



## European Education Area Strategic Framework

### Working Group on Schools, Sub-group on Pathways to School Success

Concept note: Learner's assessment policies and practices to support inclusive education



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Concept note:

Learners' assessment policies and practices to support inclusive education

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## 1. Introduction

[Pathways to School Success](#), a flagship initiative of the European Education Area, aims to boost the inclusive dimension of education by supporting EU Member States in reducing low achievement in basic skills and increasing secondary education attainment. On 28 November 2022, the EU Council adopted the [Council Recommendation on 'Pathways to School Success'](#).

The Recommendation proposes a [new policy framework](#) outlining overarching conditions for effective action and a set of key measures for supporting learners, school leaders, teachers and trainers and other educational staff and schools in general.

Pathways to School Success aims to support a shift from the traditional overwhelmingly focus on academic performance, to a more holistic view of education, acknowledging that children and adolescents need a **balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional competences to achieve positive outcomes in school and in life more generally**. It considers well-being at school as key element of educational success and places learners' needs at the centre of education.

In this context, **assessment has a key role to play** to help adapt teaching and learning more effectively to learners' needs. Research has shown that timely and specific feedback helps close learning gaps and has a significant impact on learning, including for marginalised learners. Moreover, the feedback given through assessment has an important impact on the learner's motivation, self-esteem and awareness of their own learning process – thus also impacting their well-being.

Pathway's policy framework invites Member States to "...promote assessment practices that reflect and support personal learning needs and paths, in particular by making extensive use of formative and continuous assessment, and by combining multiple digital and non-digital forms and tools (e.g. portfolios, peer assessment and self-assessment) that are inclusive, culturally responsive, and participatory". It also invites them to invest in high quality and research-based initial teacher education and continuous professional development (CPD) to support school leaders, teachers, trainers, and other educational staff in their assessment practices<sup>1</sup>.

This brief note explores key concepts in relation to assessment, highlights some main trends across EU, recalls the main questions and discussion within the previous meetings of the Working Group. The second part of the brief explores more in-depth formative assessment and learner inclusion. It highlights key concepts underpinning formative assessment. It then provides an overview of the elements of formative assessment and the need to ground formative assessment in clear theories of learning. The note concludes with a discussion of key contextual elements.

## 2. Setting the scene

In this section, we first provide a brief overview of the different types of student assessments. We then note the main influences and trends that will shape learner assessment as identified in a 2020 foresight study (PPMI, 2020). The section concludes

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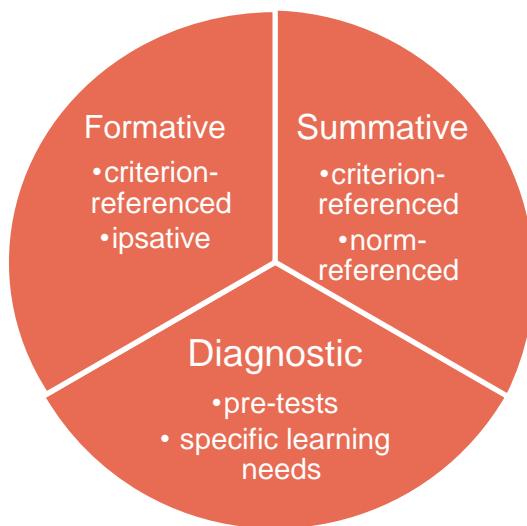
<sup>1</sup> More information, research evidence and good practices can be found in the [Staff Working Document](#) that accompanies Commission's Proposal for Pathways (see in particular p. 92-94).

with a summary of issues which Working Group members have identified as being of potential interest.

## 2.1. A brief overview of the different types of student assessment and main trends shaping the learners' assessment

Every education system integrates several types of student assessment, with each supporting different purposes. Student assessments may be used for diagnostic, formative, and/or summative purposes.

