SUPPORTING THE IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN POLAND

**(PHASE II)**

**Peer Learning Activity 5th July 2021**

**A CURRICULUM FOR ALL LEARNERS**

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Introduction and Background

The Education for All Model in Poland stresses that mainstream school is the place for all learners and recognises the need to develop schools’ capacity to welcome diversity, adapting teaching and learning to every learner through the development of a more flexible curriculum.

The Education for All model recognises the need for personalised learning with learners as active participants at the centre of the learning process. It sets out the need for learning and teaching to be supported by an inclusive assessment framework and introduces a tiered model of support. This model extends from universal support for all learners through high-quality teaching to intensive support for learners with more complex needs, involving multi-agency collaboration.

Deliverable 3 in the SRSP Phase II work identified the following as national level outcomes:

* A single curriculum framework that provides the flexibility for personalised content to support successful transitions to the world of work and adult life for all learners
* An inclusive assessment framework that supports the assessment of all learners, to inform future learning and to recognise attainment and broader achievement

In consultation events during 2020, participants – including learners – supported the need for flexibility within the curriculum, with school autonomy to ensure relevance to learners. Learners noted the need for changes in the assessment system to use more descriptive feedback and reduce reliance on grades and a competitive hierarchy.

Following the consultation events, further SRSP deliverables stressed that schools should work collaboratively to personalise learning, using the available flexibility in the curriculum and provide the support needed to ensure the progress of every learner. To enable this approach, school and teachers must be allowed to adapt curriculum content, teaching and learning approaches and assessment if they are to fully include all learners.

Building on the SRSP work to date, this paper aims to provide a framework for discussing some key issues to consider when designing a curriculum framework and related assessment arrangements. It will be used to support discussions at a stakeholder meeting in July 2021.

While it may be difficult to achieve agreement about essential skills, knowledge and values that learners should acquire through their education, there is a need to close the gap between societal demands and the education provided by schools and engage in regular review and collaborative practice to engage all learners and maintain relevance.

Above all, it is critical that curricula - and related assessment arrangements - include all learners and that diversity is seen as an ‘opportunity to expand learning opportunities, processes and outcomes and support learners’ holistic development’ Opertti, 2021 p16.

Key issues in developing a curriculum for all – a framework for discussion

Developing a curriculum that includes all learners may involve broadening the definition of learning used by teachers and education decision-makers. UNESCO (2017) state ..’as long as learning is defined narrowly as the acquisition of knowledge presented by a teacher, schools will likely be locked into rigidly organized curricula and teaching practices’ (p19).

In the light of the recent pandemic, a positive school ethos and relationships must support learner well-being (European Agency 2018). Hargreaves (2020) notes that children’s well-being is not an alternative to success in school but rather a precondition for learning, especially for the most vulnerable groups. Learner well-being is a prerequisite for engaging, meaningful, and sustainable learning which is unlikely to take place unless learners feel safe and respected and their social, self-esteem and emotional needs are met.

While this paper does not present an exhaustive list, the following are some key issues to be discussed with all stakeholders at all system levels to secure agreement and develop a clear rationale for decisions made regarding the strategic development of an inclusive curriculum and assessment framework.

The issues are divided into 3 sections to support guided discussion and will be linked to presentations in the meeting. Key issues are also supported by vignettes (presented in boxes) that give a short practice example that exemplifies the issues being raised.

1. What elements should be included in a coherent curriculum that provides continuity and progression for all learners?

It is no longer sufficient to enable learners to acquire discrete knowledge, skills and values. It is critical that learners can intelligently make connections across elements of a competence, integrate, and interactively apply them to respond to contextual demands. (Marope et al. 2019 a p27). To reflect this, the curriculum needs to move away from a traditional subject based approach. Skills, such as problem solving, critical thinking, ability to cooperate, creativity, computational thinking, self-regulation are more essential than ever before. However, skills are needed to complement knowledge and understanding – not to replace them (Alexander, 2009).

