

EQUITY AND FAIRNESS-ORIENTED ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Executive Summary



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Equity and Fairness-Oriented Analysis of School Classroom Assessment Practices to Identify Policy Recommendations for Improvement of Student Learning Outcomes was commissioned by UNICEF within the framework of the Education Sector Plan Development Grant (ESPDG) to the Republic of Armenia from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The study was developed through close consultation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports (MoESCS). The study was conducted by an expert team, peer reviewed by independent reviewers and reviewed by staff and consultants from UNICEF and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), respectively the Grant Agent and the Coordinating Agency, selected by the Local Education Group (LEG), which was established by the MoESCS within the framework of partnership with the GPE.

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This report was prepared by a core team consisting of the following consultants: Anna Aleksanyan (Team Leader), Mher Davtyan (Senior Expert), and Goharik Tigranyan (Junior Expert) with the assistance of an independent sociologist (Anna Khachatryan) who jointly with the core team carried out the focus group discussions and key expert and key individual interviews with school principals and transcribed the data, with the assistance of a number of volunteers (Mane Alexanyan, Mane Babajanyan, Milena Hayrapetyan, and Varduhi Melkonyan). We are thankful also to our former core team members Tigran Mnatsakanyan (Senior expert) and Sara Manchakian (Junior expert) for their contribution at the beginning of the project. The work was carried out under the overall guidance of Alvard Poghosyan (Education Specialist, UNICEF) and Arman Gasparyan (Education Officer, UNICEF). Ramya Vivekanandan (Senior Education Specialist, Global Partnership for Education (GPE)) and Medjy Pierre-Louis (Learning Assessments Consultant, GPE) carried out a three-day orientation session to guide the team on application of the Analysis of National Learning Assessment Systems (ANLAS).

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and its pedagogical training and implementation.

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Rationale, Purpose, and Objectives:

The activities to outline findings related to fairness and equity in classroom assessment, to explore policies and practices in student classroom assessment, to discuss actions by important players in the field, to focus professional development for educators, and to inform leadership practices in Armenia defined by the **Equity and Fairness-Oriented Analysis (EFOA) of School Classroom Assessment Practices (SCAP)** and the discussions on Improvement of **Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)** contribute to the Education Sector Plan (ESP) in Armenia in the framework of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). The aim is to address SDG4 (Global Goal 4, proposed by the United Nations in September 2015), “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”, and SDG 4.1, “By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes” (Goal 4: QUALITY EDUCATION). At the global level, SDG4 has reinforced the need for learning assessment in order to establish and monitor education quality and learning progress.

To compliment an evidence-based approach and robust understanding of ways of improvement, a comprehensive analysis of school classroom assessment practices was carried out in August 2021-February 2022 commissioned by UNICEF within the framework of the Education Sector Plan Development Grant (ESPDG) to the Republic of Armenia from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and developed through close consultation with the MoESCS.

The **aim** of the study was to support an improvement in Armenia’s classroom assessment policy and practices as well as the national learning assessment system through comprehensive system analysis and policy recommendations that are pedagogically sound, research-evidenced, appropriate, and systemic, to support classroom assessment that is fair and equitable to all students. The **secondary aim** of this study was to underpin an Equitable and Fair-Oriented Classroom Assessment (EFOCA) approach/optimal framework to Armenia’s education sector through analyses of data from the 2021-2022 Tavush pilot programme of the new curriculum framework and assessment procedures.

The **specific objectives** of this Study were: a) to complete a robust and comprehensive literature review, followed by an overview of local legal framework and existing regulations, comprehensive desk-research, and secondary analysis of existing raw data and relevant statistics; b) to design the methodology and the tools for data collection from the key stakeholders and beneficiaries, including local and regional actors, such as the education departments of regional authorities, teachers, students, and other target groups; c) to manage the quantitative data collection and quality control of the teacher survey through the National Centre of Educational Technologies (NCET) of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of Armenia (MoESCS); and d) to collect and analyse the qualitative data from students, teachers, and school leadership as well as analysis and reporting of primary data from the assessment through close collaboration with UNICEF and MoESCS.

