

Regional capacity development workshop on classroom-based assessments

Date: July 2 - 4, 2019

Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Concept note

Context of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4-Education 2030 Agenda

The SDG4 - Education 2030 Agenda calls on governments to ensure equitable, effective and relevant learning for all¹.

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) shows that 8 in 10 children and adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa do not meet minimum levels of proficiency at grade levels in reading and mathematics². This learning crisis could threaten the progress of African countries towards the achievement of SDG4³, and by extension, the African Union Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016-2025. In addition, education plays a key role in building sustainable, inclusive and resilient societies and has reciprocal linkages with almost all other goals in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Therefore, lack of progress on SDG4 slows down other related SDGs⁴.

Education systems struggle to improve statistics on learning outcomes due to several factors, including, among others, the ability of teachers to understand what information are retained by students and what skills are students developing in the classroom environment. Teachers are not always adequately trained before they enter the profession, and they have few opportunities to renew their skills and approaches to teaching. This includes, in part the use of learning assessment as tool for improving learning. From this perspective, assessment is one of the most important drivers of the learning process. Some evidence shows that there is a positive relationship between continuous assessment at the classroom level and academic performance⁵. Therefore, teachers are the essential link between the aims of educational policy and classroom pedagogy and one of the different factors affecting quality of education is the inadequate training and support of teachers in learning assessment tasks. As an example, "Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani, and Alkalbani (2012) found that teachers were lacking in assessment literacy knowledge despite having positive attitudes about assessment..."⁶. A critical aspect of assessment literacy is understanding the different forms

¹ UNESCO. "Unpacking Sustainable Development Goal 4: Education 2030", 2016

² UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). "More Than One-Half of Children and Adolescents Are Not Learning Worldwide", Fact Sheet No. 46, 2017

³ Ibid

⁴ Global Education Meeting 2018, Synthesis Report

⁵ NEQMAP Research Study: School-Based Assessment: Policies and Practices in the Asia Pacific

⁶ Beziat, T. L. R., & Coleman, B. K. (2015). Classroom Assessment Literacy: Evaluating Pre-Service Teachers

and functions of assessment. A misunderstanding of these may lead to negative outcomes, such as the proliferation of tests and quizzes. In order for education systems to meet the SDG targets for education, it is necessary that teachers benefit from opportunities to strengthen their capacity and knowledge in learning assessments to enable them to target their instructions appropriately, as well as identify corrective measures in students with learning difficulties⁷, but also in teaching in diverse classrooms. In this context, it is essential to promote classroom-based assessment practices as a key component of the teaching and learning process.

Workshop rationale

Formative classroom-based assessment is a type of “assessment carried out by teachers based on the learning that has taken place within the context of a classroom, without reference to assessment being conducted in other classes or groups. It offers feedback to teachers and students on the quality of the learning performance supporting its ongoing improvement”⁸.

This type of learning assessment is a key part of the teaching and learning process as it targets both teachers and learners. It helps teachers “know ... their pupils’ progress and difficulties with learning so that they can adapt their own work to meet pupils’ needs”⁹. In addition, it offers learners control of their pedagogical performance. “A teacher can facilitate ... by providing opportunities for participation and multiple points of entry, but students actually have to take the necessary action”¹⁰. Evidence shows that there is a positive relationship between continuous assessment at the classroom level and academic performance¹¹. Classroom assessments play an essential role for learners, teachers, school institutions and communities in measuring the progress made and identifying learning achievements, as well as accurately diagnosing the difficulties encountered and prescribing the means to solve them¹².

Therefore, classroom-based formative assessment can positively contribute to students’ learning outcomes if well integrated in the students learning process¹³. Given the pivotal role of this type of assessment within the teaching and learning process and the needs expressed

⁷ TALENT. “Levels of Learning are alarmingly low” if younger generations don’t learn, how can they contribute to the sustainable development of Africa?”, 2018;

⁸ <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/glossary-curriculum-terminology/c/classroom-based-assessment-cba>

⁹ Black, Paul and Dylan Wiliam. “Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment.” Phi Delta Kappan. (1998): 139-48

¹⁰ National Research Council. “Assessment in the Classroom.” In Classroom Assessment and the National Science Education Standards. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2001

¹¹ NEQMAP Research Study: School-Based Assessment: Policies and Practices in the Asia Pacific

¹² Assessment of school learning, CapEFA Mali, UNESCO 2015

¹³ IIEP Learning Portal. “Formative assessment in the classroom and school”, <https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/issue-briefs/improve-learning/schools-and-classrooms/formative-assessment-in-the-classroom-and>

by countries during the Regional Workshop on national learning assessment systems, the Teaching and Learning Educator's Network for Transformation (TALENT)¹⁴ is organizing a regional capacity development workshop on classroom-based assessments.

Workshop objectives and expected outcomes

The regional capacity development workshop on classroom assessments aims to strengthen the capacities of national technical staff of ministries at director level to strengthen capacities of teachers to address assessment issues in the classroom, but also to encourage national authorities to incorporate assessment in teacher training programmes.

At the end of the workshop, delegates from participating countries will be able to:

- Identify and analyze the main challenges in the use of classroom-based formative assessment;
- Identify key elements for the development of national formative assessment guidelines;
- Learn from best practices and identify suitable approaches and tools (including ICT) in terms of development, implementation and use of efficient classroom-based formative assessments according to different contexts;
- Networking among experienced practitioners, experts and educational cooperation institutions.

Workshop participants and methodology

The three-day workshop is intended for national teams composed of the director of curriculum and the director of the teacher-training unit, from sub-Saharan African countries. TALENT aims to include teachers from selected countries to inform the workshop discussions and create a foundation that considers everyday practice.

A mixed team composed by international experts on the topic of classroom-based formative assessment and UNESCO experts will lead the workshop.

The workshop will be conducted in the form of plenary presentations, group discussions and practical activity sessions and it will be preceded by a preparatory phase to start one month before the workshop. The preparatory phase consists in the submission of data on classroom-based formative assessment practices and relevance of this type of assessment in teacher training curriculum and national education policies. During the preparatory phase, selected participants will be asked to read a series of documents to set a common ground on the issue.

Logistics

¹⁴ TALENT was established in June 2016 to serve as a thematic platform to support the implementation of the SDG 4 through capacity development, research and knowledge sharing in West and Central Africa.



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The workshop will take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from July 2 to July 4, 2019.

The workshop organizers will sponsor the participation of two national-level directors from up to 12 eligible countries from Sub-Saharan Africa (only Global Partnership for Education's Development Counties Partners are eligible for sponsorship). Sponsored countries that wish to include other participants may do it at their own expense and prior agreement with TALENT. A maximum of five additional countries may also participate in the workshop, either with their own funding or with the support of their local education group.

The sponsorship offered by the organizers includes airfare (economy class), accommodation and meals.

For further information on the logistics of the workshop, please contact the TALENT Secretariat team: d.ruscelli@unesco.org; and m.gueye@unesco.org.

TALENT is designed to serve as a thematic platform to support the implementation of the Framework for Action of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education by 2030. TALENT has been one of the task teams of the Regional Coordination Group on SDG4-Education 2030 in West and Central Africa since June 2016.

The focus area of the network is teaching and learning, paying particular attention to alignment of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment, as well as issues related to institutional environment to support effective learning. Its activities focus on research, knowledge sharing, and capacity building.