A national framework that includes a balance between common statutory elements and optional content should provide schools with capacity to provide relevant opportunities for all learners without the need for separate pathways. Importantly, Inclusive curricula do not lower standards or compromise students’ future opportunities (Flecha, 2015).

For learners with disabilities, schools need to achieve a balance between offering the same learning experiences for all learners and making sure that individual needs are met – also ensuring that such groups are not given a lower status or denied access to valued learning opportunities with their peers (Norwich, 2013).

Curriculum reform needs to consider overarching principles, aims and values

The curriculum at national level needs to be guided by principles, aims and values that set out a clear purpose and direction for work as in the following examples from UK Wales and Finland.

In recent curriculum development in Wales, set out in Curriculum and Assessment Bill 2020, four purposes have guided work.

The purpose of a curriculum is to enable learners to develop as:

* ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
* enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
* ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
* healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

The legislation also sets out general requirements. The curriculum must:

* Enable learners to make progress towards the four purposes.
* Be broad and balanced.
* Be suitable for learners of differing ages, abilities and aptitudes.
* Provide for appropriate progression for learners and includes a range of provision to ensure this (linked to ages, abilities and aptitudes).

Between 2012 and 2016, the new curriculum in Finland was based on the following: uniqueness of each student and right to a good education; humanity, equality, democracy and general knowledge and ability; cultural diversity as richness; and necessity of a sustainable way of living. The new curriculum lay the learning and teaching foundations but is adapted at the local level to take local needs into consideration. The curriculum was developed through a participatory process in which teachers played a key role. UNESCO (2020) chapter 5.

As Gouëdard et al. (2020) point out, a curriculum rarely follows a pure model and often combines for example, product or process models with a combination of approaches (e.g. content-based, competence-based). Gouëdard et al. (2020) note that: *two critical policies are necessary to ensure coherence around the curriculum reform: the provision of adequate initial teacher education and professional development opportunities, and the alignment of the evaluation and assessment framework with the requirements of the new curriculum* (p44).

This complexity requires strong and focused leadership with clear vision and communication, if implementation is to be successful.

In Ireland, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) advises the Minister for Education and Skills and leads development. It has a range of stakeholder representatives to ensure wide participation. In the recent review of the senior cycle (upper secondary), it led school-based reviews in 41 schools to investigate the purpose, strengths and challenges of current senior cycle and review pathways, programmes and flexibility. Each school was provided with a grant, access to relevant material, and was assigned an NCCA mentor for support. Each cycle of the school-based reviews concluded with a series of national seminars in various parts of the country. In 2019, NCCA presented a document to the public, for feedback. The document summarised the themes from the previous phases and identified areas for further development. The results of this phase will inform the final advisory report to be presented to the Minister for Education and Skills with the NCCA advice on the future development of senior cycle. Source: OECD (2020), Education in Ireland: An OECD Assessment of the Senior Cycle Review, Implementing Education Policies.

A coherent curriculum framework considers continuity and progression for all learners, with content that provides broad, balanced, and relevant learning opportunities.

Stakeholders should consider the content of the curriculum – core subjects, other subjects, cross curricular skills, additional elements (e.g., speech therapy etc.). Schools should be provided with some autonomy to plan a relevant curriculum for all learners according to their needs. However, schools will need to attend to the time allocated to different elements to ensure curriculum breadth and balance. Overall, the curriculum for every learner should aim to provide real understanding and relevant life skills not just ‘coverage’ of curriculum content.

The curriculum should also reflect learners’ real-life experiences (e.g., for learners with different cultural identities, home languages, disabilities etc.) so that it has relevance to all learners and increases awareness of diversity.

The model below shows some key elements that need to be combined (Pont, 2018).

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Opertti (2021) recognises that COVID has emphasised the historical fragmentation of education and education systems’ approaches, levels, cycles, provisions, learning environments, and educational content and suggests that this can be ‘*a powerful institutional, curricular, pedagogical, and teaching barrier to learners’ progression, and to the continuity of the learning processes*’ (p.7).