*Figure 1. Types of student assessment*



For ease of reading, the following definitions are proposed (Riley, 2017<sup>2</sup>)

- **Summative assessment** refers to assessment for the purpose of reporting learner's achievement at the end of a period of learning and to evaluate learners' performance;
- **Formative assessment** provides timely feedback during the learning process and has the potential to provide information on the learning progress of each student, thus enabling teachers and learners to make informed adjustments to the process;
- **Diagnostic assessment** aims at identifying students' strengths and weaknesses, knowledge and misconceptions.

In Europe's standards-based systems, **central standards set out the knowledge and skills – or competences – all learners are expected to have attained at different stages of their education**. Learner performance is measured relative to the standards/performance target (that is, assessments are criterion-referenced). Criterion-referenced assessments may be used with standardised assessments which set *cut scores* for different

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<sup>2</sup> Riley, S. (2017). The types of assessment for learning. <https://artsintegration.com/assessment-strategies/#types>

performance levels, or with rubrics which set categories for which performance is to be rated, definitions and examples illustrating the element being rated, and a rating scale for each component (e.g. below basic, basic, proficient, advanced).<sup>3,4</sup>

In contrast, **norm-referenced** assessment measures learner performance relative to the learner's peer group or a sample of a similar population.<sup>5</sup>

Formative assessments may also be **ipsative** (i.e., learners' progress is measured against their own prior performance).

**Diagnostic assessments** may be used to **establish a baseline against which the learner's future performance can be measured** (i.e. the baseline for ipsative reference). Diagnostic assessments may also be used to identify the source of learner errors (providing more detailed information that is possible through a criterion-referenced assessment).<sup>6,7</sup>

Priorities for assessment (e.g. the emphasis placed on formative, summative and/or diagnostic assessments) and how they are referenced (criterion-, norm-, or ipsative-references) are based on **more general trends in education**. A 2020 foresight study -- *Prospective Report on the Future of Assessment in Primary and Secondary Education* -- commissioned by the Commission, identifies five main areas influencing assessment policy and practice across Europe.<sup>8</sup> They include:

1. *The shift towards competence-based education*
2. *The focus on employability and lifelong learning*
3. *Digitalisation of education and technological innovations*
4. *The focus on social inclusion, migration, and diversity*
5. *Standards-based curriculum and evidence-based policymaking*

## 2.2. Potential areas for Working Group Schools study/peer learning of the Working Group Schools

Several of the influences identified in the Prospective Report were also identified by Working Group members as potential areas for further Group study<sup>9</sup>:

- Several WG members expressed interest in **exploring alternative forms of assessment**, including non-standardised assessments that more effectively measure learner competence and wellbeing. These may include, for example, formative assessment of learning through dialogue, observation of project work, peer- and self-assessment, and so on. Indeed, new approaches to assessment are needed in order to measure competences more effectively, and for assessment of social-emotional learning. (See section 3.0.)

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<sup>3</sup> McGhee, J.J. and L.K. Griffith (2001), Large-Scale Assessments Combined with Curriculum Alignment: Agents of Change. Theory into Practice, 40, 137-144.

<sup>4</sup> Perlman, C. (2002). An Introduction to Performance Assessment Scoring Rubrics. In C. Boston's (Eds.), Understanding Scoring Rubrics (pp. 5-13), University of Maryland, MD: ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation.

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE), <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fr/node/12278>

<sup>6</sup> Buly, M.R. and S.W. Valencia (2002). Below the Bar: Profiles of Students Who Fail State Assessments". Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 24, 219-239.

<sup>7</sup> Rupp, A.A. and N.K. Lesaux (2006). Meeting Expectations?: An Empirical Investigation of a Standards- based Assessment of Reading Comprehension. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 28 (4), 315-333.

<sup>8</sup> PPMI (2020). Prospective Report on the Future of Assessment in Primary and Secondary Education. European Union.

<sup>9</sup> See also Annex

- WG members highlighted the importance of **ensuring that assessment is inclusive and equitable**, as well as the importance of ensuring learners' representation in the development of policies and practices related to their assessment (See sections 3.0, 4.0).
- Group members noted interest in **alignment of formative and summative assessments**. While in principle formative and summative learner assessments need to be aligned (the focus on what is assessed for these different purposes should be the same), there are nevertheless some challenges, (See section 5.0).
- Group members also highlighted the **need for teachers to develop their assessment competences**, and to expand their repertoires and capacity to support diverse learner needs. Teacher competences to design classroom-based summative assessments and/or to participate in juries rating external assessments are also important. (See section 6.0.)

