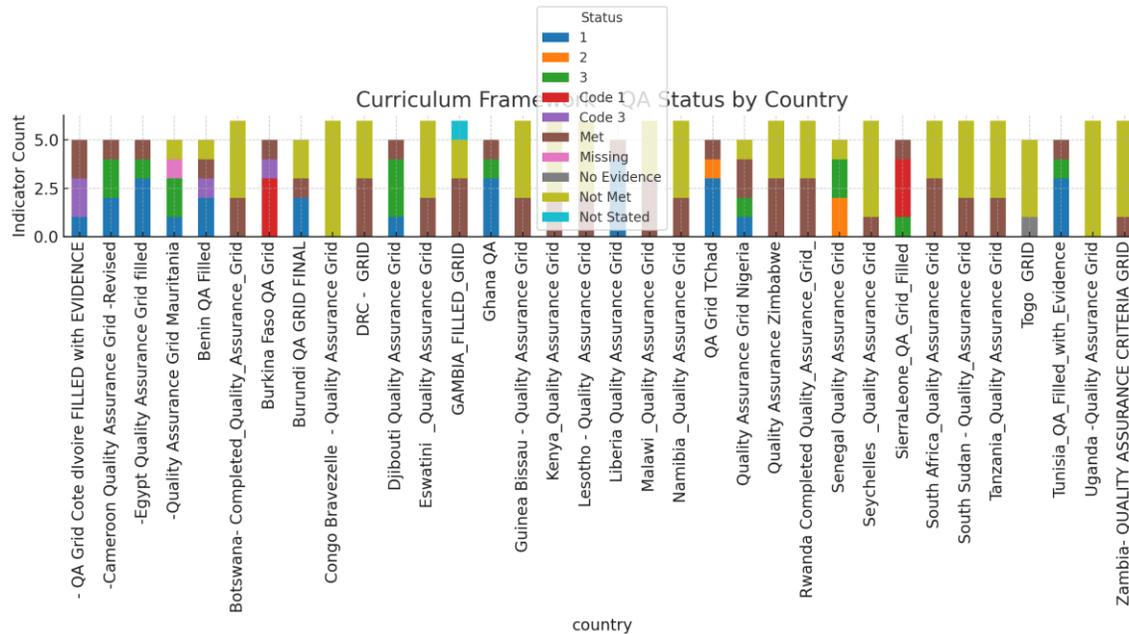
I.   National Curriculum Framework

Many countries either fully developed and validated a curriculum framework or completely missed on some of the Curriculum Framework indicators. While most countries have a validated and structured curriculum framework that defines vision, objectives, competences, and pedagogical principles others have totally no framework.

The graph below indicates how National curriculum framework indicators were covered.
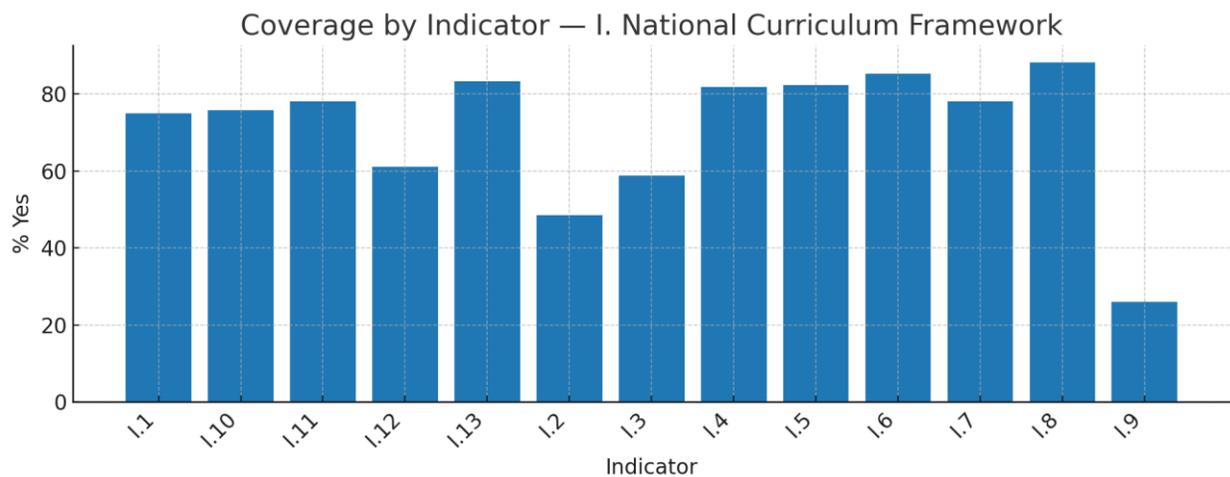
Below each country is shown how she responded to given indicators and got the conclusion on the entire section on National curriculum framework