Key is that, from the learners’ perspective, there is ‘internal coherence’ between different elements within the curriculum framework and a holistic approach to meeting needs and providing continuity between phases of education, with smooth transitions. Both learner and teacher voice and agency should be ‘built in’ to curriculum decisions and monitoring/review activity planned to inform change for improvement.

Within the curriculum framework, there must be clear progression routes for all learners. For some this might be increasing breadth or depth of knowledge, gaining deeper understanding, improving the application of skills, transferring learning across different situations, or increasing independence in managing their own learning.

For others (e.g., learners with complex support needs) it might be wider opportunities or experiences, improved engagement, consolidation of skills or greater control over the immediate environment.

The curriculum framework will therefore be closely linked to assessment arrangements, with opportunities to recognise the progress of all learners. This requires guidance to help teachers to develop a shared understanding of what progress looks like in subjects, skills and wider areas of learning. Such guidance should support teachers to set relevant meaningful and attainable goals for all, with an appropriate level of challenge.

2. How can the curriculum be made flexible to provide for all learners?

UNESCO (2020) note the technical challenge in ensuring that ‘the curriculum serves equity by being relevant and in creating bridges that do not cut off some learners’ (p. 114). The curriculum framework should provide opportunities for learners - even those with the most complex needs - to access some common elements of the curriculum with their peers.

The figure below shows that, for effective learning to take place physical, safety, social needs must be met. The second tier shows content that can form the basis of a relevant curriculum for all learners e.g., digital, personal/social skills. For some learners, such as learners with disabilities, this may also include mobility skills, sign language etc. For learners with more complex needs and intellectual disabilities, subject knowledge and understanding may not be a high priority, but relevant content can be selected and adapted to provide interesting contexts for learning focused on individual priorities e.g., communication. For some of these learners, areas such as speech therapy and physiotherapy may be an integral part of their curriculum.

Increasing emphasis on subject skills, knowledge, understanding (depth)

Reinforcement of key skills – increasing independence

Increasing emphasis on key skills, learning to learn, using subjects (in outline) extended/adapted to provide broad, age-appropriate contexts for learning priorities.

(Source: A curriculum for all learners. Welsh Assembly Government, 2010)

Learning is not hierarchical and not easily compartmentalised and schools can consider aspects of learning that are general across subjects, to support planned consolidation, and transfer of skills. Flexible time frames for some subjects, will allow some learners to revisit earlier grade content and reinforce their understanding of key ideas, while other more able learners may require extended material (UNESCO, 2020).

Flexibility can also include adaptations that focus on processes, for instance provision of alternative materials in enlarged print (Mitchell, 2014), methods of communication (e.g., sign) or collaborative teaching (Tremblay, 2013), to enable participation and access to information.

Other flexibilities could be addressed through inclusive pedagogy for example adjustments to pace and sequence of learning, lesson structure, resources, and ways that learners can show what they know, understand, and can do.

Flexibility should eliminate or reduce the need for formal mechanisms to modify or exclude learners from some subjects or elements of the curriculum. It should also reduce the need for a tokenistic approach that forces content (e.g., early developmental targets for learners with complex needs) to be labelled to ‘fit’ under subject headings. Crucially, flexibility should not deny learners the chance to experience and explore different subjects and areas of learning e.g., music, art, sporting activity.

Some learners who need more intense support may have individual education plans, although care should be taken to ensure that these enable access to the curriculum (e.g., setting out necessary adjustments) but do not separate learners from their peers for long periods of time.

Within a flexible framework at national level, there will be scope for local decisions to be made regarding curriculum content and time allocation to different curricular elements. Schools should use this autonomy but be able to provide a rationale for their approach in school curriculum policy and long-term plans.

The following examples show how some countries have developed a flexible curriculum.

