



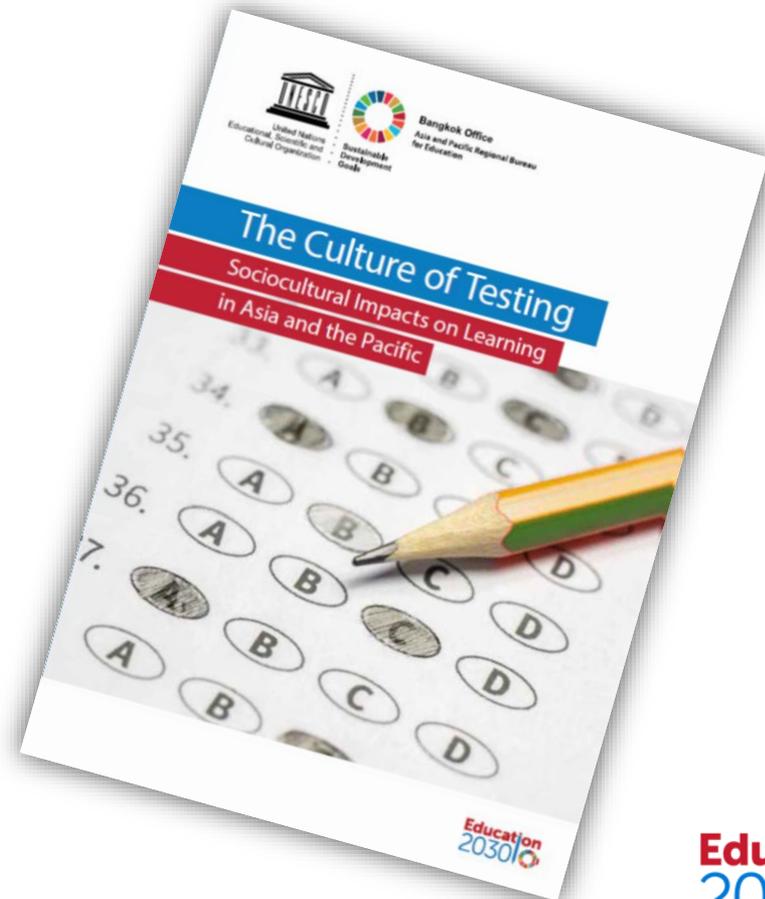
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