In the sections below we highlight selected studies relevant to areas Group members have indicated as being of interest. We first explore classroom-based formative assessment and inclusion. There is an emphasis on helping all learners to develop their autonomy, critical thinking, social emotional learning, and other key competences. Assessment is integrated in teaching and learning processes.

We also briefly highlight key the importance of including learner voice in the design and implementation of formative and summative assessments. We then note some key issues related to alignment and coherence of formative and summative assessments of learner competences. We conclude by noting the importance of supporting teachers to continuously develop their assessment competences.

### 3. Formative assessment and inclusion: some key concepts

This section begins with a brief overview on the origins and evolution of the concept of formative assessment and then looks at approaches that support the development of learner competences: *classroom activities and dialogue, feedback, learners' active engagement, tracking of learners' progress and strategies to address identified gaps*. Concerns related to inclusion are apparent in approaches that support positive classroom climates, learners' sense of safety, and learners' active engagement, even though the terminology of inclusion is rarely used.

#### 3.1. A brief overview of the evolution of formative assessment

Bloom (1968)<sup>10</sup> and Bloom, Hasting, and Madaus (1971)<sup>11</sup> first introduced the concept of *formative assessment* as part of their work on "mastery learning". They proposed that the same standards should apply to all learners, and that assessments be competence-based and criterion-referenced, with student success is defined by the achievement of expected competences. Instruction should be divided into successive phases, with learners being

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<sup>10</sup> Bloom, B.S. (1968), Learning for Mastery, *Evaluation Comment*, 1(2), 1-12.

<sup>11</sup> Bloom, B.S., J.T. Hasting and G.F. Madaus (1971), *Handbook on Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Learning*. New York: McGraw- Hill Book Co.

assessed at the end of each phase. Teachers would then be able to provide feedback to learners, addressing gaps between their performances and the learning goal (the “mastery” level), and adjust their teaching to better meet diverse learners’ needs.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to noting the importance of feedback, the mastery learning model also emphasised the need to allow learners additional time to “master” a lesson, and to provide alternative learning opportunities when appropriate. Formative assessments are used to improve and tailor instructions, teaching practices, and academic support to learner needs, and learners contribute to the design of their learning experiences and pathways.<sup>13</sup>

Concepts underpinning formative assessment have evolved since this early work. Formative is no longer seen as consisting of tests or quizzes administered at the end of a phase of teaching and learning<sup>14,15,16</sup>, but rather as an **integrated part of teaching and learning processes**. Clark (2010)<sup>17</sup> suggests that formative assessment is best seen as a dynamic process in which teachers and learners adapt according to learning conditions and needs. Allal and Mottier-Lopez (2005)<sup>18</sup> note that the integration of formative assessment in teaching and learning requires a diversification of assessment approaches.

Formative assessment has also been developed in the context of alternative education, including the work of Montessori, Freinet, Kerschensteiner and Steiner models [add citations]. These different models highlight the importance of student competence, autonomy, self-determination, and self-regulation.<sup>19</sup> In the Montessori tradition, teachers observe and support learners, and encourage students to assess their own learning progress. Freinet methods similarly emphasise the importance of student self-assessment and self-correction. Learners define their own learning goals and track their own progress. Waldorf methods based on the work of Steiner, prohibit student marks until the end of lower secondary school.<sup>20</sup>

The theoretical foundations of formative assessment were (and continue to be) underdeveloped. In the 1990s, three different literature reviews – by Natriello (1987)<sup>21</sup>, Crooks (1988)<sup>22</sup> and Black and Wiliam (1998)<sup>23</sup> brought together research findings from studies deemed to be relevant to formative assessment and established an evidence base on the effectiveness of different methods and approaches, including for lower achieving learners.

