

Terms of Reference

National Continuous Assessment System/School Based Assessment Specialist

Background

The British Council is implementing ADB / EU supported “TA 9215: Supporting Policies and Implementation in the School Sector” for program management, coordination and technical support to the government to implement School Sector Development Plan from January 2019. The three TA outputs relating to this ToR are: (i) capacity development for policy implementation strengthened; (ii) program management and monitoring strengthened; and (iii) knowledge management strengthened.

Building on SSDP's Mid Term Review (MTR), a Capacity and Institutional Assessment (CIA) for SSDP was conducted which identified Assessment and Examination as one of the priority thematic areas for the TA. A Capacity and institutional development plan (CIDP) was developed further elaborating priority TA interventions on Assessment and Examination for remaining TA period including need for study on Continuous Assessment System / School Based Assessment (CAS / SBA).

Context

School Based Assessment (SBA) is an integral part of school education and Continuous Assessment System (CAS) has been in practice since 1990s in Nepalese schools. The School Sector Reform Programme¹ states, *“Continuous Assessment System should be adopted in a phased manner with no holdbacks in basic education. At the school level, a rigorous remedial support system should be introduced to ensure minimum level of learning at each grade level. Remedial programs should be provided to learners whose performance is significantly below expectations. Guidelines for the CAS will be developed by CDC in consultation with the national examination board. Guidelines including teacher orientation program on CAS will be made available to districts.”* (p. 82).

Although recognized to be essential for student learning improvement, the CAS is not being implemented effectively in most schools. Continuous Assessment has often been interpreted simply as undertaking tests more frequently. A recent study, ‘Final report of a study on exploring effective measures for strengthening continuous student assessment and its implementation strategies at school level’² summarized that; *“Most of the teachers and Head teachers recognized formative assessment as mere formality. They failed to accept CAS as means for child friendly learning and evaluation. Subject teachers identified CAS as mere additional load to them. For parents, CAS was ‘taking test time and again’ and for students CAS was ‘passing exam without taking test’.”* (p. iv).

The School Sector Development Plan³ (SSDP) reiterated that it *‘will build on the achievements of SSRP with an emphasis on making both formative and summative assessments more skills and learner focused rather than content focused. More time will be spent helping teachers understand the use of formative and summative exams to target their teaching and to thereby improve learning outcomes. For this purpose, there needs to be a*

¹ Ministry of Education. (2009). School Sector Reform Plan, Nepal, 2009–2015. Kathmandu: Ministry of Education, Government of Nepal.

² Department of Education, 2074 BS.

³ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2016). School Sector Development Plan, Nepal, 2016–2023. Kathmandu: Ministry of Education, Government of Nepal.

*greater cohesion of curriculum, textbooks and assessment and a move from the assessment of learning to assessment for learning.*⁴ (p. 67).

In line with this intent, the National Curriculum Framework⁵ (CDC, 2076 BS) and school level curriculums have provisioned the proportion of CAS and periodic assessment (testing) as follows:

Grade 1-3 (integrated curriculum): CAS only

Grade 4-5: 50% CAS, 50% summative assessment

Grades 6-7: 40% CAS, 60% summative assessment

Grade 8: 25% internal evaluation and 75% external examination.

The Mid-Term Review (MTR)⁶ of SSDP indicated several issues which hinder the development of a continuous quality assessment culture within the education system at different levels:

- 1) Teachers and head teachers can be reluctant to admit low results or progress when it comes to their students' learning outcomes. This attitude reveals that evaluation is still perceived as a normative 'audit-type' process (e.g. potentially followed by sanctions).
- 2) This confusion might be further sustained as the SSDP encompasses two different evaluation approaches at the same time: A performance-related approach, which is traditionally linked to an increase in control, top-down supervision (i.e., teachers TST⁷, financial auditing, etc.), and focus on results.
- 3) The development of a continuous quality improvement-oriented process which requires the enablement of innovation, experimentation, and autonomy, and focuses on processes and accountability mechanisms more than results.

The MTR also discusses that there is confusion due to a much stronger focus on quantitative program results rather than qualitative processes. The report recommended to explore different options to further develop innovation and experimentation at local level, and also to document existing initiatives and disseminate good practices.

Scope of Work

The CAS/SBA specialist will synthesize findings and suggestions of the studies related to SBA and CAS based on the available SBA/CAS studies, deliberate on what worked and where are the weaknesses, and then draw lessons to improve SBA/CAS in Nepalese schools.

Detailed Tasks:

Detail tasks include but not limited to the following:

- i) Finalization of methodology and scope for synthesis study on SBA / CAS
- ii) Stocktaking of plans, policies and practices in SBA and CAS
- iii) Analysis of manuals, guideline, teacher training documents and other guiding documents related to SBA and CAS
- iv) Review of different forms of student assessment at the school and classroom levels existing in Nepal and how they are administered and utilized

⁴ Still 'assessment as learning' is not into discussion.

⁵ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2076 BS). National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2076 BS. Bhaktapur: Curriculum Development Center, Government of Nepal.

⁶ MOEST. (2019). School Sector Development Plan - Mid-Term Review – conducted by SOFRECO and FBC.

⁷ TST: time-spent-teaching

- v) identifying areas to improve student assessment at the school and classroom level and use them to improve teaching learning
- vi) suggest how to develop simplified and user-friendly process, tools and forms related to SBA and CAS; and
- vii) suggest effective mechanisms for gearing SBA and CAS to improve student learning in the context of integrated curriculum (grades 1-3) and dual provisions in other grades.
- viii) Pilot testing of SBA / CAS mechanism in 5 schools
- ix) On the basis of pilot testing, suggest where revision is required for wider implementation in close coordination with the National Examination Board (NEB) and Education Review Office (ERO)
- x) Supervise and guide Research Assistants during synthesis study and pilot testing.

Minimum Qualification Requirements:

The Specialist shall preferably have Master's degree in Education or relevant degree with preferably 5 years of experience working in educational research including in student learning assessment in Nepal. Familiarity with SSDP and decentralized education service delivery would be an advantage.

Reporting Requirement/Deliverables:

The specialist will contribute to Annual progress report and other reports as requested by the client.

The specialist will produce the Research report with two parts:

Part 1 – Study context, process and lessons from synthesis review (preferably about 15 pages)

Part 2 – Suggestions from improving design, process, guideline, forms, tools, prototype, etc. related to SBA/CAS based on piloting (about 20 pages).

The specialist will report to SSDP TA Team Leader.

Engagement Period:

The CAS/SBA Specialist will be deployed for the duration for 4.5 person-months, with 0.5 person-months in the field.