The Culture of Testing

Sociocultural Impacts on Learning in Asia and the Pacific

NEQMAP Webinar The Culture of Testing 1 November 2018

Mark Manns
UNESCO Bangkok

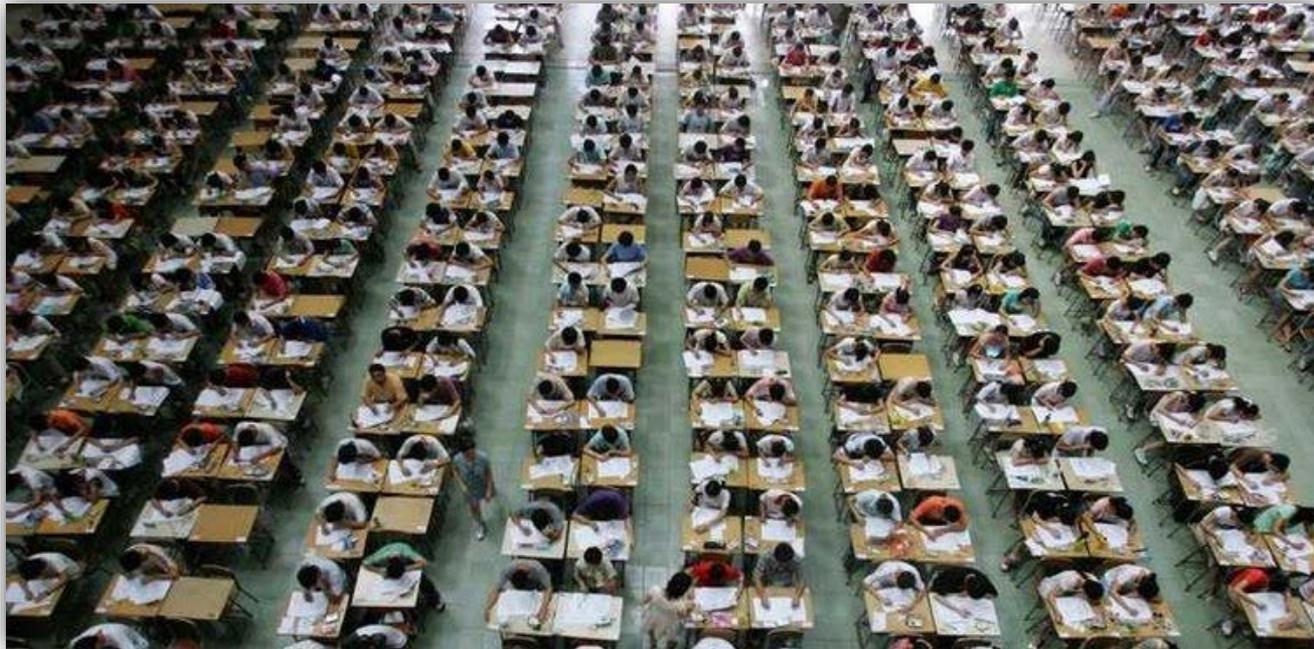


NEQMAP

Network on Education Quality
Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific

Definition – ‘Culture of Testing’

A culture in which high-stakes standardized testing is accepted as a foundational practice in education and shapes how education is understood in society and used by its stakeholders (Smith, 2016).



Design and Methodology

To examine

- the manifestations of a ‘culture of testing’
 - the relationship between sociocultural factors, education and examinations
 - how this ‘culture of testing’ both shapes and is shaped by education policies and systems
-
- Nine case studies: Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Japan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Philippines, Tonga, Viet Nam
 - Desk study and primary data collection through surveys, focus groups and interviews with students, teachers and parents
 - Sample sizes ranged from 100 students, 30 parents, 30 teachers to over 5000 students, in public and private, urban and rural areas