Curriculum Framework QA Status by Country

The graphs above show that about 70.6% of countries answered yes threshold. The average coverage of compulsory indicators is 73.2%. This implies that most countries have a validated and structured curriculum framework that defines vision, objectives, competences, and pedagogical principles. However, some frameworks remain under reform or lack official validation, creating uncertainty in policy guidance. The indicator-level analysis shows that broad vision and goals are usually well-articulated, but explicit integration of cross-cutting issues (like ICT, inclusivity, life skills) is less consistent. Although the overall framework availability is high. It was noted that Countries like Liberia, Gambia, South Sudan, South Africa, and Rwanda show strong Yes scores, confirming well-documented curriculum frameworks. On the other hand, countries like Togo, Uganda, Congo, and Mauritania scored mostly 'No,' showing missing or incomplete framework documentation. It was further noted that the Anglophone countries nearly all have a standalone validated framework (100%) while Francophone around two-thirds (≈67%) have a validated framework, with others under revision or not validated.

The chart above highlights variation in NCF documentation depth. The chart indicates that across 35 countries majority shows strong coverage on substantive elements in the curriculum framework Things like Vision/Objectives' and 'Learning objectives'are substantial However, system-supporting enablers such as 'Required resources' (I.9) and 'Teacher training' (I.7) show lower coverage, indicating areas where guidance may be less formalized in the framework documents. Status indicators (code 1) suggest that while several frameworks are officially validated, a notable number are either (code 2and

3)under revision or require reform. This reflects active policy cycles and ongoing alignment to competency-based approaches. In this regard countries with higher totals demonstrate more fully articulated frameworks, while those with lower totals may require targeted technical assistance to finalize or consolidate sections. It was noted that although some countries did have a National curriculum Framework, some aspects of this section are also found in other documents like syllabuses this might have led to giving such areas less attention. A strong framework is foundational therefore countries that are not having validated frameworks need urgent support to document curriculum intent and structure.

II. Syllabi (Literacy and Mathematics)

Some countries submitted syllabuses fully aligned to competence-based reforms and therefore answered Yes threshold, while others recorded No, which signals missing or outdated syllabuses, often not reflecting progression in learning outcomes.

The graphs below show the results of the data collected from countries on syllabi (Literacy and Mathematics) as per given indicators in the quality assurance grid

Coverage by Indicator — II. Syllabi (Literacy & Mathematics)


