Regional TALENT Capacity-building Workshop on classroom-based formative assessment

From July 2-4, 2019, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

REPORT CONTENTS

SECTION 1 – Executive Summary

The Regional TALENT Capacity Building workshop on classroom based formative assessment (CBFA) was held from 2 to 4 July 2019 in Addis Ababa. Representatives from 14 African countries were present and shared discussions and group activities to achieve a shared understanding of CBFA as a way to promote Assessment for Learning (AFL). Concept clarification was promoted by expert presentations

on specific topics such as AFL, CBFA, and strategies implement ICT tools. Good practices were showcased through country presentations to favour horizontal exchanges

In the opinion of the participants, the workshop was considered an excellent opportunity to network with other countries' education professionals and international experts, to learn about best practices and challenges of CBFA in the region, and to gain access to learning materials, tools and research results.

The workshop provided an opportunity for clarifying the concept of "formative assessment" (in the framework of AFL) and how to balance it with "summative assessment" (i.e. assessment of learning) within national curriculum and assessment policies, as well as the role of teacher training to achieve that balance. Participants were also engaged in debates about the role of formative assessment to promote 21st century skills together with the assessment of subject-bound competencies.

Emphasis was also put on the need to align curriculum/learning, teacher policies and practices, and assessment with a view to implement Education Agenda 2030 and reaching SDG4 targets.

Experts from Brookings Institution, as well as African country experts who belong to the TALENT network shared studies and initiatives that can be adopted as models for developing modern learning assessment systems, including the redesign of the teacher training to build their capacity to facilitate and assess learning.

Participants had opportunities to discuss ways to implement a balanced approach combining standardised evaluation and CBFA as a strategy to improve learning. They had been involved in hands-on planning of possible national strategies to build capacity to use CBFA in the schools by facilitating teachers' access to tools and best practices, ensuring alignment with systems of standardised evaluation, promoting policy dialogue with educational decision makers as well as school community stakeholders.

They also shared their needs to be supported in promoting CBFA through technical training and capacity development in the use of strategies and tools. They agreed that a CBFA toolkit would be of great support for the African countries, provided it is based on context-based elements, including the usage of ICT, so that they can be customized to the specific country situations. They proposed that UNESCO's support through TALENT would help the countries in achieving this objective.

As a general recommendation resulting from the informal discussions and exchanges, a possible follow-up process might involve UNESCO and the TALENT network to devise a set of synergical activities under a regional umbrella including:
  a) achievement of political commitment around the idea of CBFA as a way to improve learning objectives, including budgeting costs and policy guidelines at the level of ministers and secretaries
  b) technical capacity building of local teams to conduct alignment of curriculum and assessment through an exchange platform with international experiences and best practices
  c) design of a regional toolkit containing CBFA samples and cost-effective implementation strategies (including the use of ICT tools) as a flexible and growing resource to use in local in-service training settings.

SECTION 2 – Conceptual elements discussed for common understanding

This section highlights a series of definitions concerning assessment that were shared with the participants during expert presentations to achieve a common understanding of the issues to be worked upon in the hands-on sessions.

- Regarding the **purpose** of assessment, two types were analysed:

Formative assessment is a continuous and frequent assessment done *during* the instructional process for the purpose of improving teaching or learning. To be formative, assessment must be immediately used to adjust teaching and learning so students can learn better, and teachers use it to determine what they need to do to move the student/s forward, but not for grading or promotion purposes.

Summative assessment is a time-bound assessment carried out *after* the instructional process, to ascertain if students have reached a particular set of learning objectives, for the purposes of marking and making decisions regarding promotion of students to the next level. It is normally communicated formally to the student and his/her family. In the case of standardized testing, the results can also be disseminated to the public at large.

- Regarding the **function** of assessment, three types were discussed:

Assessment of learning: is carried out for administrative reasons, marking the evolution of the student within the formal education system. It is summative in nature, and contributes to decision making regarding promotion or streaming, often with lifelong impact on students. The tests can be designed by the teachers, the school team, the district or national agencies.

Assessment for learning: is conducted to improve teaching decisions, whereby the results can be used by teachers and principals to research what specific students need to progress in their learning. By nature, it is formative, and it means (for the teacher) to identify what concepts, skills and attitudes are available to students at a given point of the learning process, if there are blockages to learning arising from confusions or misconceptions. The tests are designed by the teachers and/or the school teams.