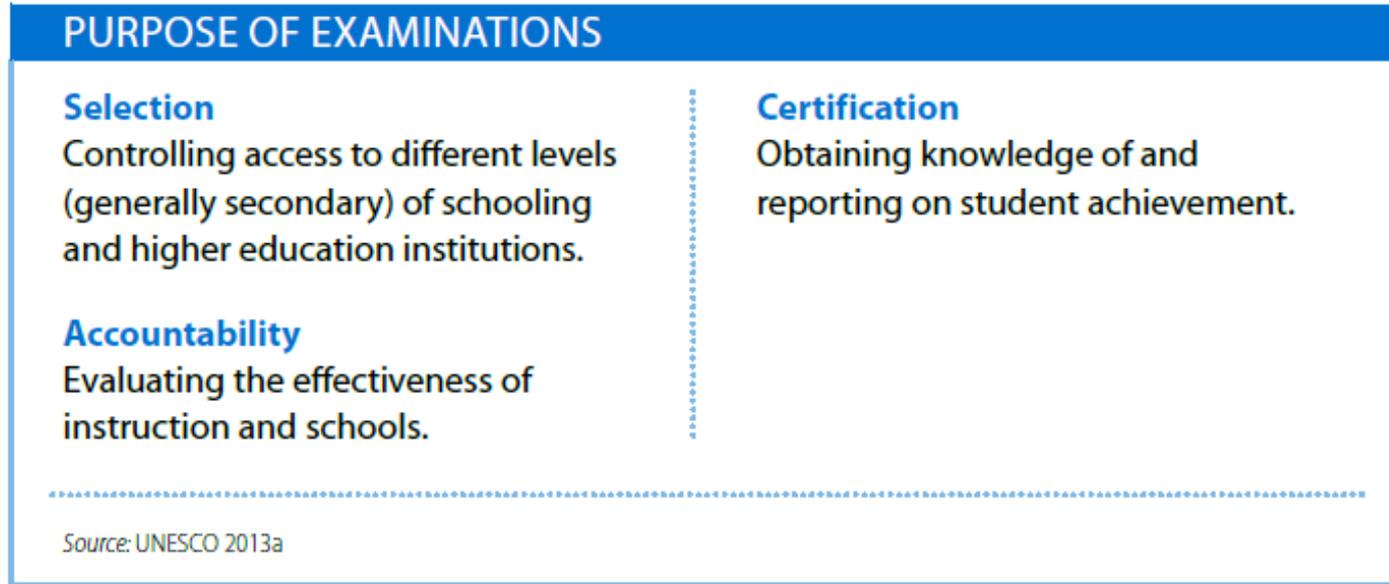


Figure 1. Most common points for high-stakes examinations



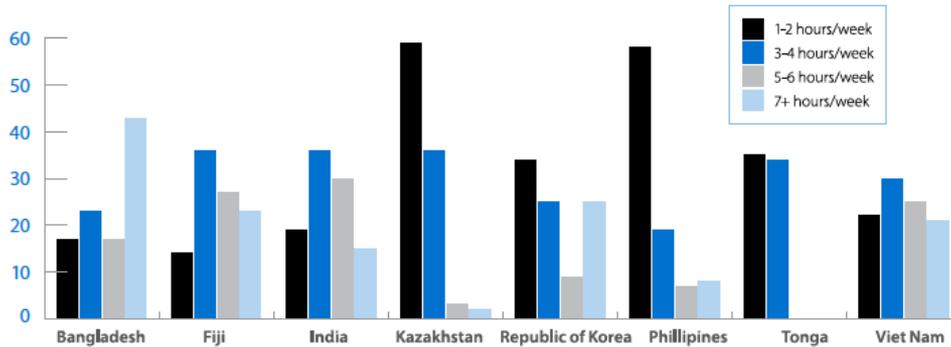
Table 2. Frequency of tests and examinations by country and respondent

| Country | Subjects ¹ | Students | Teachers | Parents |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Bangladesh | 6 | • 57% reported 1–2 per semester | • 44% reported 1–2 per semester | – |
| Fiji ² | 4-5 | – | – | – |
| India | 6 | • 30% reported more 1–2 per semester | • 44% reported more 1–2 per semester | • 44% parents reported once a month |
| Japan ³ | 10 | – | – | – |
| Kazakhstan | – | • 38% reported more than once a month | • 80% reported 1–2 per semester | • 38% reported more than once a month |
| Republic of Korea | 9 | • 49% reported 1–2 per semester | • 56% reported 1–2 per semester | • 55% reported 1–2 per semester |
| Philippines | 8 | • 30% reported 1–2 per semester | • 29% reported 1–2 per semester | – |
| Tonga | 5 | • 61% reported 1–2 per semester | • 41% reported 1–2 per semester | • 36% reported more than once a month |
| Viet Nam | 9 | • 42% reported more than once a month | • 40% reported more than 2 per semester | • 30% reported 1–2 per semester |

Notes:

1. Subjects: this is the average number of subjects students are required to take per semester.
2. Fiji: the case study presented information by school, not by individual respondents. All rural schools reported having tests more than once a month, while urban schools split between once a month and more than once a month.
3. Japan did not conduct a questionnaire.

Figure 2. Hours spent preparing for tests or exams inside the classroom



Notes:

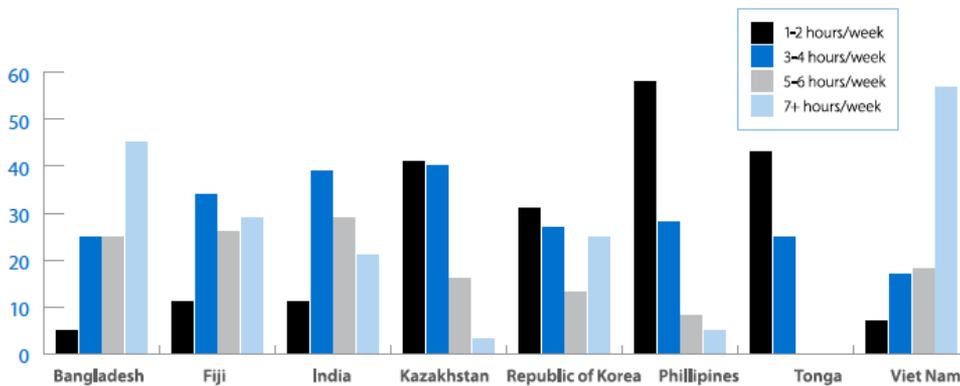
1. Japan did not conduct a questionnaire.
2. For studies that utilized more than one grade level (i.e. Phillipines, Republic of Korea, Bangladesh) these numbers reflect overall totals.
3. Some missing information is due to 'no response' on the questionnaire or the information was not provided in the case study.