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<sup>12</sup> Allal, L. and L. Mottier-Lopez (2005). Formative Assessment of Learning: A Review of Publications in French, in OECD, *Formative Assessment: Improving Learning in Secondary Classrooms*. Paris: OECD.

<sup>13</sup> Bouchrika, I. .Retrieved from <https://research.com/education/what-is-mastery-learning/#3>

<sup>14</sup> Allal, L. (1979). Stratégies d'évaluation formative : conceptions psycho-pédagogiques et modalités d'applicatio. In L. Allal, J. Cardinet and P. Perrenoud (eds.), *L'évaluation formative dans un enseignement différencié*, Peter Lang, Bern, 153-183.

<sup>15</sup> Allal, L. (1988). Vers un élargissement de la pédagogie de maîtrise : processus de régulation interactive, rétroactive et proactive. In M. Huberman (ed.), *Assurer la réussite des apprentissages scolaires ? Les propositions de la pédagogie de maîtrise*, Delachaux et Niestlé, Neuchâtel, 86-126.

<sup>16</sup> Perrenoud, P. (1998). From Formative Evaluation to a Controlled Regulation of Learning Processes. Towards a Wider Conceptual Field. *Assessment in Education*, 5(1), 85-102.

<sup>17</sup> Clark, I. (2010). Formative Assessment: There is nothing so practical as a good theory'. *Australian Journal of Education*, 54 (3), 341-352.

<sup>18</sup> Allal, L. and Mottier-Lopez, L. (2005), op cit.

<sup>19</sup> Köller, O. (2005). Formative Assessment in Classrooms: A Review of the Empirical German Literature, In OECD, *Formative Assessment: Improving Learning in Secondary Classrooms*. Paris: OECD.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Natriello, G. (1987). The impact of evaluation processes on students. *Educational Psychologist*, 22, 155 – 175.

<sup>22</sup> Crooks, T.J. (1988). The impact of classroom evaluation practices on students. *Review of Educational Research*, 58, 438 - 481.

<sup>23</sup> Black, P. and D. Wiliam (1998). Assessment and Classroom Learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, 5, 7-74.

In subsequent work, Black and Wiliam (2001)<sup>24</sup> set out a **definition for formative assessment** noting that it encompasses:

*“...those activities undertaken by the teacher, and by their students in assessing themselves (that is, students’ assessment of their own work as well as their peers), which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such assessment becomes ‘formative assessment’ when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching work to meet the needs.”*

Research on formative assessment has highlighted elements of effective formative assessment, as including:

- Planned and structured classroom activities and dialogue
- Feedback aimed at helping learners to close learning gaps
- Learners’ active engagement in learning and assessment processes
- The use of diverse assessment tools to track learner progress
- Adjustment of teaching and learning strategies to address identified gaps.

International interest in formative assessment to improve learning has grown over the past two decades. In Europe, there is also interest in formative assessment to support competence-based curricula, including learners’ personal, social, and learning-to-learn competences.

### 3.2. Planned and structured classroom activities and dialogue

Opportunities for formative assessment may be embedded in structured classroom activities and dialogue. Teachers may gain insight into learner thinking through **observation, review of written work products and portfolios, student presentations and projects, inquiry learning, interviews, tests and quizzes**.<sup>25</sup> Structured activities are also well aligned with competence-based curricula, with emphasis on learners’ ability to apply knowledge in different contexts. Observations of learners’ work overtime and in different contexts allow teachers to identify patterns in thinking and problem solving.

Classroom **dialogues** also provide opportunities for meaning making in classrooms. Teachers manage the dialogue and pursue meaningful opportunities for contingent learning. Learners also explore ideas as part of a collaborative community – building social competences.<sup>26</sup>

Teachers may also guide students toward deeper understanding of a subject through **extended dialogues that build on a series of questions**.<sup>27</sup> Effective questioning helps to reveal students’ level of understanding and possible misconceptions. Questions that explore students’ understanding regarding the direction of causality in a process they are just learning about, or “why” questions, help to reveal possible misconceptions. Students

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<sup>24</sup> Black, P. and Wiliam, D. (2001). *Inside the Black Box Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment*. British Educational Research Association.