The National Curriculum Framework in Malta aims to free schools and learners from centrally-imposed syllabi and give them the freedom to develop programmes that better address learners’ needs. In addition, learning outcomes phrased as ‘I can...’ statements are designed to empower learners, moving to focus on what the learner has achieved rather than the teacher’s intentions.

Teachers receive specific guidance on how to use these ‘I can...’ statements in their teaching. This is done through the ‘Learning and Assessment Programme’, which includes examples of how learning outcomes can be attained, as well as references to content which can help teachers locate learning experiences in their subject area. Source: European Agency (2018) Key Actions for Raising Achievement p32

In July 2017, Portugal launched a project called the “Project for Autonomy and Curriculum Flexibility (PACF)”, allowing Portuguese schools to join on a voluntary basis. PACF provided schools with the necessary conditions to manage the curriculum while also integrating practices that promote better learning and was implemented as a pilot project during the 2017-2018 school year.

The pilot project has helped to identify innovative schools and good practices at the national level, while also helping to identify innovative teachers and good teaching practices within schools. The pilot laid a strong foundation to support schools in effectively exercising autonomy and greater flexibility as they redesign their curriculums. Source: OECD (2018), Curriculum Flexibility and Autonomy in Portugal - an OECD Review.

Non-formal and informal learning also play an important role in supporting the development of skills and competences e.g. inter-personal, communicative and cognitive skills such as: critical thinking, analytical skills, creativity, problem solving and resilience that facilitate young people’s transition to adulthood, active citizenship and working life. Such approaches can also establish better co-operation between different learning settings helping to promote a variety of learning approaches and contexts (Council of Europe, 2018)

It is important to make best use of the talents and interests of school staff and to develop links with local sports clubs, employers and others in the community to broaden and increase the relevance of curriculum.

Leaders and teachers at Calderglen High School, Scotland have developed a wide range of masterclasses and courses leading to national qualifications. These include some practical and vocational options to provide choice and meet a wide range of learner needs and interests. They include: painting and decorating, patisserie, electronics, songcraft (composition), design of apps and computer games, fashion design, media, make-up, outdoor learning, art and photography. These options can help to motivate learners, improve attendance, inform career choices, contribute to other subjects and allow them to gain qualifications needed to enter college. Masterclasses are often initiated by teachers who have a particular talent/interest, so this also provides motivation and engaging leadership opportunities for staff.

A range of vocational pathways in the senior curriculum supports the principle that learning is better in context. This practical approach engages learners who may otherwise be at risk of leaving school early and gives them a greater awareness of the realities of the future job market. The Calderglen curriculum includes work placements and an introduction to work qualification for learners with additional support needs (ASN), as well as college link and taster programmes. The development of school/employer partnerships includes a Foundation Apprenticeship in Engineering in association with East Kilbride Group Training Association. This allows learners to attend a workplace/training provider for two days per week. (Source: European Agency (2018) Key Actions for Raising Achievement p33).

In Iceland, the objectives of study and instruction and the working practices of pre-primary, compulsory and upper-secondary schools aim to prevent discrimination based on origin, gender, residence, class, religion or disability. All school activities take into account learners’ varied personalities, talents, abilities, interests and levels of maturity.

According to the Pre-School Act, Compulsory School Act and Upper-Secondary Education Act, each school is obliged to produce a working guide which is based on the National Curriculum Guides, but gives the school an opportunity to take its circumstances and special characteristics into account.

Six fundamental pillars have been developed within the curriculum framework. These pillars are literacy, sustainability, equality, creativity, health and welfare, and democracy and human rights. The pillars are interrelated and interdependent in education and school activities and are important for continuity within the system. They provide a clear overview of educational work and are based on the idea that active democracy cannot be achieved without literacy of society’s diverse symbolism and communication systems. They are also based on the idea that active democracy can only flourish if every form of equality between individuals and groups in society is simultaneously supported. Human rights can only be ensured by supporting individual health and welfare and by fighting discrimination and all forms of violence, including bullying.