Syllabus – QA Status by Country
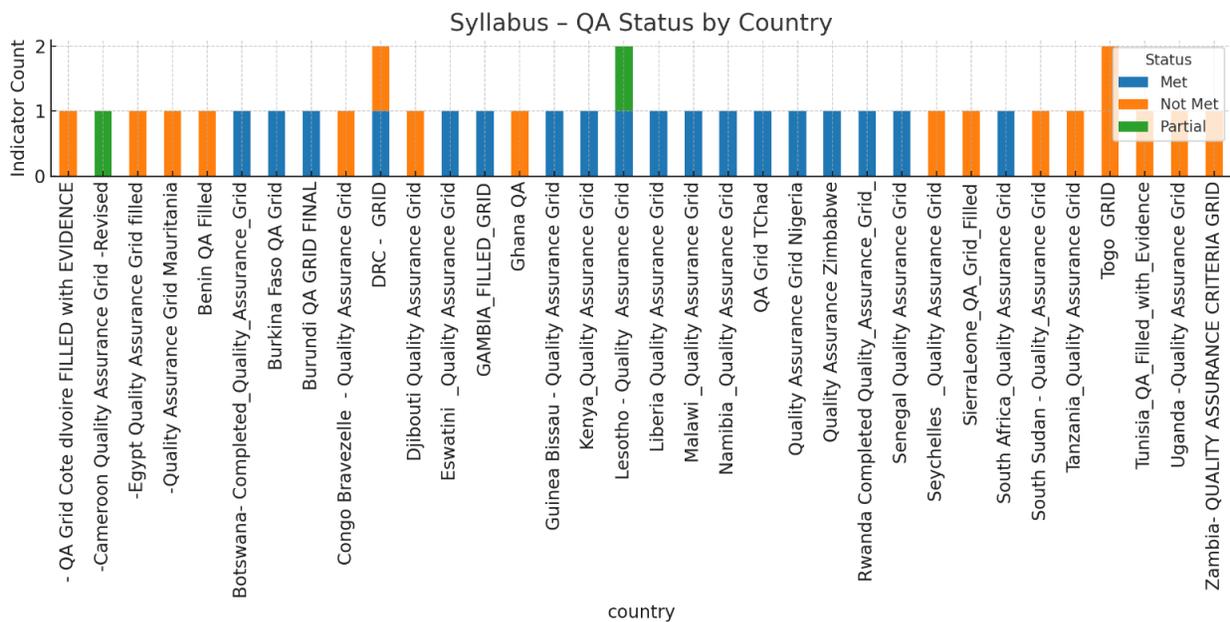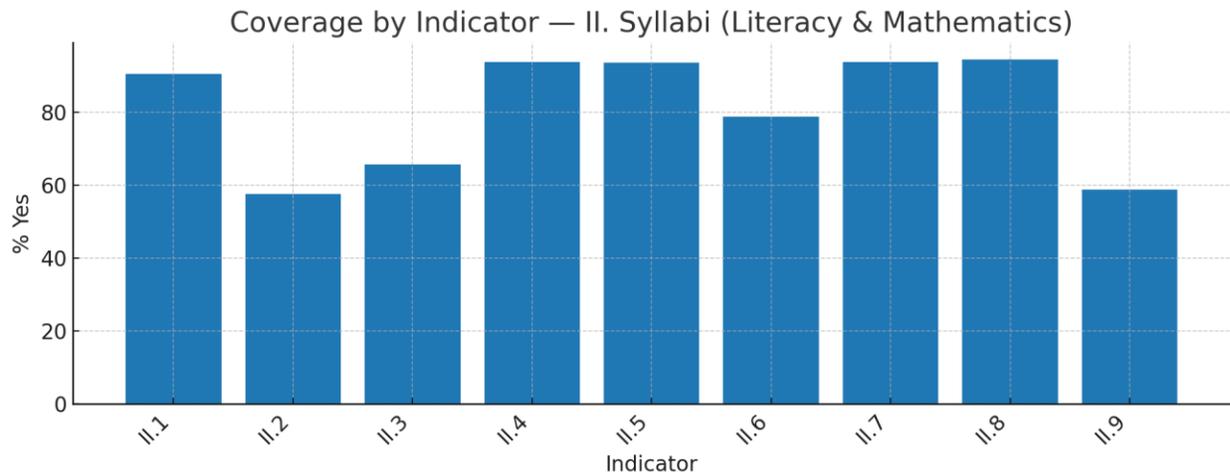
The graphs indicate that 82.4% of countries answered yes threshold. This implies that nearly all countries have detailed syllabi in place, especially for literacy and mathematics in early grades apart from Burundi who didn't show evidence of syllabi. The charts above indicate that most