<sup>25</sup> Shepard, L.A. (2006). Classroom Assessment. In R.L. Brennan (ed.), *Educational Measurement* (4th ed.), Westport, CT: American Council on Education/Praeger Publishers, .623-646.

<sup>26</sup> Crossouard, B. and Pryor, J. (2012) | How Theory Matters: Formative Assessment Theory and Practices and Their Different Relations to Education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 31, 251–263

<sup>27</sup> OECD (2005). *Formative Assessment: Improving Learning in Secondary Classrooms*, Paris: OECD.

may develop and deepen knowledge by generating their own lines of questioning.<sup>28</sup> Classroom cultures that support learners to feel safe to make mistakes and reveal misconceptions when working with peers are also important.<sup>29</sup>

Black and Wiliam (2018)<sup>30</sup> highlight the importance of **coherent theories to support the development of formative assessment**. The planning and design of classroom activities, they argue, are preceded by appropriate models of pedagogy and instruction, and theories of learning. Plans also allow flexibility to adjust teaching as needed.

### 3.3. Feedback aimed at helping learners to close learning gaps

Several studies have focused on the most effective approaches to providing feedback to learners in order to help move learning forward. Studies have shown that **feedback is most effective when it is timely, is tied to criteria regarding expectations, and includes specific suggestions for how to improve future performance and meet learning goals**.

Empirical studies have found that feedback is most effective when it is provided within minutes (or “on the fly”), or at the most, within a period of days (Wiliam, 2006). At the same time, feedback should not be provided too rapidly – i.e. before the student has had a chance to try to work out a problem him or herself. Feedback that is non-specific (e.g. “needs more work”) or “ego-involving”, even in the form of praise, may have a negative impact on learning (see for example, Boulet et al., 1990; Butler, 1988). It is also important to “scaffold” information given in feedback – that is, to provide as much or as little information as the student needs to reach the next level.

**Feedback focused on the learning process rather than the final product, and which tracks progress over time, has also been found to be more effective.** Mischo and Rheinberg (1995) and Köller (2001) have identified several experimental studies where teachers tracked progress over time, showing positive effects on students’ intrinsic motivation, academic self-concept, performance, and attribution of achievement to effort as opposed to ability.

Beyond these specific methods, Hattie and Clarke (2018) address the importance of **building a “feedback culture” within classrooms**, comprised of several key elements:

- *Feedback sits within a formative assessment framework*
- *Motivation, curiosity and willingness to learn and deepen current understanding are the aims for all learners (i.e. the skill, will and thrill)*
- *Embed challenge mindsets, mindframes, metacognition and deliberate practice, spaced over time*
- *Normalizing and celebration of error is key to new learning*
- *Equity in learning is maximized through mixed ability grouping*
- *Feedback needs to be task rather than ego related*

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<sup>28</sup> Williams, J., and J. Ryan (2000), National Testing and the Improvement of Classroom Teaching: Can they coexist?, *British Educational Research Journal*. 26, 49-73.

<sup>29</sup> OECD (2005). Op cit.

<sup>30</sup> Black, P. and Wiliam, D. (1998). Assessment and Classroom Learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 7-74.

- *The development of a desire to learn needs to be privileged, and there needs to be an absence of external rewards which act as negative feedback.*

Source: Hattie and Clarke (p. 8)<sup>31</sup>

### 3.4. Learners' active engagement in learning and assessment processes

The **learner's active engagement in learning and assessment is core to effective formative assessment**. Clark (2010)<sup>32</sup> suggests that feedback is formative not only when teachers adjust strategies, but also when learners:

- *are engaged in a process that focuses on meta-cognitive strategies that can be generalised ...*
- *are supported in their efforts to think about their own thinking*
- *understand the relationship between their previous performance, their current understanding and clearly defined success criteria*
- *are positioned as the agent improving and initiating their own learning."*

Learners thus exercise their agency and develop their competences for "learning to learn" in this feedback process.