The analysis explored the following **key research questions**: What were the optimal theory and practice of classroom assessment as evidenced by international educational research and practice? To what extent was the current Armenian classroom assessment practice fair and

promoting equitable learning for all students, including the most vulnerable, both girls and boys, children with disabilities, or children with special educational needs? What were the key stakeholder views and understandings of classroom assessment, both in practice and in theory, and how did they compare to the international research literature and practice reviewed? What were the current limitations and the necessary developmental strategies and resources to address those limitations and to increase the quality of classroom assessment that is fair and promotes equitable learning for all students? To what extent were the contexts and assessment programs consistent with other elements of the wider education system, for example with learning standards and curriculum, the structure of the education system, and national education priorities?

Context:

Current education planning and development programs at international, national, and local levels are targeting the improvement of effectiveness in education by ensuring **equal access** for all, regardless of socio-economic and racial factors, to achieve a structured education without gender bias and harassment. They also aim to raise the standards

of **inclusive education** to a level beyond the basics of ‘data farming’ and numbers of ‘heads in school-counting’.

In the short to medium term, equitable access to education is likely to be missed due to the on-going effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a “projection that more than 200 million children will still be out of education by 2030”¹. Consequently, this alarming situation prioritizes studying the state of equality, inclusion, and human rights in education.

At the core of the SDG is the following: “Achieving inclusive and quality education for all reaffirms the belief that education is one of the most powerful and proven vehicles for sustainable development” (Goal 4: QUALITY EDUCATION). The SDG emphasizes “**outcome-oriented**” targets and **indicator** 4.7.1 focuses on the “Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment”.



Equitable Quality Education Systems (EQES)

are most likely to stimulate students’ full potential without considering student background (gender, race, religion, socio-economic condition, or any other factor) and ensuring **equal opportunities for all students**. However, in terms of fairness, students’ background can play a vital role in their academic achievements. PISA 2009 reported that: “According to findings of PISA 2009 students with low parental education, low socioeconomic status, first or second-generation immigrant background, as well as boys have a higher risk of low performance”². Hence, according to

¹Statistics Division: SDG Goals - UNSD - the United Nations at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/goal-04/>.

²PISA 2009 Results: Volume II, Overcoming Social Background: Equity in Learning Opportunities and Outcomes, OECD, 2010.

a report published by Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, one of the Indicators of Quality in a System of Next Generation Assessments is “Assessments that are Valid, Reliable, and Fair”. That is explained by different factors: “Evidence that the assessments are unbiased and fairly measure the knowledge and skills of students from different language, cultural, and income backgrounds, as well as students with learning differences”³. This fact is playing an important role in the inclusion of every student with different backgrounds.

In this study (as a result of Literature Review and Desk Review), **Equity and Fairness** were considered and defined as **Indicators of Quality Learning Assessment/Quality Classroom Assessment (IoQLA/ IoQCA)** of student’s learning experiences and outcomes which illuminate evidence to analyse four emerged themes based on the following questions: What is the understanding of Classroom Assessment (CA) as well as Quality Learning Assessment/Quality Classroom Assessment (QLA/QCA) by the target groups in Armenia? What are School Classroom Assessment

Practices (SCAPs) at the classroom level? To what extent was the current Armenian SCAP fair and equitable for all students? Which recommendations should be followed by teachers, school administrators, and stakeholders to ensure Equitable and Fair-Oriented Classroom Assessment (EFOCA) and Improvement of Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) in Armenia?

Methodology

The study methodology followed a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection to obtain rich insights, address all the objectives of the assignment, and assure triangulation of data sources and data collection methods. The detailed methodology allowed for the collection of all required information with a detailed sampling strategy, study instruments, and analytical approach, which were developed by the Project Team at the end of the inception phase and submitted to UNICEF in a form of a Study Protocol for approval and quality assurance. All the materials underwent an ethical review by an independent Institutional Ethical Review Board (ERB) and were approved.

³Criteria for High-Quality Assessment: SCOPE, CRESST, LSRI – Policy Brief, Darling-Hammond L. and others, 2013, p. 15.

Phase 1 of the study included a comprehensive literature review and desk review of secondary sources as well as focus groups with representatives of the stakeholder groups and lesson observations. The literature review incorporated the scholarly articles and research reports in the field of EFOCA and SCAP. In Phase 2, the insights from the first qualitative FGD round and lesson observations informed the quantitative survey. This phase encompassed the development of the questionnaire for the online teacher survey that was administered in selected schools across the country. In Phase 3, the qualitative data helped to explain the correlations identified through qualitative analysis done in Phase 2. In-depth interviews provided more explanations and insights. Furthermore, as the secondary aim of this study was to suggest a framework for optimal classroom assessment theory and practice in Armenia as well as to form actionable recommendations, in Phase 4 the draft framework and recommendations were validated. The practitioner input from Phase 3 in-depth semi-structured interviews particularly enriched those recommendations.