Sustainability concerns the interplay of the environment, economy, society and welfare. It includes respect for the environment, a sense of responsibility, health, democratic working methods and justice, not only now but also for future generations. Therefore, it is unthinkable to support human rights without simultaneously espousing sustainability and balanced social development. Additionally, sustainability is dependent on the equality of social groups. Democracy and human rights and health and welfare are thus an integral part of sustainability and, at the same time, independent fundamental pillars of education. (Source: European Agency Country Information – Iceland <https://www.european-agency.org/country-information/iceland/legislation-and-policy>

The **Norwegian** Government suggested in a White Paper (April 2016) that three interdisciplinary themes are prioritized when revising the curriculum. These are Democracy and citizenship, Sustainable development (which includes both environmental challenges and technological changes), as well as public health and life skills. It is underlined that these interdisciplinary topics will be emphasized within the existing subjects' scope. They should not be at the expense of existing subjects in school. The Norwegian Parliament supports the development of a guide to the curriculum that provides support for the teachers' planning and implementation of these themes. (Source: European Commission 2018 p.97)

Social and emotional learning is compulsory and a core aspect of the school curriculum in Ireland. Social and emotional competences are taught as part of the ‘Relationship and Sexuality Education’ within the comprehensive programme of Social, Personal and Health education (SPHE) at both primary and secondary school levels, since 1997, when guidelines were published, and in-service training provided. The content varies over education levels, but includes mental health, gender studies, substance use, relationships and sexual education, and physical activity and nutrition. The aim is to enable students to talk about themselves, their feelings, their relationships with others, resolving conflict, developing self-awareness, self-esteem and coping skills. It also aims to develop students' skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities; to promote self-esteem and self-confidence; to develop responsible decision-making skills and critical thinking and to promote physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being. (Source: European Commission 2018 p.96)

3. What does an inclusive assessment framework look like?

There must be consistency between the curriculum and assessment frameworks (Marope et al. 2019b). In consultation, Polish stakeholders expressed the view that the system should rely less on formal grades and examinations and improve teachers’ use of assessment information to inform on-going learning for development. Crucially, teaching should follow the curriculum and not be led by assessment instruments or tools. As learners’ progress through the curriculum is assessed, any barriers to learning or additional support needs should become evident, enabling teachers to seek input from specialists where necessary to ensure that appropriate support is provided.

SRSP Deliverable 6 noted that on-going assessment for learning is an integral part of the learning process. It highlighted the need for the assessment system to:

* Support learning. This includes monitoring progress, using feedback to improve learning and adjust the curriculum and teaching approaches, identifying and overcoming barriers to learning and informing decisions about the type and level of support required.
* Describe individual learners. This includes summing up, reporting, certifying progress and achievement, allocating resources, and grouping learners for data analysis.
* Evaluate schools, initiatives, or interventions. This may require aggregation of data to monitor and evaluate support strategies, curriculum, teaching approaches and school organisation as well as work with other professionals.

Generally, assessment for learning can cover the full range of learning outcomes (hard and softer indicators) set out in the curriculum framework. The table below, taken from the New Zealand curriculum guidance (Ministry of Education, 2019 p7) sets out the move from assessment as compliance towards assessment that informs teaching and learning.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessment as compliance** | **Assessment that informs teaching and learning** |
| Progress and achievement are assessed only through the use of assessment tools. | Sound teacher judgments supported by a reliable assessment tool and ongoing classroom observations and conversations provide information on progress and achievement. |
| Progressions of learning are not well documented or commonly shared across the teaching staff. | Progressions of learning are well documented, with exemplars from student work, teacher observations, and assessment tool information. Teachers and students have a shared understanding of progress across levels. |
| Teacher judgments are not moderated. There are no common understandings of "what good looks like". | Effective moderation practices establish "what good looks like" at a range of levels. Student exemplars are kept to illustrate different levels of achievement. |
| Several tools are used to assess progress and achievement within a year level and learning area. | There is a school-wide plan that reflects the purposeful use of a small number of tools to supplement teacher observations and learning conversations. |
| There are no standardised procedures across the school for assessment tools. | Every teacher knows how to administer assessment tools according to the instructions from the tool developer. Teachers have time to discuss procedures. |
| Assessment is something that is "done" to the students, without their involvement. Students see it as a "test" and something to be worried about. | Students are involved in assessment processes and they see it as a learning opportunity. They’re motivated to do their best and they look forward to finding out how they’re progressing with their learning. Students discuss with peers, whānau, and teachers where they’re at, what they want to improve on, and how others can help them. |
| Assessments are carried out at times only to provide information for school leaders or outside providers. | All assessments are carefully chosen so that they provide valuable information for all stakeholders, particularly students and teachers, that can be acted on. |
| Analysis of assessment information is done by a select few in the school, and results are presented to teachers. | Teachers are assessment and analysis capable and take an interest in working with class/cohort data to establish student pathways for learning. |