countries report strong availability of operational syllabi: Official validation (II.1) and core content elements—Learning objectives (II.4 for Literacy; II.5 for Mathematics), Specific expected competencies (II.6 for Literacy; II.7 for Mathematics), and Learning progression (II.8)— are marked 'Yes' for the vast majority. These syllabi provide learning objectives, scope and sequence, content standards, and teaching guidelines. They show that the coverage of grade-level content and progression across grades is strong. However, some countries lack sufficient teaching guides, assessment strategies within syllabi, or explicit links to competences. Countries like Liberia, Gambia, South Africa, Senegal, and Rwanda demonstrate complete syllabuses meeting all the indicators, while countries like, Côte d'Ivoire, fall behind with some indicators not met and Burundi with no sign of any syllabi, indicating either missing or outdated syllabuses. While the widespread availability of syllabi indicates a strong foundation for teaching, countries need to ensure the availability of pedagogical support materials and teacher preparation to match the curricular intent. Besides, the main relative weakness is 'Indicative duration' (II.6), thought with more 'Yes' and than 'No' that shows that time allocations or pacing guidance are not consistently specified, which may hinder consistent implementation and monitoring across schools. Therefore, countries with Not Met indicators need to urgently produce structured syllabuses for early grades to ensure consistency in classroom delivery

Section III: National Assessment Framework

This report analyses the Assessment Framework section across theparticipating countries and . The chart below shows the summarized information on Assessment framework which includes also general assessment aspects.