The qualitative data were collected through remote stakeholder semi-structured interviews and focus groups discussions (FGDs) with the

following target groups: 14-17 year-old students, teachers, principals, vice principals, school board members, and school assessment guideline providers. The total number of key informant and key expert interviews (KIIs and KEIs) conducted during the study was 55 (11 per each target group [(1) teachers, (2) **teacher assistants or multidisciplinary team members /psychologist, social worker, special educator/**, (3) **school principals**, (4) **vice principals**, (5) **key experts**]).

Overall, 65 people were contacted for interviews, 10 out of which rejected participation because of a lack of interest or time, and five participants said they were sick. A total of 15 FGDs with 3-8 participants were implemented with 99 key informants (see Annex 4). Lesson observations were done in accordance with protocols and the lesson observation tool.

The quantitative data were gathered through a teacher survey. The total number of the sample frame was around 1,755 teachers. The sample size was calculated to assure a 95% confidence level and $\pm 5\%$ margin of error by taking into consideration three criteria: years of teaching experience, school location, and subjects taught. The final decision on the sample design was reached in the Inception Phase in close collaboration with UNICEF. To identify the intended

respondents, the targeted sample was restructured into 30 micro-groups. As advised by NCET specialists, the initial sample of survey respondents was increased by 30% based on the usual response rate of NCET surveys. As a result, 2,280 teachers were selected from the NCET database (from 71 to 83 teachers in each micro-group, for example, 73 math teachers from rural schools with experience of fewer than 3 years). Responses from 880 teachers were received, which ensured different confidence intervals referring to the initially planned sample structure.

In order to address the research questions, and especially the first, a **Literature Review** (see Annex 2)

was conducted of published scholarly works and research results on specific topics, such are Quality Education⁴ (QE), Quality Learning Assessment (QLA), Quality Classroom Assessment (QCA)⁵, Classroom Assessment (CA)⁶, Quality Learning Assessment Standards (QLAS)⁷, Equity and Fairness as prioritized Indicators of Quality Classroom Assessment (IoQCA)⁸, Models, Pedagogical Approaches and Evidenced 'Best Practices' of CA, and Measuring Equity and Fairness in Classroom⁹.

A **Desk Review** (see Annex 3) was also conducted in order to provide a general **Overview of Factors Affecting Equity and Fairness in Armenia**.

⁴"**Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century**", 2021 (2022) AERA Presidential Program Theme AERA: Last retrieved on 11.08.2021 at https://www.aera.net/Portals/38/AERA%20Theme%202022_FINALMay13_2021.pdf; **Defining Quality in Education, UNICEF, June 2000; UNESCO Understanding educational quality**. In Education for All: Global Monitoring Report. Education for all: the quality imperative; EFA global monitoring report, 2005; 2004 - 137333eng.pdf (www.unesco.org); Thomas, S., Kyriakides, L. and Townsend, T. **Educational effectiveness research in new, emerging and traditional contexts** (p.220-245) in Chapman, C., Muijis, D., Reynolds, D., Sammons, P. and Teddlie, C. The Routledge International Handbook of Educational Effectiveness and Improvement: Research, Policy, and Practice. Abingdon: Routledge, 2015.

⁵Educational Assessment in the 21st Century: Connecting Theory with Practice, Springer, 2009.

⁶Handbook of Research on Classroom Assessment, James H. McMillan, (Ed.), Sage, 2013.

⁷Criteria for High-Quality Assessment: SCOPE, CRESST, LSRI ~ Policy Brief, Darling-Hammond L. and others, 2013.

⁸Criteria for High-Quality Assessment: SCOPE, CRESST, LSRI ~ Policy Brief, Darling-Hammond L. and others, 2013; Equity in education: a general overview, Luciana Castellia, Serena Ragazzia, Alberto Crescentinia, 2012. Equity and Quality in Education" OECD, 2012, <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/50293148.pdf>.