Cefai, Downes and Cavioni (2021)<sup>33</sup> highlight **the value of formative assessment in tracking learner development of social and emotional education (SEE)**. They observe that formative assessment is particularly suited to SEE, where students are actively involved in the learning process and where competences inherent in formative assessment, such as collaboration, self-regulation, and responsible decision making, are crucial components of the SEE curriculum. Cefai et al. further stress the importance of respect for the rights of the child, the use ipsative referenced assessments (i.e. that measures the learner's own progress over time), strengths-based approaches, inclusiveness, the importance of school and classroom contexts, cultural relevance, developmental appropriateness, and so on.

### 3.5. The use of diverse assessment tools to track learner progress

Tools to support classroom-based formative assessment can ensure that learning goals and standards are transparent, and support learners to track their progress. They include *rubrics and checklists*. They typically set out categories for which performance is to be rated, definitions and examples illustrating the element being rated, and a rating scale for each component (Perlman, 2002). They may support criteria-referenced or ipsative assessments of learner progress.

In the context of formative assessment of social and emotional education, Cefai et al. (2021)<sup>34</sup> prefer **individual-referenced – or ipsative** (i.e. self-referenced) – assessments, which support learners to track and reflect on their own progress and improvement over

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<sup>31</sup> Hattie, J. and Clarke, S. (2018). Visible Learning: Feedback. Routledge.

<sup>32</sup> Clark, I. (2010), op cit.

<sup>33</sup> [A formative, inclusive, whole school approach to the assessment of Social and Emotional Education in the EU - NESET \(nesetweb.eu\)](#)

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

time. There is also some evidence that ipsative assessments support better outcomes and academic self-concepts, particularly for lower achieving students.<sup>35, 36</sup>

**Digital tools** may also support effective classroom-based formative assessment. They include *e-portfolios* and *online collaborative platforms* that allow for peer- and self-assessment, *classroom polling devices* that allow teachers to gauge whether learners have understood a concept and determine next steps, tracking tools and digital dashboards, and so on (Looney, 2019). Open Education Resources (OER) and Open Educational Practices (OEP), where used within online learning communities, can put educational material more readily in the hands of learners and create opportunities for student peer learning and self-assessment<sup>37</sup>.

Importantly, the effective use of digital tools for formative assessment depends on teachers' assessment competences, and their ability to integrate use of tools to support learning aims.<sup>38</sup>

### 3.6. Adjustment of teaching and learning strategies to address identified gaps.

Adjustment of next steps in teaching and learning based on the evidence of student learner needs is a crucial component of formative assessment. This reflects the contingent nature of teaching and learning processes and underlines the interrelationships of assessment, pedagogy, and instruction.

Teachers need to be able to identify the source(s) of learner misconceptions, and to scaffold the next steps, allowing learners to work within their comfort zone (their zone of proximal development). A broad repertoire of strategies and resources to address diverse needs within a specific subject area and at different age levels, and a clear understanding of learner progression are necessary.

## 4. Rights of the child/learners' voice

Working Group members noted **the importance of learner voice** in assessment-related matters. As highlighted above, formative assessment highlights the importance of active learner engagement in formative assessment processes in classrooms. Yet there has been little attention to learner engagement in the development of assessment policy (both formative and summative).

Elwood and Lundy (2010)<sup>39</sup> argue that assessment policy and practice should support the principles and standards of the UN Charter on the Rights of the Child (CRC). These include: **(1) best interests; (2) non-discrimination; and (3) participation.**

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<sup>35</sup> Krug, S. and R. Lecybyl, R. (1999). Die Veränderung von Einstellung, Mitarbeit und Lernleistung im Verlauf einer bezugsnormspezifischen Motivationsintervention". in F. Rheinberg and S. Krug (eds.), *Motivationsförderung im Schulalltag*. Hogrefe, Göttingen, 95-114.

<sup>36</sup> Lüdtke, O. and. Köller, O. (2002). Individuelle Bezugsnormorientierung und soziale V ergleiche im Mathematikunterricht: Der Einfluss unterschiedlicher Referenzrahmen auf das fachspezifische Selbstkonzept der Begabung. *Zeitschrift für Entwicklungspsychologie und Pädagogische Psychologie*, 34, 156-166.