Coverage by Indicator — III. National Assessment Framework


Assessment Framework – QA Status by Country
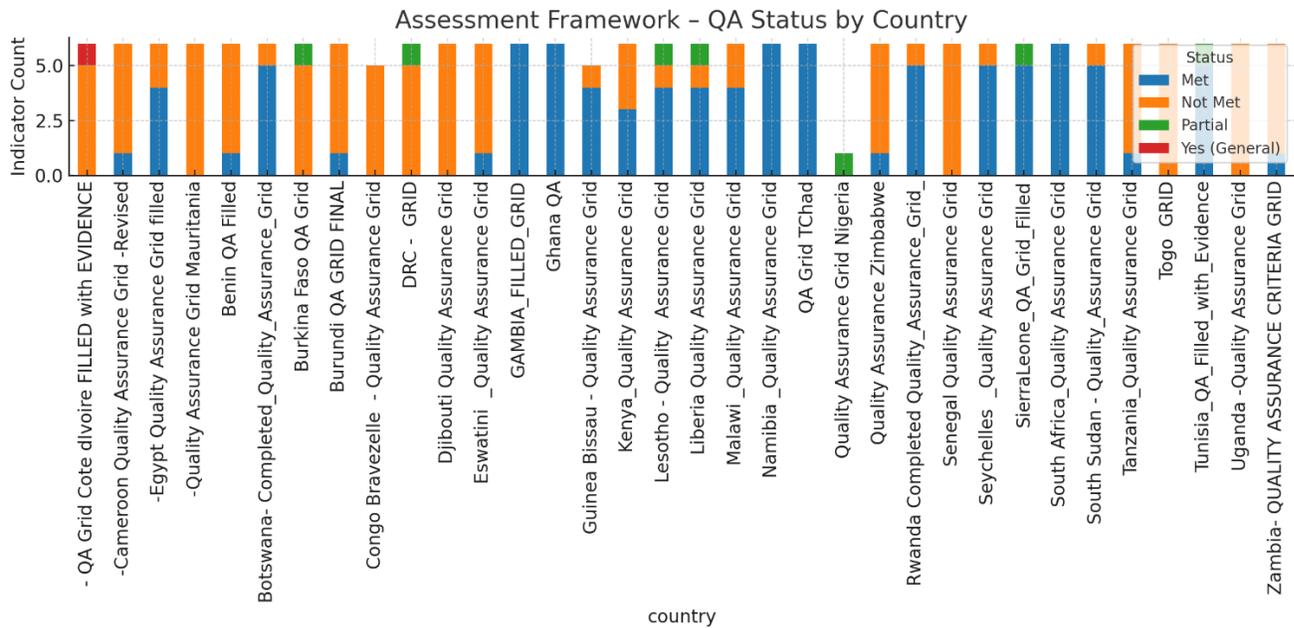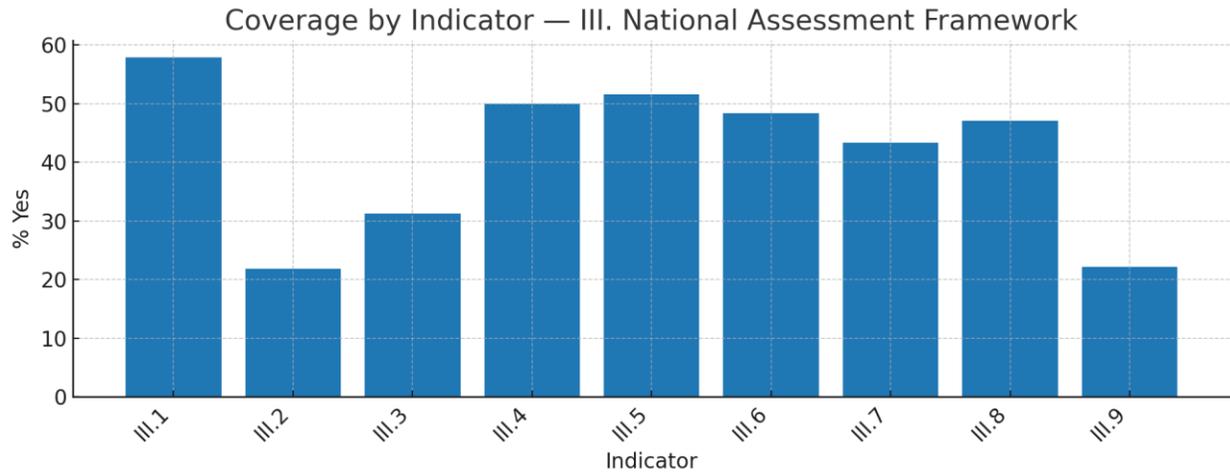
The graph indicates that this is one of the weakest areas overall. Several countries show 100% Not Met, indicating no formalized assessment framework was submitted. A few strong examples exist where Met reflects clear policies on formative and summative assessment and alignment to competency-based curriculum. The results indicate that only 29.4% of countries answered yes threshold as few countries have a standalone, validated national assessment framework. Where they exisit they don't seem to provide a holistic strategy across formative, continuous, and large-scale assessments. The assessment principles, that link to curriculum competences, and guidelines for classroom-level formative assessment were often marked "No." This implies that the absence of validated frameworks undermines consistency in monitoring learning outcomes and weakens the feedback loop between curriculum, teaching, and assessment.

Without national assessment standards, teachers and exam bodies risk misalignment and inequity. It is noted that only Ghana, Chad, South Africa, Namibia, Gambia indicated Yes threshold indicator, while countries like Uganda, Togo, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal are 100% not met the indicators. This gap points to lack of national policies on formative/summative assessment aligned to new curricula. Without clear assessment frameworks, teaching cannot reliably measure or support learning outcomes. Targeted technical support should prioritize these gaps.

IV.   Languages Policy in education

This report analyses the Language Policy section across the participating countries, and the results are presented in the charts below.