⁹Siarova, H.; Sternadel, D.; Mašidlauskaitė, R., 'Assessment practices for 21st century learning: review of evidence', NESET II report, 2017. From a formative evaluation to a controlled regulation of learning processes towards a wider conceptual field: Perrenoud P, 1998. Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice. Vol 5 (10), p.85-102.

Findings and Conclusions

Equity and Fairness-Oriented Analysis (EFOA) of School Classroom Assessment (SCAP) and the context of Improvement of Student Learning Outcomes allow us to underpin **Equitable Quality Education¹⁰ (EQE)** optimal framework with the **Equitable and Fair-Oriented Classroom Assessment (EFOCA)** approach. EQE has a central role in the conduct and acquisition of general education in developed countries that moved forward by the education research discourses on **“Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century”**.

The education research community has sought to find more effective ways to improve the quality education making it relevant, accessible for all, and inclusive for everyone in society. In accordance with “Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century” approach developed by the American Educational Research Association “...the COVID-19 pandemic, the pandemic of systemic racism, the economic crisis, and the climate crisis-that together lay bare the long-standing and deep disparities in our systems of education and call for a new charge. This

historical moment is an opportunity to build systems that realize the full potential of people and communities. It is a time for us to be laser-focused on understanding and redressing educational inequalities and building systems that embrace equity and justice. To do this, we must dismantle, redesign, and reconstruct systems that have reinforced and propagated structural racism, anti-Blackness, and educational injustice for minoritized people. We must move towards the reimagining and creation of systems that view opportunity and education as a human right.

Reimagining these systems also means transforming how education conceptualizes and engages a whole range of human experiences, identities, and practices such as language, Indigenous knowledges, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, among others. Creating systems that honor the full range of ways of knowing and developing, and of student needs will be key. This will require providing widespread access to transformative teaching and learning; creating learning spaces that respect the humanity and brilliance of all students and support them in developing their

¹⁰“Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century”, 2021 (2022) AERA Presidential Program Theme AERA: Last retrieved on 11.08.2021 at https://www.aera.net/Portals/38/AERA%20Theme%202022_FINALMay13_2021.pdf

full potential; providing experiences rooted in respect for the cultural, emotional, and identity-related nature of learning; and preparing young people and adults to imagine and create a more just and sustainable society”¹¹.

The Desk Review consisted of two parts: 1) Equity and fairness issues relevant to classroom assessment and the legal framework underlying classroom assessment in Armenia; and 2) Analysis of classroom assessment policy documentation. The review enabled the Overview of Factors Affecting Equity and Fairness of SCAP in Armenia. Armenia has made a number of efforts to ensure the implementation of classroom assessment as part of the national assessment system. Classroom assessment needs further development to become a robust system for ensuring more effective teaching and learning and improved student development towards automaticity. The same equity and fairness issues that affect the quality of education also tend to affect classroom assessment. As such, equity and fairness concerns of classroom assessment cannot be

separated from the systemic issues challenging teaching and learning in schools in general. Although there have been several attempts to create a classroom assessment system, the coherence among existing classroom assessment mechanisms is a challenge.

The secondary review shows that although there are official guidelines on certain aspects of classroom assessment, they are stated in different regulations, recommendations, and guideline documents, which makes it difficult to refer to classroom assessment guidelines in a single accessible document (mostly gathered and disseminated by NCEDI at <https://kznakgnahatum.blogspot.com/>).

During focus group discussions and individual interviews about **the understanding of classroom assessment by target groups** it was discovered that various target groups, such as teachers, students, parents, and principals, have almost the same perceptions about the set of **purposes of classroom assessment**. The purpose of classroom assessment according to in-school respondents is to check student progress and

¹¹“**Cultivating Equitable Education Systems for the 21st Century**”, 2021 (2022) AERA Presidential Program Theme AERA: Last retrieved on 11.08.2021 at https://www.aera.net/Portals/38/AERA%20Theme%202022_FINALMay13_2021.pdf



