



Optimizing Assessment for All

Measuring 21st century skills

About Optimizing Assessment for All

Optimizing Assessment for All (OAA) is a project of the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at the Brookings Institution. The aim of OAA is to support countries to improve the assessment, teaching, and learning of 21st century skills.

OAA will identify a small group of 4-6 countries across Asia and Africa to work intensively over two years to design, administer, and use the results of classroom-based assessments of 21st century skills. These countries will share their progress and work with other countries in their region through 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 is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4—to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all children.

The project will complement initiatives such as the Global Alliance for Monitoring Learning (GAML), led by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics as the global standard-setting body for monitoring of the SDGs. The emphasis of OAA is on developing existing assessment capacity and resources, and changing mindsets to cultivate and support the development of a new generation of assessment specialists within the participating countries and regions.

Project approach

Between December 2017 and December 2019, 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 21st century skills. In contrast with high-stakes assessment, the focus of OAA is on classroom-based assessment of 21st century skills to improve teaching and learning.

OAA is designed:

1. To develop capacity among teachers on the use of classroom-level assessment of 21st century skills 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 in participating countries and regions. With regional organizations in Africa and Asia, OAA will convene education policymakers and other key stakeholders from several countries in each region to work on assessment activities, priorities, and best practices. Learnings from the project will be shared with all interested countries in the region through regional workshops. This information sharing will help to build a community of assessment specialists in collaborating countries who can provide each other with technical support on assessment issues.

PHASE 1 – BUILDING ASSESSMENT LITERACY

The first phase is focused on building assessment literacy among global, regional, and national education actors. The goal is to lay the foundation for the assessment of 21st century skills, focusing on:

- The different purposes and forms of assessment, from informal formative assessment at classroom level through to international large scale assessment.



- How student assessment data can be interpreted in terms of learning outcomes to inform teaching and learning.
- The nature of 21st century skills and implications for design of assessment tasks; providing examples of current approaches to 21st century skills assessment.

Brookings will work through the two regional networks to convene key stakeholders to share foundational research on 21st century skills and on technical aspects of assessment.

PHASE 2 – DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING ASSESSMENT APPROACHES

The second phase will be implemented with a small group of countries to build capacity in developing learning measures of 21st century skills. These focus countries will consider alignment of assessment with curriculum and pedagogy, and will convene various policymakers and experts to ensure assessments are developed and implemented in step with the other core elements of the education system.

The focus countries will select target skills and ages/grades to focus on. However, the assessment tools will 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 are 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 will gather the evidence from outcomes of the first two phases and promote use of assessment for learning of 21st century skills 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:

- Increasing assessment literacy among regional and national education stakeholders.
- Focusing on the constructive use of assessment in education.
- Developing new methods for assessing 21st century skills 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 21st century skills, demonstrated methods of aligning assessment with curriculum and pedagogy, and strengthened education systems' capacity to integrate 21st century skills into their teaching and learning. Achieving these goals will help us meet the challenge before us—preparing students to succeed in an increasingly dynamic world.