Coverage by Indicator — IV. Language Policy

Language Policy – QA Status by Country
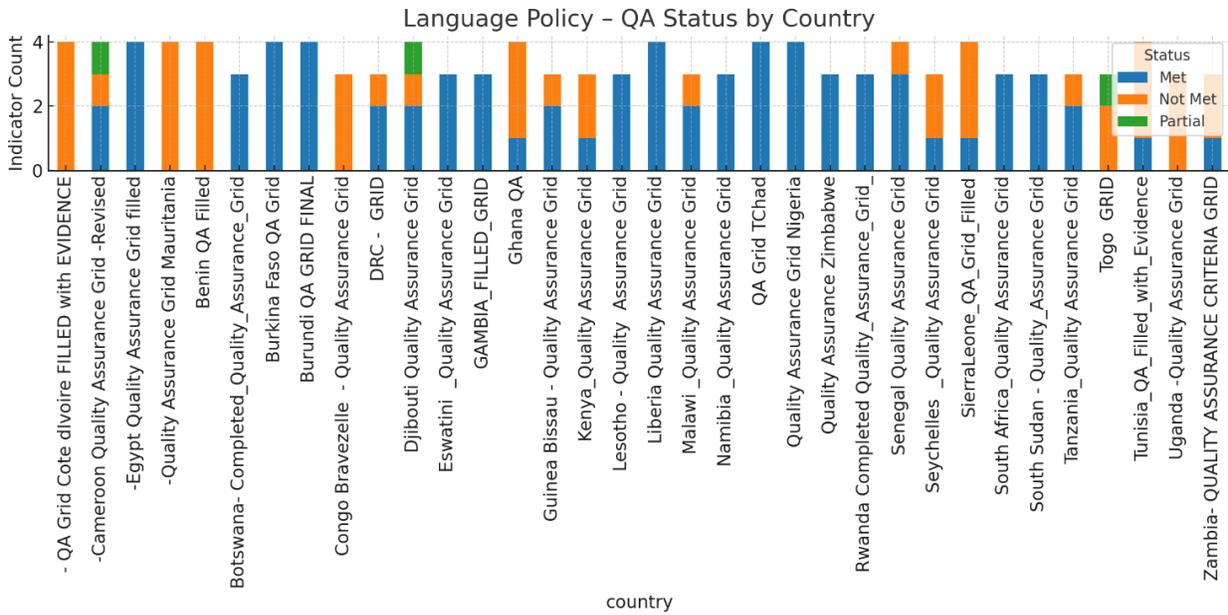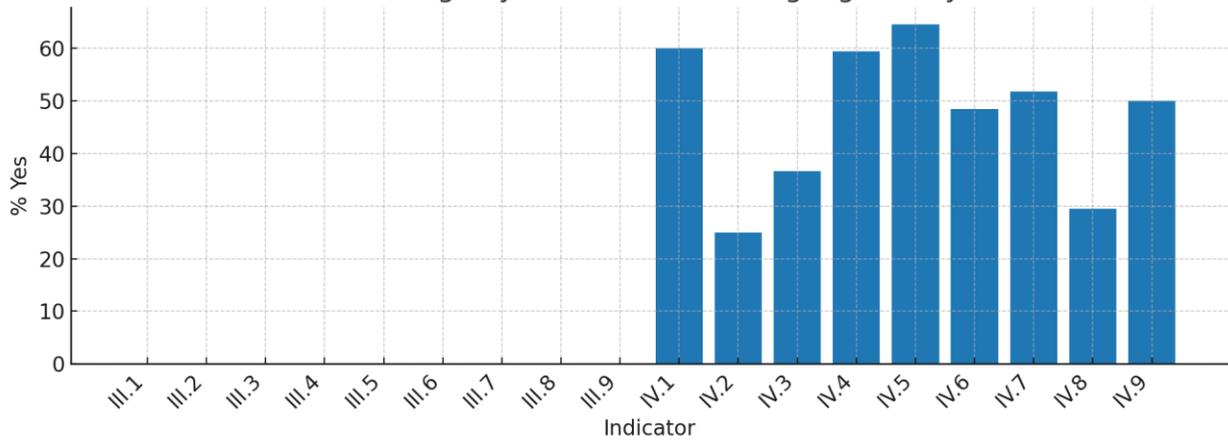
The graph shows that only 35.3% of countries meet the threshold, with average coverage at 47.2%. Although most countries' curricula mention language of instruction, few have a standalone, validated national policy. Where language policies exist, they often lack clarity on transition years (e.g., from local languages to official languages), or do not align with teacher training and textbook availability. The clear grade-by-grade language mapping and policy dissemination to schools are weak. This implies that the gap creates inconsistency where local practices are not adopted or shift languages too early or too late, may cause learning difficulties in literacy and numeracy. Only a handful of countries scored " Yes," showing explicit documentation of the language of instruction (e.g., use of local languages in early grades transitioning to official language).