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make judgments about student understanding. Fewer respondents perceive classroom assessment as an equally important mechanism for making judgments about the quality of teaching. Classroom assessment is seen separate from teaching and learning. However, key experts recognize the gaps in classroom assessment practices. Many still approach classroom assessments as a parallel process to teaching, rather than an integrated pedagogical approach. During the FGDs and interviews, teachers emphasized the importance of students' perception of fairness. The main **challenge of equity and fairness**, according to many teachers, was the possibility of

subjectivity by the assessors, although some expressed that subjectivity was a normal and even effective aspect of classroom assessment. It was typical for most of the respondents to reflect deeply before answering what **equity and fairness meant in the context of classroom assessment**. Teachers and other target groups mostly reported that they did not **differentiate between equity and fairness in classroom assessment**. **Perceptions about equity and fairness** were focused around equality and fair treatment, rather than the creation of optimal conditions through individualized provision matched to every student's learning needs, so that students learned and

were enabled to express their learning through formative teaching linked to flexible assessments. Holding high expectations for learning progress and development by all students, and providing multiple means of information presentation, student engagement, and knowledge and skill expression, were not often seen as critical to equity and inclusion. The survey results also showed that most teachers claimed to have seen no influence or bias demonstrated by assessors and disagreed that assessment was an imprecise, inequitable process. However, FGD members with children who talked about unfair treatment and CA brought to light some controversial results.

Key findings in connection with **classroom assessment practices at the classroom level** suggested that **classroom size** had a **significant influence on formative assessment** according to many teachers, students, and key experts. Although this finding equally illustrated that teachers had not been pedagogically trained to understand and use formative methods such as 'guided group' and 'co-construction' planning to address issues of 'larger size' classes. The **multi-grade learning environment** was **not supportive of equitable classroom assessment** due to classroom management, the number

of students with special needs in multi-grade classrooms, and teaching methods that were not flexible and responsive to differentiated instruction.

Furthermore, the **nature of knowledge and skills assessed** are based on practical aspects of facts and figures, highlighting the importance of passing Mathematical and Scientific theories rather than being assessed on soft skills of critical thinking, presentation skills, comprehension, analysis, and good judgment. Teachers said that mathematics and science take higher priority in both teaching and grade collection. Perhaps classroom assessment was reported as more challenging across the humanities subjects due to the lack of teaching capacity in schools for planning and structuring the observation and measurement of higher order thinking skills, such as analysis and synthesis. Students were reported as less interested in PE, arts, geography, history, social studies, or literature, because of the lower future employment opportunities linked to those subjects. However, that pressure was reported as emanating from their parents' concern that they have scored highly on mathematics and sciences. Those parental concerns, which repeated continually over time, limited students' attention to whether they have improved their

fluency in literature and set a model for what the student should pay more attention to. That strongly influenced students' perspective of classroom assessment.

It was reported that **classroom assessment data** was more used for making summative judgments about student grades, scores, or cohort positions than for informing both teachers and students of specific learning issues which both could work together on resolving on an on-going, formative basis. Classroom assessment grades were reported to be usually presented publicly with accompanying negative and positive public comments. The insensitive 'failure labelling' which accompanied the negative commentaries affected student wellbeing and learning behaviour in the classroom. The focus for the students was on comparisons with others rather than on having analytic conversations on how to improve their own performance. The 'test-based' model of classroom assessment which is based on a 'correct score' did not produce useful data for analysis to inform about the holistic and actual development of students and their readiness for future learning.

Formative assessment was reported as being graded in many instances. This is strong evidence of a

misunderstanding of the formative assessment's core purpose, which is not to mark, but to analyse and share specific, developmental feedback for improvement. Assessment criteria were not clear for either teachers or students; therefore, it was inevitable that teachers would revert back to the security of the current 'summative' model of marks out of 10. The sharing of understanding that formative assessment is about supporting learning rather than awarding 'scores', will need further exemplification and modelling [at both pre-service and in-service] for teachers and time for familiarization for classroom practice.

When discussing **in-class factors challenging equity and fairness in classroom assessment**, it was discovered that feedback has been defined as being a correction, rather than a learning relationship between teacher and student, where strengths are reinforced and weaknesses are identified, as a result of joint analysis and discussion of identified misconceptions in student problem-solving or misunderstandings. Both students and teachers suggested that factors such as student social status, perceived level of intelligence, and gender affect teacher feedback. Similarly, teacher expectations of student success and student-teacher relationships affect student effort, and the resulting positive or negative

context then affects the results of feedback sessions.

The teacher's identity and professional development were reported as strong factors in students liking the subject and performing well in assessments. Teachers who worked with a multi-grade class faced - and should have anticipated and been prepared for facing - a predictable series of challenges relating to classroom management, differentiated instruction, multi-tasking, and checking a student's individual progress. A combination of these challenges has led to the presumption of a lack of equality and fairness in the use of the existing, flawed model of classroom assessment.