Assessment as learning: implies involving students in the process of assessment so that they can achieve a notion of their own thought processes, strengths and weaknesses, and knowledge gaps. It means teaching students to reflect on their work on a regular basis, using inputs from the teacher and peers so they can take responsibility for their own learning and self-monitor their improvement. The evaluation criteria can be designed by the teacher, but are adjusted and shared with the students who learn to "own" them in self-assessment opportunities

- Regarding the **object** to be assessed, a classic approach (knowledge assessment) was compared with a more up-to-date, holistic approach (competency assessment)

A lot of effort is being made at the international level to promote an expansion of the assessment concept by moving away from a restricted idea where only factual or conceptual knowledge is assessed, and where knowledge is organized into neat disciplinary clusters, to advance towards more authentic ways of assessment that can predict the level of competence of students to use knowledge in context whenever they have to solve practical situations that are usually multi-disciplinary in nature. The strategies for this kind of evaluation are more complex and require a clear definition of the competencies to be assessed, in terms of different observable dimensions, and to create sample situations and tools such as rubrics that can be later adapted to specific contexts.

Special attention is nowadays being paid to so-called "soft" competencies or 21st Century Skills. Many international and national agencies have devised several schemes to identify and organize these competencies; for example, the World Economic Forum has grouped them into 3 categories: Foundational literacies, competencies and character qualities.

Exhibit 1: Students require 16 skills for the 21st century
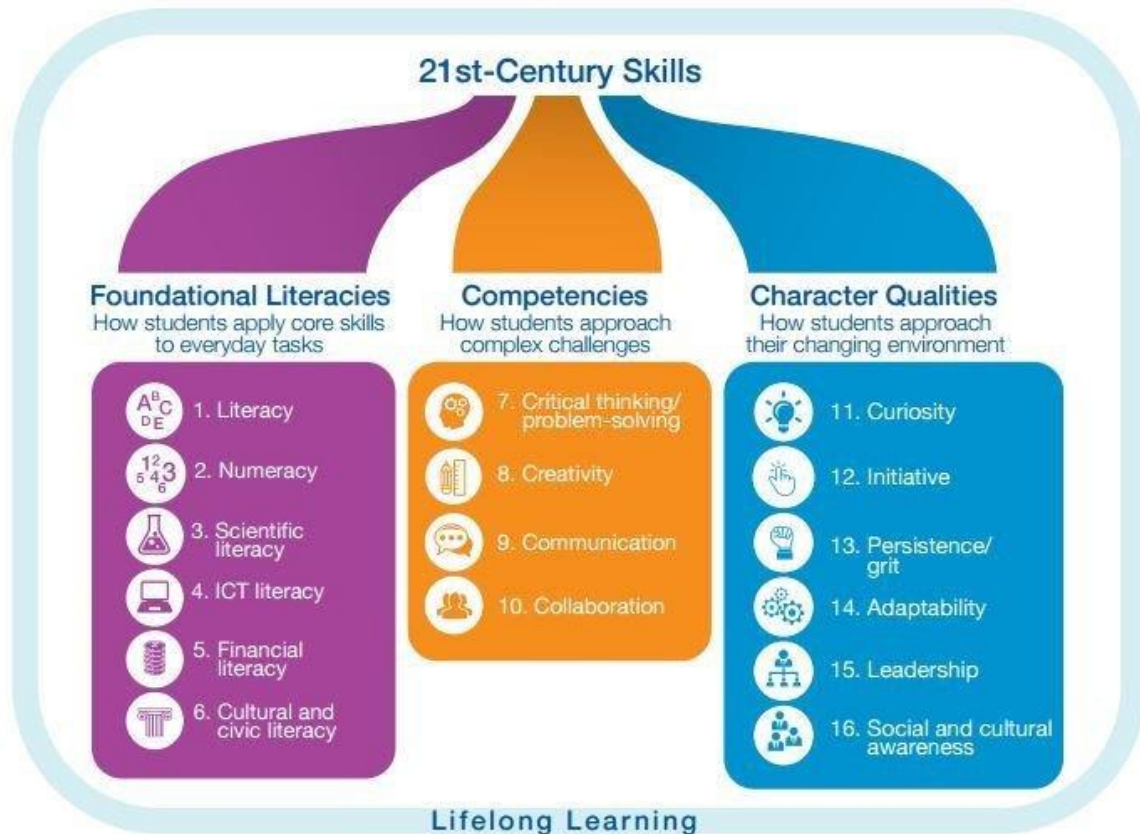
Source: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEFUSA_NewVisionforEducation_Report2015.pdf