Many show No, meaning no documented language policy was included in their submission. It was noted that countries like Liberia, Eswatini, South Sudan, South Africa, and Rwanda stand out with strong met indicators of language of instruction performance, reflecting clear Language of Instruction (LOI) policies. Benin, Congo, Mauritania, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo show no evidence of LOI policy (100% 'Not Met'). Language of Instruction is critical for foundational literacy/numeracy. The absence of policies in many countries raises concern about equitable and effective learning. Without a clear, validated policy, the implementation of mother tongue-based multilingual education remains fragmented.

General conclusion

The survey was to be carried out in 37 countries, however, Libya and Niger declined to participate in the survey while Madagascar refused to respond to our several reminders, she only submitted the questionnaire without any supporting documents. The participating countries' systems systems show the strongest readiness at the operational level (syllabuses) and more uneven coverage in the policy scaffolding that should anchor and sustain implementation (NCF, assessment, and language policy).

The results indicate that the Syllabuses (Literacy & Mathematics) are broadly in place as most countries marked "Yes" for learning objectives, specific competencies, and progression, indicating classrooms having practical guidance. However, revealing duration that is less consistently specified, which can dilute instructional time management and monitoring. Besides, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) section shows good coverage of the vision, objectives, competencies, structure, subjects, but validation status is mixed and enabling pieces however, required resources and teacher training are weaker in several grids. This suggests curricula are being used, but not always under a fully validated and capacity backed framework.

On the other hand, Assessment frameworks are partially established, while many countries articulate objectives, disciplines, and formative and summative approaches, fewer document progression of assessment criteria and student self-assessment were visible. These two gaps limit coherence with competency-based aims and reduce opportunities for learners to take ownership of progress. On the issue of Language policy (LoI), it is the least operationalized, more countries can state policy objectives and which languages serve as LoI than can specify subject-by-subject implementation, grade-level duration and transitions, or integration in teacher training. This disconnects risks inconsistent classroom language practice, especially in early grades.

In a nutshell, countries are delivering instruction with usable syllabuses, but the validated frameworks, assessment progression, LoI implementation, and

teacher preparation aren't always complete. To translate policy intent into consistent learning gains, systems need to finish and connect these scaffolds.

This survey shines a bright light on the curriculum readiness landscape across Africa. It reveals a tale of two sides: on one end, countries that have boldly documented their curriculum frameworks, syllabuses, assessments, and language policies, standing as models of progress; and on the other, countries still grappling with gaps and incomplete documentation.

The results are clear that curriculum Frameworks and Syllabuses show strong progress in several countries, laying the foundation for meaningful learning.

Assessment Frameworks and Language Policies, however, remain the weakest links, leaving many systems unable to measure learning or support children in languages they understand best.

Yet, the story is not of failure, but of opportunity. With peer learning, targeted technical support, and renewed commitment, Africa can bridge these gaps and ensure that every child benefit from a coherent, competency-based curriculum.

The survey concludes with a uniting call to strengthen the weak links, celebrate the strong, and move together towards an inclusive, evidence-based curriculum future for Africa.

Recommendations

1. There is need to close the validation gaps by finalizing and approving NCFs and assessment frameworks where drafts exist, publish interim guidance and timelines in the meantime.

1. With just 20 assessment frameworks shared, countries may need support to articulate formative and summative purposes, grade-level standards, and progression criteria that match competency-based intentions.

