



Student assessment processes in Cyprus: The transition to formative assessment, policy perspectives and practice.

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Introduction

- ❖ Assessment is an indispensable and integral practice in the education process. All actors are being assessed.
- ❖ The dominant assessment, in our educational system, is summative, measuring what students have learnt through testing and written examinations.
- ❖ Assessment hold schools and teachers accountable. However, teacher assessments are not connected or used for appraisal purposes.
- ❖ Formative assessment dynamics are, recently, being acknowledged
 - Suggestions for a blending methodology where both summative and formative approaches are to be enacted.
 - Part of measures to improve students' learning outcomes.
- ❖ Policies for actively involved in research programs, like FORMAS, as a tool for seeking effective innovations and gaining knowhow for successful implementation

Our current assessment processes

- The committee's report, 2018, its findings and suggestions for a comprehensive scheme for student assessment.
- Comprehensiveness:
 - Uniform student assessment policies at all levels of education.
 - Lower levels should in place to inform successive levels about:
 - student learning outcomes (cognitive aspect)
 - The whole child / student (metacognitive aspect)

Elements identified (our current situation) 1

1. Absence of a general and uniform educational student assessment policy between levels of education.
 - Almost absent for Pre-Primary and Primary education.
 - Mostly summative assessment in secondary schools.
2. Either determined from tests and final exams or is not adequately evaluated during semesters.
 - Students' weaknesses are not identified on time,
 - Intervention or compensation programs cannot be planned effectively.
3. Oral assessment practices, do not provide for reliable student achievement measurement. Written tests and final examinations determine students' learning performance.
 - Student motivation for day to day actively engaged in learning activities is reduced.

Elements identified (our current situation) 2

4. Assessment mainly on:

- procedural understanding, algorithmic knowledge, memorisation , retrieving of information described in the student's textbooks.
- Almost absent for Pre-Primary and Primary education.

5. Comparative nature of assessment:

- No reasonable documentation about students' achievement.
- System level lacks necessary information, feedback on curriculum implementation
- Students' weaknesses are not identified on time.

6. Assessment of academic achievement – cognitive learning is predominant.

Suggested measures - blinding assessment approach (1)

- A blinding approach to student assessment. Both summative, comparative, diagnostic, and formative assessment practices will be enacted, each for its contribution.
- The leading suggestions:
 1. Formative assessment is to be the bulk of assessment practices at all educational levels.
 - Introduction of new assessment instruments like the Individual Progress Report, (IPR). Designed mostly for reporting formative assessment information.
 2. Teaching methodologies need to be improved.
 - Authentic teaching and learning. Focus on conceptual understanding and critical thinking.
 3. Assessment needs to be multifaced. Activities enabling the use of oral, written and performance assessment (homework, short quizzes, discourse in the classroom, short projects, self and peer evaluation).

Suggested measures - blinding assessment approach (2)

4. Introduction of semester central examinations for core subjects at lower and upper secondary schools.

Their threefold role:

- Inform teachers and schools about student's attainment, identify learning needs, facilitate reshaping teaching (mainly at school level).
 - Provide schools with reliable information for reporting student learning outcomes.
 - Keep schools accountable and inform central level for improving decisions.
5. Call for focused TPD actions aiming at improving teacher's skills for formative assessment and using effective teaching practices.
 6. Set up a standing committee to monitor the implementation of the suggested student assessment comprehensive plan.

Measures initiated

- Training teachers is perceived as a precondition for the assessment transition.
- The MOECSY has adopted a policy for simultaneous implementation of individual suggestions. The idea is taking policy actions that would stimulate a wider range of assessment reforms:
 - As from 2019 semester central examinations are gradually introduced in secondary schools.
 - Directions for teachers for using multifaced assessment activities.
 - Focused TPD activities are organised. Mostly seminars aiming to inform about characteristics of FA.
 - Agreement has been reached with primary teacher's union for the introduction of formal pupil assessment.

Implications for further policy measures

- *Encouraging links between research, policy, and praxis*
 - Best practices should find their place in our policies.
 - Disseminate knowhow – trained practitioners and policy officials
 - Strengthen the capacity practitioners to draw upon research findings



Implications:

Invest in training for formative assessment

- Misconceptions about what exactly formative assessment is:
 - “ a particular kind of measurement instrument ...” ?
 - A set of best teaching practices?
 - Using multiple activities for assessing student learning?
- Teachers are in the center. Need for investing in the role of teachers and promote wider, deeper and sustained practice of formative assessment.



Implications:

The FORMAS paradigm

- FORMAS has developed a framework for empowering teachers in ways of practical implementation and integration of formative assessment practices in their teaching.
- A proven cause – effect between formative assessment practices and improved learning outcomes.
- Features need to be considered when designing TPD programs:
 - Acknowledge the importance of stages.
 - Provide differentiated TPD activities to address teacher needs and priorities for improvement in each stage
- Formative assessment is foremost a way of teaching

Implications:

Develop reinforcement among FA and SA

- For a successfully taking advantage of enacting both FA and SA all actors must have a clear understanding about the individual role of each assessment approach.
- FA and SA do not compete each other.
 - Summative assessment activities could be design to provide information for formative decisions.
 - Standardised, end of term exams should be design to inform about student's ability to reason
- Formative and Summative assessments can reinforce each other for providing constructive feedback.



Implications:

Avoid misuse of new tools

- The Individual Progress Report:
 - Can be designed to serve as a formative assessment report
 - A vehicle to encourage and stimulate assessment policy transition
- Multifaced assessment activities
 - It is not an end in itself
 - Carefully linked to intended learning outcomes and success criteria
 - Enable recording and reporting of assessment results
 - Used in an interactive manner - promote discourse in the classroom
- Standardised end-of-term exams need to be designed carefully to avoid:
 - Hindering teachers from helping students develop their abilities, reach their potential, explore their creative interests.
 - Should be carefully designed . Examining ILA and success criteria while at the same time give room for non-trivialities.



Implications - Last and not least

- *Build coherence between assessment and evaluation*
 - Assessment data are of little consequence if they are not used for improvement purposes.
 - A need to develop a culture of evaluation at all levels (teachers, schools, system)
 - Actors in educations need to get trained on how to analyze and correctly read assessment data.
 - School internal or self-evaluations as well as their action plans need to transform these analyses into actions for improvement.



Thank you for your attention