<sup>37</sup> Koseoglu, S., & Bozkurt, A. (2018). An exploratory literature review on open educational practices. *Distance education*, 39(4), 441-461.

<sup>38</sup> Looney, J. (2019). op cit.

<sup>39</sup> Elwood, J. and Lundy, L. (2010). Revisioning assessment through a children's rights approach: implications for policy, process and practice. *Research Papers in Education*, 25(3), 335 — 353

- **Best interests** – Elwood and Lundy (2010) argue that ‘one-size-fits-all’ assessment systems lead to inequality and discrimination are therefore not in children’s best interests, and. They cite Article 29 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), which defines education aims as including: the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential’ and note that while assessments have important consequences for learners (e.g., promotion), not all children adapt well to assessment systems.
- **Non-discrimination** – teachers’ perceptions of how an individual child or different groups of children are likely to cope with the demands of assessment can affect children’s opportunities to succeed. Elwood and Lundy note that how children experience formative assessment varies (see also Marshall and Drummond 2006)<sup>40</sup>. Given that formative assessment approaches have not been developed from a children’s rights perspective, they may not be implemented consistent with these principles.
- **Participation** – Article 12 of the CRC requires that in matters that affect them, children have the right to have their views taken into account the need to ‘assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child’. This right, which is considered to be a cornerstone of the CRC.<sup>41,42</sup> applies to policy making as well as classroom practice.<sup>43</sup>

## 5. Alignment and coherence of formative and summative assessments: the state-of-the-art

Working Group members highlighted interest in ensuring alignment and coherence of formative and summative assessment. Within classrooms, the same assessment may be used formatively (i.e., to support learner improvement) or summatively (i.e., to make decisions related to course grades, for learner promotion, etc.).

**Tensions between formative and summative assessment arise primarily in relation to high-stakes, external assessments, and classroom-based formative assessments.** In high-stakes assessment environments, teachers are more likely to narrow teaching to the content most likely to be featured in the assessment. Large-scale external assessments, as noted above, in many cases are not designed to measure learners’ higher order thinking. There are fewer incentives for teachers to integrate formative assessment methods that support learners to develop their higher order thinking.<sup>44</sup>

At the policy level, the tension between formative and summative assessment may be addressed, to some extent, by **ensuring that important decisions are not based on a single, high-visibility examination score**. Rather, the results of multiple assessments, administered throughout the school year, will provide a more accurate view of learner

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<sup>40</sup> Marshall, B., and M.J. Drummond (2006). How teachers engage with Assessment for Learning: Lessons from the classroom. *Research Papers in Education* 21, 133–49.

<sup>41</sup> Fortin, J. (2003). *Children's rights and the developing law*. 2nd ed. London: Butterworths.

<sup>42</sup> Freeman, M. 2000. The future of children's rights. *Children and Society* 14, no. 4: 277–93.

<sup>43</sup> Lundy, L. (2007). 'Voice is not enough': Conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child for Education. *British Educational Research Journal*, 33, (6), 927–42.

<sup>44</sup> Looney, J.W. (2011). Alignment in Complex Education Systems: Achieving Balance and Coherence, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 64, Paris: OECD.

capabilities, and will also provide teachers with more information<sup>45,46</sup>. Local areas and individual schools may also develop their own assessments to supplement regional or national measures and to better reflect the local context.

## 6. Teachers' assessment competences

Assessment should not be considered as a minor competence, but rather as **central to teachers' roles and responsibilities**. Teacher competences to design and implement diagnostic, formative and summative assessment and to adapt teaching to support learner needs to underpin each of the above areas.