Summative assessment often targets a narrower range of outcomes (e.g. core subjects of the curriculum) and can be used to ‘check’ on learning through, for example, tests. However, information from on-going, formative assessment may also be used to ‘sum up’ learning over time. Teachers can then base summary judgements of pupils’ learning outcomes on evidence from a range of sources. It should be kept in mind that negative impacts can arise when what is assessed reflects only easily tested aspects of learning. These effects are increased if results become ‘high stakes’ (e.g., being used for school comparison, ranking etc). Research shows that in such cases, teachers may ‘teach to the test’, narrowing the curriculum on offer and impacting on pedagogy.

The reliability of teacher assessment can be raised by moderation. Experience in several countries shows that although this takes time, there are substantial benefits to learning and teaching. Information on moderation purposes, principles and processes in New Zealand can be found at: <https://assessment.tki.org.nz/Moderation>

Any national framework for assessment should include ALL learners and should carefully consider different types of assessment and use of information gained from them. While most learners will be assessed against curriculum outcomes (subject knowledge and understanding, wider skills and competences) some learners with more complex support needs may require a closer focus on their individual priorities such as communication, inter-personal skills. One such approach from UK(Wales) is described below.

The Routes for Learning  assessment materials were first published by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2006 but have recently been revised and updated. See: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/routes-for-learning/> The materials have been adopted by schools in Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland (Quest for Learning - <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/quest-learning> ) also in individual schools/authorities across Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

The materials represent a step forward in including all learners in any assessment framework. The Routes materials focus on learners’ early cognitive development, communication and social interaction skills, and their interaction with the environment to help teachers construct, test, and refine theories about individual learning. Importantly, Routes does not support a tick box approach but is about using careful observation to build a holistic picture of a learners’ development. The materials include detailed guidance on the assessment process and pedagogy for learners with complex needs.

The Routemap below shows early development milestones, taking into account that learning happens along a range of different pathways (i.e. not hierarchical). Broadly, the left side of the map focuses on communication while the rights side looks at cognitive development. Arrows indicate possible routes between the milestones but recognise the need for flexibility. The materials recognise that some milestones (in central orange boxes) are likely to be crucial to all future learning.

The Routemap extends to the development of symbolic communication and early problem solving so as learners move beyond the skills on the Routemap, there are progression routes into early learning in core areas such as language, literacy and numeracy.



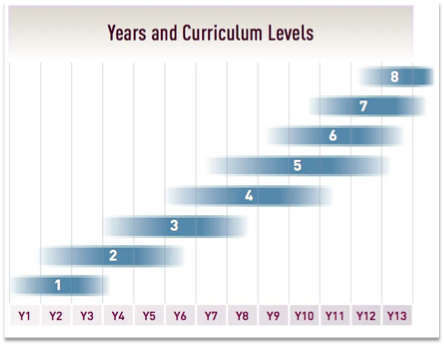
The flexible approach taken by the Routemap may also be helpful in considering the assessment of wider areas of learning and competences for all learners such as personal, social learning.