Trend 1. Number of hours studying for exams increases as students progress

Trend 2. Females report studying more (both inside and outside class)

Trend 3. Rural students study more (both inside and outside class)

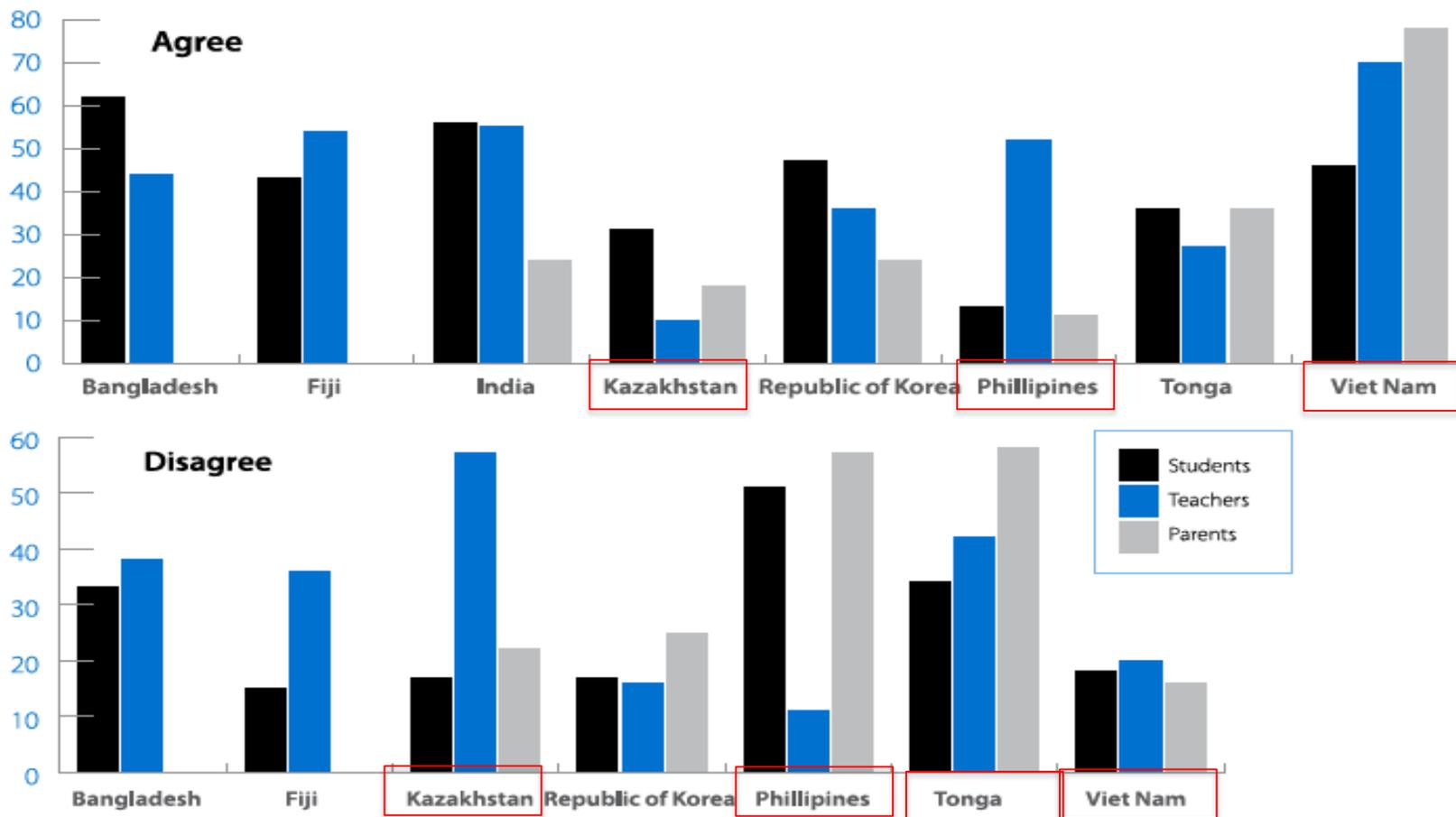
Figure 3. Hours spent preparing for tests or exams outside the classroom



Notes:

1. Japan did not conduct a questionnaire.
2. For studies that utilized more than one grade level (i.e. Phillipines, Republic of Korea, Bangladesh) these numbers reflect overall totals.
3. Some missing information is due to 'no response' on the questionnaire or the information was not provided in the case study.

