

OPTIMIZING ASSESSMENT FOR ALL



ABOUT OPTIMIZING ASSESSMENT FOR ALL

Optimizing Assessment for All (OAA) is a project within the Global Economy and Development Program at the Brookings Institution. The aim of OAA is to support countries to improve the assessment, teaching, and learning of 21st century skills (21CS).

Facilitated by the Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP) at UNESCO Bangkok; and the Teaching and Learning Educators' Network for Transformation (TALENT) at UNESCO Dakar, OAA identified a group of 3 countries in each of Asia and Africa to work intensively over two years to design, administer, and use the results of classroom-based assessments of 21CS. These countries have worked collaboratively within their regions and share their progress regularly with other countries through their regional networks - NEQMAP and TALENT. OAA is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 – to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all children. The emphasis of OAA is on developing existing capacity and resources, building additional capacity as needed, and changing mindsets to cultivate and support the development of assessment expertise associated with 21CS within the participating countries and regions.

PROJECT APPROACH

Between December 2017 and April 2020, the OAA project is supporting the use of educational assessment as a tool for improving student learning, and to encourage effective assessment, teaching, and learning of 21CS. In contrast with high-stakes assessment, the focus of OAA is on classroom-based assessment of 21CS to improve teaching and learning. OAA aims to support the following two overarching goals:

1. To develop capacity among teachers on the use of classroom-level assessment of 21CS to support learning,
2. To develop best practices geared towards improving the competencies and skill sets needed by the new generation of students to thrive in the 21st century.

OAA's approach is through collaborative learning, building upon existing expertise and strengths by working alongside countries and regions. With regional organizations in Africa and Asia, OAA has convened education policymakers and key stakeholders from several countries in each region to work on assessment activities, priorities, and best practices. Learnings from the project are being shared through regional workshops. This information sharing is designed to build a community within collaborating countries who can provide each other with technical support on 21CS assessment.

Phase 1 – Building Assessment Literacy

The first phase focused on building assessment literacy among global, regional, and national education actors. The goal was to lay the foundation for the assessment of 21CS, focusing on the following main areas:

- The different purposes and forms of assessment, from informal formative assessment at classroom level through to international large scale.
- How student assessment data can be interpreted in terms of learning outcomes to inform teaching and learning.
- The nature of 21CS and implications for design of assessment tasks; providing examples of current approaches to 21CS assessment.





Phase 2 – Developing and Implementing Assessment Approaches

The second phase has been implemented with a small group of countries to build capacity in developing learning measures of 21CS. These focus countries have considered alignment with curriculum and pedagogy, and convened policymakers and experts to ensure assessments are developed and implemented in step with the other core elements of the education system.

The focus countries selected target skills and ages/grades, with the number and dimensions of the assessment development varying based upon these priorities. However, the assessment tools are not be 'high stakes'. The purpose of OAA is to demonstrate how assessments can be developed which provide both formative information for teachers for use in class, as well as link to the provision of summative information for use on student progress at the policy level.

The main activities in this phase have been the following:

- Contextualize classroom-based assessment within national assessment frameworks
- Undertake the collaborative process of development of classroom-based assessment tasks with the focus countries
- Present progress on classroom-based assessments with the regional networks.

Phase 3 – Learning and Dissemination

The final phase from October 2019 to April 2020 will gather the evidence from outcomes of the first two phases and promote use of assessment for learning and of 21CS by disseminating findings to national, regional, and global education stakeholders. This phase includes:

- In-country dissemination events by members from Focus Countries
- Dissemination of recommendations for teacher professional development around assessment literacy
- Publication of research reports, briefs, and case-studies for a wide range of audiences.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

The OAA project is designed to contribute to systemic change through the following:

- Shift minds and improve assessment literacy among regional and national education stakeholders.
- Shift perceptions to the constructive use of assessment related to the broader education endeavor.
- Develop new methods for assessing 21CS to support teaching and learning of these skills.

By the conclusion of the project, we hope to have shifted perceptions of assessment among regional and national educators, built capacity among stakeholders for measuring learning of 21CS, demonstrated methods of aligning assessment with curriculum and pedagogy, and strengthened education systems' capacity to integrate 21CS into their teaching and learning. These are lofty goals, but they must be so if we are to meet the challenge before us – preparing students to succeed in a future world whose contours we cannot fathom, and to ensure their vibrant future.