SECTION 3 – Workshop takeaways and exchanges

Planning Ahead: what can countries do as next steps

Following the workshop presentation and activities, at the end of the workshop, a session of group work by country was used to explore local measures that could help to support teachers in the use of CBFA. The participants reflected on possible ways of cooperation in this regard, either horizontally across countries or with the help of the TALENT Network. Countries were asked to:

- choose from a sample list at least 2 products to be achieved and 2 processes to implement so as to promote CBFA in their context adding items if they saw them missing, and
- for the selected items, explore:
    - Who should be involved (stakeholders)
    - How long could it take (time frame)

Each country proposed a set of national strategies as a draft roadmap. Each draft roadmap is considered an exercise that must be validated by their authorities.

Some common aspects found across countries' proposals were:

- Availability of a written policy about formative assessment
- Samples of CBFA activities aligned with the curriculum objectives
- Advocacy to political authorities to improve alignment and assessment policies
- Revision of the Teacher Training curriculum

As a general recapitulation of the workshop, participants were invited to reflect in what ways the several activities have benefitted them; a list of answers is given below:

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Main takeaways from the workshop:

- Experience sharing from other countries
- Clearer understanding of assessment concepts and procedures for CBFA implementation, specifically assessment of learning/assessment for learning, formative assessment/summative assessment.
- Importance of alignment between curriculum, teacher education and assessment and other related areas and stakeholders, need to harmonize the assessment policies, guidelines and framework and tools and assessment techniques, as well as to improve coordination of assessment at regional, national, district and community levels
- Intention to reinforce communication and advocacy strategies on the importance of CBFA with colleagues at the Ministry of Education
- Clear identification of factors that affects the implementation of CBFA : the need for building confidence of teachers in using CBFA as part of the teaching process, to develop frameworks to guide and monitor CBFA, to explore the use of ICT to enhance CBFA, ensure strategies to be implemented are cost effective for scalability and sustainability
- A revision of the Bloom taxonomy that emphasizes wider learner outcomes, especially competencies or 21st century skills.
- The need to raise debate on the use of standardized tests in views of disparities in school settings and the tension between policies of direct promotion vs. summative assessments.

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SECTION 4 – Suggestions for follow-up

Questions and reflections

Open questions and reflections from the participants that remain as thinking points to be discussed in the upcoming months and activities:

- Assessment for learning, assessment as learning, continuous assessment, formative assessment are still unfamiliar concepts for many teachers. What kind of teacher development might help to further these concepts?
- How can the involvement of the community be promoted to put stakeholders on board regarding CBFA?
- Regarding the piloting of CBFA, what role should be expected from the upper levels in the administration?

- What practical strategies could be useful to practise CBFA with a large group of students? How do you scale up classroom-based assessment? How can CBFA be implemented in bilingual contexts?
- National aspirations and goals largely determine the curriculum design and assessment instruments. The implementation is affected by political will of the government. How can we increase the alignment?
- How do we ensure alignment of available contact hours and the teaching strategies and curriculum especially in allocation for different subject/content areas?
- What kind of capacity building is needed for developing and implementing 21st century skills assessment strategies?

Main lines of future cooperation

Comments from the participants regarding promising lines of cooperation with the help of the TALENT network were recorded during the workshop:

- **Knowledge/best practices sharing** has to be continued, especially those practical strategies which are country specific but can be inspiring, regarding the use of various assessments strategies and the use of technologies in support of CBFA. Setting up communication channels between countries (online platform) for sharing experiences, innovation and knowledge about CBFA, ICT – video conferencing, database, software, website, platform for collaboration amongst workshop participants, Continuous learning from workshop participants to gain more mastery over the subject.
- **Technical support** is needed to plan strategies to optimize classroom assessment: specific tools, time constraints, large classes, capacity building of teachers - Providing technical assistance, expertise to individual countries through designing of tools, alignment of curriculum pedagogy and assessment. Aligning CBFA to national assessments, strategies for scalability and sustainability, support on tool development for diagnostic assessments, CBFA, standardized assessment, support capacity development of national curriculum agencies, strategies for improving teacher training.
- There was high interest raised by the examples of **ICT applications in assessment.** The ICT component should be given more time and be included in future activities at the national level.
- Strategies to integrate **21st century competencies** in the curriculum and how can they be assessed in a formative way.
- Develop conditions for harmonization and alignment working at regional level to **build political support** from the Ministerial authorities to lead a process that avoids incoherent efforts in assessment, curriculum and teaching.