Under the theme **administration of classroom assessment, scoring, communication, use of data and quality assurance issues**, teachers, vice principals, and principals noted that there is no common and well-described framework of classroom assessment, or whether it is viewed as 'summative' or 'formative' (putting all the responsibility on the teachers). Moreover, teachers have a real concern about the new system of formative assessment and its implementation to be equitable and fair without taking too much time. The quality of training, resources, and guidelines is also in question.

Furthermore, according to teachers' responses, there are no **systematic support, resources, or guidelines** provided both by the regional/national authorities and/or school administration/management to the newly hired teachers. There is a wide cooperation gap between the schools that are failing to share resources and practices. Even with the successful practices and methods, there is a localized nature: sharing either does not happen or is restricted to neighbouring schools of the same community. Most teachers reported that even using the 10-point assessment scale, they face various difficulties to grade across schools with and from different backgrounds. Teachers also have difficulty understanding the 10 point assessment scale, which results in the reality that the same point can measure different knowledge and skills in different communities depending, for example, on the teaching context, style of lesson, style of teaching, and the set-up and prior teaching of the assessment theme or topic. In turn, this lack of reliability depletes the community's trust in teachers, which increases the parents' doubts about the assessment being fair and equitable. In addition, teachers express their concern about being confident in delivering various teaching and learning methods and their grading. For instance, teachers

face difficulties in assessing group work, which affects both the teaching process and the reliability of the assessment.

Parents and their engagement in the assessment processes

to be fair and equitable are also questioned by the administration of schools. They are mostly perceived as actors who are only interested in their own children's grades but not in the learning details within. They are also uninterested in the relevance of grades as indicators of the progress that their child might have or have not made during the academic year.

Regarding the theme **Coherence of classroom assessment and educational system at national level**, highlighting the **Perceptions of Target Groups about the national policy and guidelines for classroom assessment**, teachers, teaching assistants, principals, and vice principals identified several challenges and opportunities at the policy level: the classroom assessment of students with special needs; the alignment of initial teacher education content and nature with current policy reforms, such as the new curriculum reform; inclusive education implementation and the role of classroom assessment in both reforms; the opportunities and limitations of the new policy on eliminating students' performance

grading in primary schools and using descriptive assessment up to the first semester of grade five; and the lack of fairness in the current summative assessment system.

The current grading and assessment system is not conducive to fair and equitable assessment of students with special needs, particularly those with intellectual development differences. Their learning objectives and on-going assessment of progress remain ambiguous.

The policy on abandoning grading in primary school and using descriptive assessment up to grade five is a perceived opportunity to reduce competition among students and parents for grades. Many teachers, principals, and vice principals embrace the increased attention to formative assessment. All stakeholders agree that descriptive assessment may also restrict the culture of 'teaching/coaching for grades'. However, in-school stakeholders and many key experts question the time teachers spend on descriptive assessment and the level of support for formative teaching and learning.

Although the quantitative survey results show that different groups of teachers mostly agree that classroom assessment guidelines and regulations facilitate their

work, in-depth interview results suggest that there are many technical and conceptual issues with the resources and guidelines provided to teachers. Teachers, vice principals, and principals agree that methodological guidelines and regulations addressed to schools mostly facilitate the technicalities of summative assessment administration by defining the frequency, design, and implementation of summative testing as well as providing a 10-point assessment scale.

Regarding **pedagogical education and professional development for equitable and fair classroom assessment**, there are concerns about how initial teacher education (ITE), which is the same as pedagogical education, and continued professional development (CPD) align with the perceived challenges and needs of classroom assessment according to participants from the four target groups. The concerns

are with the practicality, design, and content relevance of ITE to the classroom needs of students and the CA relevant needs of novice and experienced teachers. As for the CPD, the main themes of trainer capability and credibility, training design, and methods are discussed.

According to study participants from all target groups, ITE does not prepare prospective teachers for enabling equitable and fair classroom assessment practices. Many regional and Yerevan-based pedagogical programs either lack classroom assessment components in pedagogical courses, or else those components are not meaningfully embedded in the professional preparation of prospective teachers. As a result, both newly trained, novice entrants to the profession and experienced teachers can hardly conceptualize any consistent models for formative teaching from their ITE about classroom assessment.