2. Should tighten alignment; linking NCF competencies the syllabus objectives and assessment criteria, ensuring LoI rules match early-grade reading strategies.
3. Make assessment developmental by providing grade-by-grade progression criteria and classroom ready self-assessment routines aligned to competencies.

2. The 18 LoI policies shared underscores the need to formalize language pathways including duration, transitions, bilingual models to strengthen foundational learning.

4. There is need to operationalize LoI specify duration and transitions by grade and application by subject, and embed LoI pedagogy in pre-service and CPD with concrete classroom strategies.

5. Prioritize requesting the NCF, assessment framework, and LoI policy from countries that shared syllabuses but not system-level documents.

6. Support countries to tighten links between teaching methods, language of instruction, and assessment for coherent implementation.

In conclusion, the what of teaching is largely present, the how, how long, and how to evidence progress need sharper, validated, and teacher-ready articulation to secure consistent outcomes across the 36 systems.

Suggested Follow-ups

a) Track planned revisions to align curriculum framework, syllabi with national competency frameworks and assessment expectations.
b) Support countries to finalize and validate national assessment frameworks especially where revision or reform is underway.
c) Provide practical guidance and examples to embed 'student self-assessment in classroom routines aligned to competency development.
d) Integrate LoI requirements into pre-service and in-service teacher training with practical classroom strategies and materials guidance.
e) Where validation is pending, document interim guidance and timelines; where reform is active, align LoI policy with early literacy strategies and assessment.
f) ACA and IBE should lead continental Coordination & Advocacy
g) Lead the results into a continental monitoring dashboard, providing a clear picture of curriculum readiness across Africa.

h) Advocate for curriculum strengthening at AU-CESA and with regional economic communities (RECs), ensuring curriculum reform remains a continental priority.
i) Facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges by connecting countries with strong "Yes"results (e.g., South Africa, Liberia, Gambia) with those lagging behind.
j) Organize annual Curriculum QA Clinics at ACA conferences where countries present progress and lessons.

k) Develop training modules and workshops for national curriculum teams on curriculum frameworks, syllabus design, assessment literacy, and language policy.

l) Build a pool of African curriculum experts who can provide rapid technical support to countries.

m) Establish a continental Curriculum Resource Hub to house validated frameworks, syllabuses, assessment guides, and language policy exemplars for member countries to adapt.

n) UNESCO-IBE and ACA should provide direct technical assistance to countries with 100% "Not Met" results in Assessment Frameworks and Language Policies, ensuring they develop core guiding documents.

o) Support research on effective implementation of curriculum frameworks, assessment strategies, and language-of-instruction policies in African contexts.

p) Publish continental and regional status reports to guide donor investment and government prioritization.

q) Work with ACA to design and deliver training programs on competency-based curriculum design, formative assessment, and bilingual/multilingual education policies.

r) Strengthen the capacities of national curriculum centers to collect, analyze, and update QA data regularly.

s) Mobilize funding from global partners (e.g., UNESCO GEM Report, AfDB, Mastercard Foundation) to support curriculum reforms in countries most at risk of being left behind.

t) Partner with ACA to implement continental curriculum development projects aligned to CESA 25- 36 and SDG4.

u) Lastly ACA and UNESCO-IBE should spearhead a continental movement to close curriculum gaps, provide sustained technical support, and ensure every African child learns through a coherent, competency-based, and inclusive curriculum system."

Appendix

LIST OF ACA- IBE SURVEY PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

	ACA COUNTRIES	ACA FOCAL POINT NAME, CONTACT AND EMAIL (PERSON OF CONTACT)	POSITION
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9	Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)	**Guillaume Korogo Alokoa-+243815164822- gkorogoalokoa@gmail.com**	**Director**
10	Djibouti	**Mme Roda MAHAMOUD ISSA- (+253) 77 36 80 30 - roda_moud@yahoo.fr**	**Directrice Générale**

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