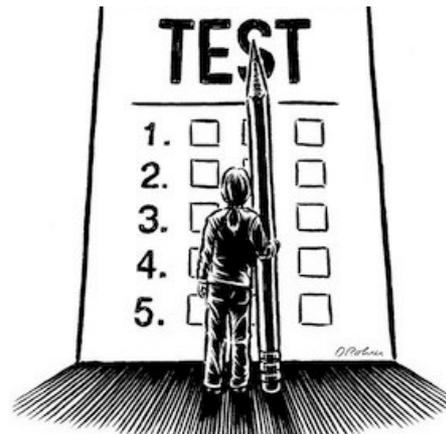
Figure 4. Are there too many tests or exams?



Notes:

1. Japan did not conduct a questionnaire.
2. No data available for disagreement in India.
3. No data available for parents in Bangladesh and Fiji.

- Social mobility/economic opportunity
- Social, cultural and family expectations
- Implications for learning
 - Competition - stress and anxiety
 - Teaching and curriculum
- Relationship between testing and policy



- Career path
 - Student responses: 89% India, 94% Tonga, 100% Fiji, 86% Philippines, 93% Kazakhstan
- Students and families strive for:
 - better courses/education tracks
 - better schools
 - better economic and employment opportunities
- Influences urban and rural disparities, migration for education and economic opportunities



The exam is very important because it will affect my whole life.

– Student, Japan

- Confucian heritage
- Colonial legacy and the impact of western education systems across the globe
- Testing as a 'tradition'
- Testing as a rite of passage



tradition

- TRA•DI•TION:**
1. a time-honored practice
 2. the passing down of elements of a culture from generation to generation
 3. an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior

- Most students, teachers and parents agreed that exams were positive, effective and objective tools
- This positive perception has significant impact on the importance placed on examinations, socially, culturally and academically



- Competition increases across all actors:
 - students
 - awards, scholarships, schools and employment
 - parents (compete for status)
 - teachers (appraisal and salary)
 - schools (funding)



Leads to:

- Stress, anxiety and lower well-being
- Corruption and cheating
- Increased private tutoring and shadow education

We just teach the tests. That is what is expected, isn't it?