EFOA allow us to identify following Policy Recommendations for Improvement of Student Learning Outcomes (SLO):

Consolidated recommendations for improvement		Responsible Key Stakeholder/actors
1.	Revise classroom assessment policy to formulate clear learning objectives based on the identified literature for trajectories/strands of progression in each of the subject domains.	MoESCS

2.	Revise all pedagogical courses [because ALL pedagogy has/should have an ‘assessment’ component since assessment is integrated totally within teaching and learning] to include models and methods and core aspects of the ‘formative toolkit’ which all teachers will need for every lesson to support the development of the learner. The toolkit will enable the teacher to learn how to support the learning progress of their students more effectively.	MoESCS/ NCEDI/ HEI
3.	Eliminate ‘deep’ fragmentation between Ministry/NCEDI and HEI’s from the aspect of educational/ ‘assessment’ programs, including a strong focus Equitable and Fair-Oriented Classroom Assessment (EFOCA) approach/ EQE optimal framework to practically prepare them for equitable quality teaching and learning and sensitize them around fairness and discrimination-related issues.	MoESCS/ NCEDI/ HEI
4.	Urgently revise and make possible the coherence among subject curriculum [Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) in it], school teaching methods, Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs), and the content of ITE and CPD/ pre-service and in-service teacher training programs [for teachers across all phases from primary education to those teaching in HEIs] per the EFOCA approach.	MoESCS/ NCEDI/ HEI
5.	Focus on the School Classroom Assessment Practices (SCAP) and CATs component of ITE and CPD/pre-service and in-service trainings and ensure consistent contribution to the development of them, organizing ToTs (Training of Trainers), and elaborating Modules of ToTs according to EFOCA approach/EQE optimal framework.	MoESCS/ NCEDI
6.	Create guidelines, manuals, and guidebooks for teachers, teacher assistants, pedagogical education educators/trainers, parents, and school administrators to explain the EFOCA approach, provide CATs to teachers, and implement Quality Learning Assessment/Quality Classroom Assessment (QLA/QCA) for consistent improvement of SLO.	MoESCS/ NCEDI
7.	Organize trainings on the methods and modes of formative teaching, learning, and assessment.	MoESCS

8.	Design a logically organized set of purposes of classroom assessment and communicate it to the stakeholders. This should be done at the school level to guarantee that the need for classroom assessment is well understood and its efficiency is understandable.	NCEDI
9.	Be guided by the Principles for EFOCA Practices that is evidenced at the international level.	NCEDI
10.	Embed a strong focus on equity, inclusion, and fairness at the core of all teaching, learning, and assessment modules and training workshops/sessions.	NCEDI
11.	Urgently review and subsequently use the evidence from the review to revise summative grading. The evidence may lead to abandoning of the practice of automatically counting the average score from all marks that students get throughout the semester: create a low-stakes, light-touch, sample model of summative reporting for the MoESCS to base its accounting and accountability of budget data for transparency at the political level.	NCEDI
12.	Urgently include formative classroom assessment policy objectives and methods as essential within initial teacher education/continuous development in-service modules and programs so that initial teacher education can model CA as key components.	NCEDI; Pre-service/ in-service teacher training organisations
13.	Require teachers (within trainings/attestations) to demonstrate detailed knowledge on CATs, especially where it is important to apply differentiated learning/assessment techniques.	NCEDI; Pre-service/ in-service teacher training organisations
14.	Require differentiated learning methods and opportunities to produce equitable individual development. If those differentiated and multimodal teaching strategies [methods], learning opportunities, and experiences for learners are not created, then inevitably learners will have inequitable outcomes.	NCEDI; Pre-service/ in-service teacher training organisations
15.	Exemplify the relationship between teaching and learning and classroom assessment. Illustrate the developmental relationship through practical, accessible modes. Explain not only the requirements but also how to use modelling for each of the methods of a 'formative toolkit'.	NCEDI; Pre-service/ in-service teacher training organisations