An inclusive assessment framework therefore sets out how learning can be recognised for all learners. The example below shows how this is approached in New Zealand.

In the New Zealand Curriculum, the learning area statements describe the essential nature (big ideas) and should be the starting point for developing programs suited to the student’s needs and interests. Schools are then able to select achievement objectives to fit those programs. The achievement objectives and content are described in levels which are approximately two year bands and show how they typically relate to years at school as demonstrated below. Assessment is supported by tools and resources such as assessment resource banks with samples of learners work – also progressive achievement tests. Learning progression frameworks describe significant learning signposts that students reach as they develop their skills in reading, writing, and maths in years 1–10. They provide a big picture illustration of the typical pathways students take as they make progress in reading, writing, and maths.

Source: Assessment for Learning: Using the right tools and resources to notice and respond to progress across the curriculum . Ministry of Education, New Zealand

<https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Strengthening-local-curriculum/Leading-local-curriculum-guide-series/Assessment-for-learning>



The Learning Outcomes Framework in Malta shifts the focus from teaching to learning and places the learner at the centre. Developed in 2017, following extensive consultation, it was accompanied by professional development for teachers which is still on-going to ensure that all teachers are confident and competent to align programmes of teaching, learning and assessment to the underlying inclusive principles identified in the Framework.

The first implementation phase mainly addressed the alignment between teaching, learning and assessment.Teachers were introduced to a new system of class-based assessment which aimed to safeguard the flexibility in teaching and assessment programmes and to keep track of learning outcomes reached, through learning experiences which pedagogically make sense for different learners in class. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate on tasks and share exemplars of learning opportunities of how Learning Outcomes may be attained.

The LOF framework helps educators ensure a seamless transition across the various cycles of schooling from the Early Years to secondary education. Additional outcomes have been added at Secondary level to provide learners with a broader range of possibilities to follow their interests and to shape their educational pathways through a combination of academic, vocational and applied routes.

The LOF approach has brought about the move away from reliance on centrally-based summative assessment practices and the introduction of systems of continuous class-based assessment.

Source: Paper prepared for Peer Learning Activity in Poland 7th July 2021.

While the emphasis is on assessment for learning, summative tests and examinations can also play a complementary role to teacher assessment and recognise learners’ achievement at the end of a period of learning. Development work may be needed to ensure that the learning of all learners is recognised and accredited.

Wherever possible, arrangements should be made to enable learners with disabilities to access exam papers to show what they know and understand e.g., using Braille, sign, extra time etc. This can be done without compromising standards. However, it is also necessary to have a system to record and verify achievement by learners not able to access examinations such as those with intellectual disabilities. This is likely to be based primarily on teacher assessment formal examinations are unlikely to be the most effective way to assess learners who experience significant barriers to learning.

Recognising the achievement of ALL learners is an important strand of evidence in the continuous improvement model included in SRSP deliverable 3. Here it is key that data on all learners is included to ensure that rights are met and the system is equitable. It is also important to identify what works and where change is needed. For example, issues could be related to the curriculum itself (e.g., responsiveness to learner needs, lack of stakeholder input and commitment, lack of clarity or poor planning, lack of recognition of the local context). Other issues could stem from pedagogy (e.g., lack of professional development) or local/school organisation (e.g., poor coordination or communication).

Concluding Remarks

The curriculum can be a key lever for improving equity and inclusion if there is a clear conceptual and operational framework that is shared among all those within education. As the COVID pandemic has shown, there is an increasing need for all those responsible for issues around childhood, family, health and poverty, to also be involved to ensure that learner well-being is at the centre of all developments – remembering that inclusion is everyone’s responsibility.

As Opertti (2021) notes: ‘*Approaches to counteracting vulnerability require that we understand, value, and support people as individuals before we decide on any kind of sectoral intervention*’ (p.8) . Working together, it is possible to design a curriculum to meet the needs of all learners.

Further reading

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