ANNEX: AGENDA

Time	Session Title	Facilitators / moderators
colspan	*Day 1 : Setting the ground*	
8.30 – 9.00	**Participants registration**	TALENT / IICBA
9.00 – 9.30	**Welcoming remarks**	Yumiko Yokozeki (Director - IICBA) H. E. State Minister Nebil Mahadi (Ministry of Education Ethiopia)
9.30 – 10.00	**Introduction of participants and ice-breaker**	Maty Gueye (TALENT Secretariat)
10.00 - 10.20	**Introduction to TALENT and the workshop**	Davide Ruscelli (TALENT Secretariat)
10.20 - 10.40	*Group photo and coffee break*	
10.40 – 11.00	**Results from the pre-workshop survey on common practices of classroom based formative assessment**	TALENT Secretariat/ Hugo Labate (International Expert)
11.00 -1.00	**Glossary and terminology**: Introduction to the concepts of classroom assessment, formative evaluation and education alignment	Hugo Labate (International Expert) / Dakmara Georgescu (UNESCO Beirut)
1.00 – 2.00	*Lunch break*	
2.00- 2.30	**Assessing in the classroom : addressing the formative vs summative assessment relation**	Hungi Njora (IICBA) / Hugo Labate(International Expert)
2.30 – 3.30	**Classroom based assessment of 21st century skills**	Helyn Kim (Brookings Institution)
3.30 – 3.45	**Building teachers' capacity to facilitate learning**	Helyn Kim (Brookings Institution)
3.45 – 4.15	**Updates from GPE**: KIX and Development of DCP's Learning Assessment Systems (GPE Indicator 15)	Ramya Vivekanandan (Global Partnership for Education)
4.15- 4.45	**Recap**	Hugo Labate
colspan	*Day 2 : Opportunities and innovations for classroom-based formative assessment*	
8.30 - 9.00	**Evaluation of Day 1**	Dakmara Georgescu
9.00 - 9.45	**Learning from promising and innovative practices in ensuring effective use of formative classroom-based assessment: country presentations**	Davide Ruscelli / Maty Gueye (TALENT Secretariat)
9.45 – 10.45	**Basic concepts to design quality classroom-based formative assessments**	Hungi Njora (IICBA)
10.45 – 11.00	*Coffee break*	
11.00 – 1.00	**Group work:** Developing support strategies and tools for teachers in the use of classroom-based formative assessment (p.1)	Hugo Labate (International Expert) / Dakmara Georgescu (UNESCO Beirut) / Davide Ruscelli (TALENT Secretariat / UNESCO Dakar)

1.00 – 2.00	Lunch-break	
2.00 – 2.45	**Harnessing ICT in continuously assessing learning and providing feedback to students**: promising practices from Sub-Saharan Africa	Engida Temechegn (IICBA)
2.45 - 3.45	**The role of formative assessment in reaching curriculum's objectives**	Dakmara Georgescu (UNESCO Beirut) / Hugo Labate (International Expert)
3.45 – 4.15	**Learning from promising and innovative practices in ensuring effective use of formative classroom-based assessment: country presentations (pt.2)**	
4.15 – 4.30	**Recap**	
Day 3 : Policy support for improved teachers' assessment capacity		
9.00 – 9.20	**Evaluation of Day 2**	
9.20 - 10.40	**Round-table on the tension between classroom-based formative assessment and standardised assessment : Q+As ???**	Marcelo Souto (IIEP Pôle Dakar / TALENT Steering group)
10.40 – 11.00	Coffee- break	
11.00-12.30	**Group work:** Developing support strategies and tools for teachers in the use of classroom-based formative assessment (p.2)	Hugo Labate (International Expert) / Dakmara Georgescu (UNESCO Beirut) / Davide Ruscelli (TALENT Secretariat / UNESCO Dakar)
12.30 - 1.30	Lunch break	
1.30 – 2.30	**Scoring, analysis, and reporting of classroom assessment data:** presentation from countries and plenary discussion	Hungi Njora (IICBA) / Dakmara Georgescu (UNESCO Beirut)
2.30 - 3.15	**Formative assessment national / regional support tools:** work-plan and way forward	Hugo Labate (International Expert)
3.15 – 3.30	**Workshop evaluation (evaluation form after the lunch break)**	Hungi Njora (IICBA) / Maty Gueye (TALENT Secretariat)
3.30 – 4.00	**Closing remarks and issuing of certificates**	Yumiko Yokozeki (IICBA) / TALENT Secretariat

ANNEX: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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