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Assessment of Transversal Competencies in the Asia-Pacific: A Case Study in Malaysia

Research Report

by

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PREFACE

There have been a lot of initiatives and reforms on 21st century education as revealed by various studies, reports and reviews which contain diverse perspectives and opinions from authors, educators, and researchers alike. Along with the complexity, tensions arise in education. Some are of the opinion that schools must cultivate literacy and numeracy while some support readiness for college and employment. Whichever direction is taken, a robust foundation in core knowledge and skills is imperative. The foundations need to incorporate 21st century skills such as critical thinking, creative thinking, actions for success, and the ability to genuinely apply these in a global society. Educators need to provide learning opportunities beyond the core competencies and provide relevant challenging real-life connections to learners throughout their education.

The terms such as 21st century skills, non-cognitive or soft skills are well-known or commonly used in many countries. However, in this study, these skills are being referred to as transversal competencies (TVCs) based on the outcomes of a series of regional studies undertaken by the Asia-Pacific Education Research Institutes Network (ERI-Net) hosted by UNESCO Bangkok. The core competencies and 21st century skills should be viewed as complementary to each other. Embedding along with valid and relevant assessments connected to real-life learning into the curriculum is one of the central tasks of teaching in this present time.

The current research, which was launched under the Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP), a regional network focused on assessment issues coordinated by UNESCO Bangkok¹, aims to explore different approaches or practices that countries adopt in assessing these skills and competencies, the challenges encountered in the process, the lessons we could draw from the existing practices in the Asia-Pacific region and recommendations for future directions in this area. The study builds on the ERI-Net transversal competency framework which includes six domains of TVCs, namely, critical leadership, interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills, global citizenship, media and information literacy, and physical health and religious values. This multi-country research covers nine countries and economies in the region.

This book presents a case study on the assessment of TVCs in Malaysia. It is divided into chapters to elucidate the policies, practices, issues and challenges in the implementation of TVCs at both system and school levels, as well as the

¹ For more information on NEQMAP, please see: <http://www.unescobkk.org/education/neqmap/>

lessons learned. Recommendations for action along with suggested strategies for implementing TVCs assessment are presented. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide an array of information that could further strengthen and improve the existing education policies in enhancing the effective implementation of assessment of TVCs in the schools to produce learners who are critical and creative thinkers, self-reliant, responsible, morally upright, and globally competitive in this 21st century.

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List of Abbreviations

DSKP	Document Statement Curriculum and Assessment
ERI-Net	Education Research Institute Network in the Asia Pacific
ES	Examination Syndicate
HOTS	Higher Order Thinking Skills
HPS	High Performing Schools
KSSM	Secondary School Standard Curriculum
KSSR	Primary School Standard Curriculum
MOE	Ministry of Education
MRC	Malaysian Red Crescent
NEQMAP	Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PT3	Form Three Assessment
SBA	School-Based Assessment
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
RECSAM	Regional Centre for Education in Science and Mathematics
SEGAK	National Physical Fitness Standard
SISC+	School Improvement Specialist Coach
SMAR	<i>Sekolah Menengah Agama Rakyat</i>
SPM	Malaysian Certificate of Education
TVCs	Transversal Competencies
UNESCO Bangkok	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UPSR	Primary School Evaluation Test
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia
VCLE	Virtual Computer Learning Environment

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