16.	<p>Incorporate Teacher-Conducted assessment with peer-evaluation and self-reflection. This could be done as part of the student's portfolio. Formative assessments must also target soft skills and values, such as teamwork, self-knowledge, discipline, innovation, presentation, public speaking, strategic thinking, persuasion, and critical thinking. Design or use a mechanism or a tool to track students' performance both individually and in the group.</p>	<p>NCEDI; Pre-service/ in-service teacher training organisations</p>
17.	<p>Incorporate more practical work for teachers on identification and design of formative assessment questions and tasks and emphasize formative assessment as integral to teaching (assessment as teaching), rather than a separate process.</p>	<p>NCEDI; Pre-service/ in-service teacher training organisations</p>
18.	<p>The data collected from the formative and summative assessment needs to be collected in every student's portfolio to check the progress and competencies acquired throughout the year. The portfolio should not be an 'archive' that includes a combination of 'planning' notes for concepts which are supported by teaching and 'critical stages' which mark how the student's thinking has changed/prospered. A portfolio must be seen as an interactive document; it is more of sampling profile of 'evidence' for either internal or external validation, if required. Adding an additional point on the summative assessment based on the formative assessment negates its purpose altogether.</p>	<p>NCEDI; Pre-service/ in-service teacher training organisations</p>
19.	<p>Multi-grade combined classroom instruction cannot be the single solution to the issue of small size schools. While students in small size schools can and must have common time to socialize and learn with each other, their core learning is not always possible to facilitate in a multi-grade group. Paying teachers for a single lesson is not fair to their efforts: preparation and curriculum adaptation take considerable time from teachers which needs to be paid for acknowledged.</p>	<p>MoESCS</p>
20.	<p>In the 'school-wide formative teaching and learning assessment system consider school and class size and propose a collaboration model for primary teachers and teaching assistants, especially in large schools, to engage teaching assistants in formative assessment and descriptive report development for supporting primary and subject teachers.</p>	<p>MoESCS</p>

21.	Mandatory standardized teacher certification as well as robust and comprehensive ITE and CPD/pre-service and in-service trainings must analyse the needs of multi-grade teachers and embed training and supervision on flexible grouping, station rotation, teaching centres, differentiated instructional techniques, self-regulation, and social emotional learning for teachers.	MoESCS
22.	Develop and implement teacher's pedagogical training in classroom assessment methods, modelling from good practice in classroom contexts. Use formative pedagogy, either face-to-face or through visual classroom footage, to demonstrate the relationship between assessment and planning for teaching and learning as an integral, core aspect of the pre-service-and then the in-service-programme.	MoESCS
23.	Fix the technical issues of EMIS to make the electronic journals user-friendly for teachers. Conduct a small survey in order to understand what issues need to be changed or fixed.	NCET
24.	Come up with tools that will ensure more effective internal evaluation of the schools, paying attention and revising parts that include examination and analysis of classroom assessment practices and results. Create a clear understanding of why and how the classroom assessment should be analysed and used and what kind of change they could bring.	NCEDI; Pre-service/ in-service teacher training organisations
25.	Revise or design a comprehensive tool for classroom observation that will offer more opportunities for critical reflection on teaching and assessment, rather than rigid descriptions of categories standardizing teaching. They should be more positive and stress the importance of positive feedback to foster professional development (these tools can be developed for students as well).	NCEDI; Pre-service/ in-service teacher training organisations
26.	Create an opportunity and platform for schools to start inter-school and out-of-school cooperation. In addition, foster the creation of professional or subject-based communities (Communities of Practice is one example internationally modelled).	MoESCS

27.	The function to create subject-based communities can be put under responsibility framework of regional administrations, as a sub-function of department of Education, Culture, and Sport (this point can be added or clarified by a small legislative change).	MoESCS
28.	Consider the role of parental engagement in classroom assessment and propose parental engagement approaches and methods co-created with teachers. This is critical for teachers in order to support parents in understanding the new policy change in primary school regarding descriptive assessment and positively impact on parental beliefs about assessment, marking, and learning.	School administration
29.	Provide resources and develop capacity in regional pedagogical and psychological support centres for appropriate and holistic special need evaluation and timely support to school multidisciplinary teams.	MoESCS
30.	Update subject-specific assessments and guidelines with assessment scales, criteria, and tools for the classroom assessment of students with special needs.	MoESCS
31.	Adapt the national electronic assessment online platform for the classroom assessment of students with special needs so that their individual learning plans with relevant assessments are reflected clearly in the online system.	MoESCS/NCET
32.	Develop and pilot school-wide formative teaching and learning assessment systems with assessment resources, guidelines, and toolkits. This is critical for school methodology councils to have resources and options to make informed choices for formative teaching and learning and feedback provision in fulfilling their policy obligation for formative assessment system selection.	MoESCS/ NCEDI



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