– Teacher, Fiji

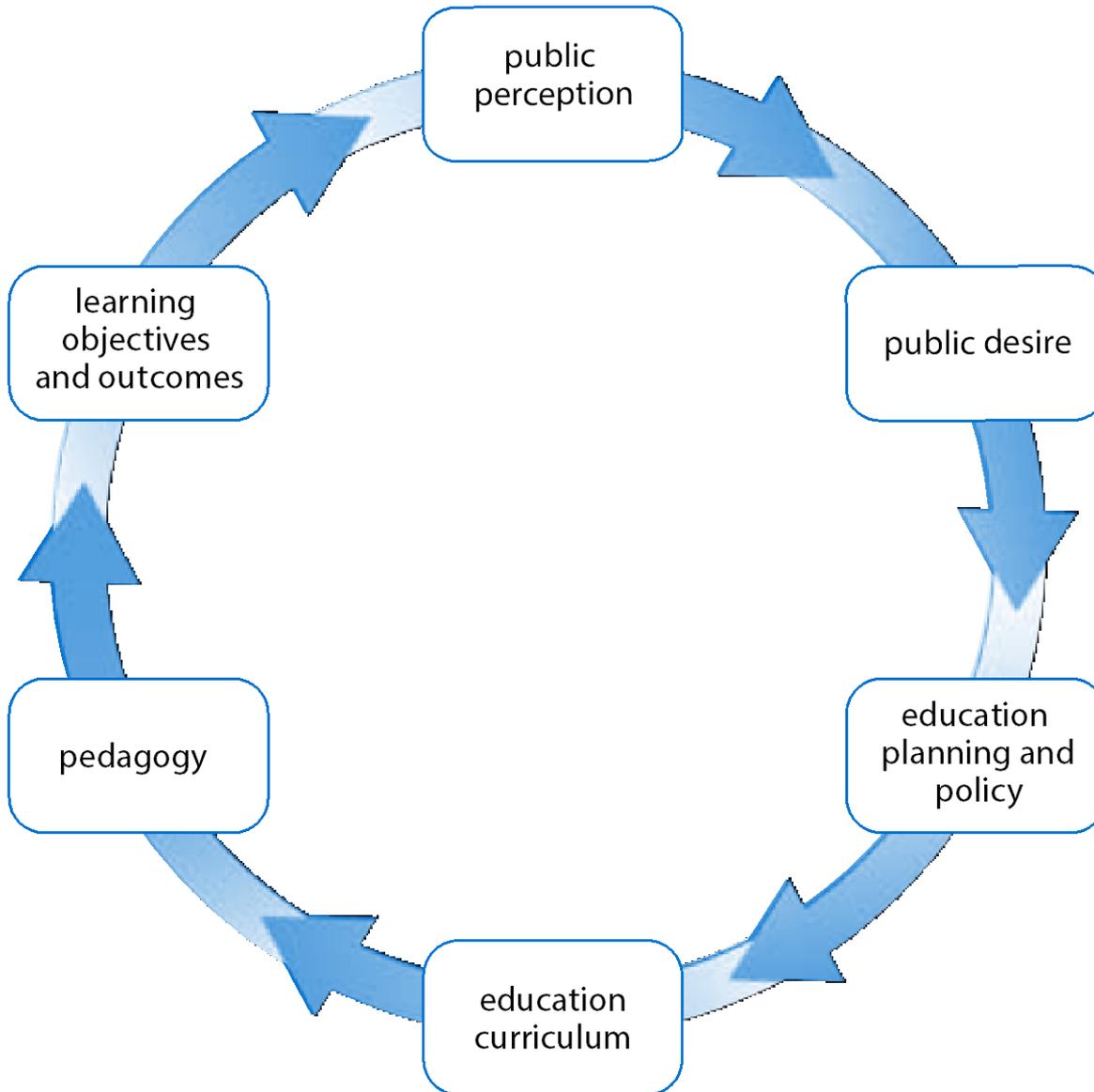
- Simplifies and narrows curriculum
- Teachers teach to the test
- Teacher reputation and evaluation
- Alternative methods for assessments
 - mixed results for class-based and performance assessments

Ahh...standardized test season.

Love that my reputation as a third grade teacher is in the hands of an 8 year old.

someecards
user card





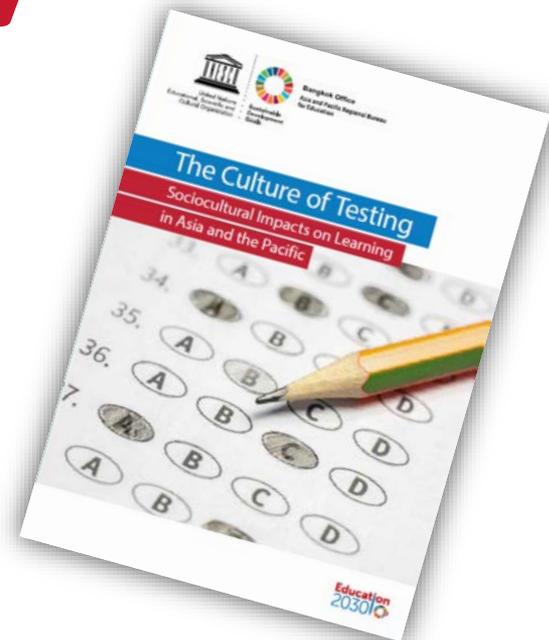
Several countries have repealed and then reintroduced exams due to public pressure

- Promote a balanced and holistic education that emphasizes the relevance and effectiveness of learning
 - i.e. emphasize holistic learning and learner well-being
- Improve classroom strategies and evaluation of transversal competencies, 21st century skills and soft skills
- Create effective assessment frameworks for classroom and school-based assessment
- Providing more resources and support for teachers to teach and undertake alternative assessment methods, rather than prepare students mainly for standardized tests.
- Limit the influence of national and international rankings based on examination and assessment results
- Balance **assessment *of* learning** and **assessment *for* learning**

Thank you!

Learn more in the full report:

<https://bit.ly/2v63MhE>



Mark Manns
UNESCO Bangkok
m.manns@unesco.org