In their work, teachers need to be supported to:

- develop a coherent model<sup>47</sup> and approach to teaching, learning and assessment, and develop effective classroom practice;
- design lessons that integrate opportunities to gather evidence of student learning;
- respond to a broad range of student needs to adapt lessons to meet learner needs “on the fly” as well as in planning subsequent lessons;
- ensure that interpretations based on evidence gathered through assessment – whether diagnostic, formative, or summative – are valid;
- ensure that they are aware of and address potential bias in their assessments of different learners;
- provide opportunities for learners to express their views on assessments and take these into account;
- continuously develop their assessment competences – in initial teacher education and continuing professional development opportunities, as well as in school- and network-based professional learning communities;
- take on leadership roles to promote whole-school approaches to learner assessments.

Support may include: availability of pedagogical resources and expert support, including through the involvement of universities, education ministries, teacher networks, and consultants or specialist organisations; opportunities for teachers to pilot new approaches, and to collaborate with peers in their own and in other schools to support shifts in behaviours and professional beliefs.

Strong and sustained political commitment to new assessment approaches is essential for successful implementation of new competence frameworks and changes in student assessment. Teacher engagement in policy design and implementation processes can build trust and ownership in initiatives.

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<sup>45</sup> Baker, E.L. (2004). Aligning Curriculum, Standards, and Assessments: Fulfilling the Promise of School Reform, University of California, Los Angeles.: National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST),

<sup>46</sup> Abu-Alhija, F.N. (2007). Large Scale Testing: Benefits and Pitfalls. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 33, 50-68.

<sup>47</sup> Learning theories, or models, focus on different ways people learn, with a focus on internal and external influences. Different learning theories include: behaviourism, cognitive theory, constructivism, connectivism, and humanism (for more information see <https://teachnhrive.com/teaching-ideas/5-educational-learning-theories-explained-in-plain-english/>)

## Annex

### Questions raised by the Working Group (WG meeting #3 – 19-20 September 2021)

Options discussed were to focus on either competence-based approaches or assessment, as originally foreseen, or to merge these two. Following a “collective mind map” exercise, the majority of participants indicated interest in the merging the two areas (i.e., approaches to formative and summative assessment of competences). Specific areas of interest include:

- How to combine “new” assessment practices with accountability approaches
- Designing assessment of competences for primary vs. secondary school levels
- New pedagogies that support competence-based learning and support differentiation [e.g., through formative assessment?]
- While a minority of participants expressed interest in exploring assessment (and no participants expressed interest in a PLA on competence-based approaches only), several elements may also be relevant for a merged approach. The “assessment only” advocates noted interest in:
  - Understanding what and why we assess (there were different viewpoints on whether a focus on assessment of competences is premature or not)
  - Whether assessment is for the student, the teacher or the state
  - National structures for assessment (summative) and its role in admissions, including equivalent assessment of knowledge
  - How to develop and assess wellbeing in schools
  - How to empower development of assessment at local levels, where students, teachers and schools are involved in self-assessment, and these are trusted and valued, and students themselves are more engaged in the assessment process
  - Examples of representative and inclusive forms of summative assessment
  - Assessment vs. evaluation vs. feedback / supportive feedback
  - How to combine summative and formative assessment
  - What are the two/three main issues about this topic we should focus on? (*to be addressed at the January 2023 WG plenary*)
  - How to achieve integrated/blended assessment regimes that align formative and summative assessments (3<sup>rd</sup> bullet point and below)
  - Learners’ perspectives on the impact of assessment practices, and how to make these inclusive and equitable. (2<sup>nd</sup> bullet point and below)
  - Developing a systemic approach towards assessment, and how this is linked to other issues: curricula, teacher education, school leaders, national perceptions of assessment. (throughout in discussions on standards-based systems and alignment)
  - Assessment and disadvantaged groups (embedded in references to inclusion)
  - How to achieve integrated/blended assessment regimes that align formative and summative assessments (3<sup>rd</sup> bullet point and below)

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- Learners' perspectives on the impact of assessment practices, and how to make these inclusive and equitable. (2<sup>nd</sup> bullet point and below)
- Developing a systemic approach towards assessment, and how this is linked to other issues: curricula, teacher education, school leaders, national perceptions of assessment. (throughout in discussions on standards-based systems and alignment)
- Assessment and disadvantaged groups (embedded in references to inclusion)

