

NEQMAP 2023 Knowledge-Sharing Webinar Consultation: “Integrating 21st century skills in teaching and learning policies and practices”

February 24th, 2023

Main outcomes

Context

Over the past ten years, The Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP) has worked on promoting the assessment of 21st century skills through several projects. These projects aimed at taking stock of the integration of 21st century skills in curriculum, assessment practices across Asia-Pacific as well as building capacity at a national level. In 2023, NEQMAP members are invited to further build on past work on 21st century skills to support the integration of 21st century skills in teaching and learning policies and practices. To kick off this work, NEQMAP organized a knowledge-sharing online webinar to share previous activities and identify where additional support might be needed.

Main Objectives

The workshop was framed by the question: “Where are countries in terms of 21st century skills now, and where do they want to take this work forward?” The workshop was consultative in nature and aimed to assess countries’ needs for further follow-up engagement. More specifically, the workshop aimed to:

1. Take stock of Asia-Pacific's current policies and practices for the integration of 21st century competencies in teaching and learning in schools
2. Identify countries’ needs, gaps and priorities in the 21st century skills integration and follow-up to previous NEQMAP work

SESSION’S MAIN OUTCOMES

Welcome Remarks

In this session, Margarete Sachs-Israel, Chief of Section for Inclusive and Quality Education UNESCO Bangkok, welcomed all the participants and highlighted the importance of 21st century skills integration:

1. In recent years, many nations in Asia-Pacific have been embarking on major transformations of their curriculum frameworks to broaden the scope of education. This transformation aims to better equip learners with the skills, attitudes, and values needed to lead a fulfilling life, prepare for the future of work, and contribute positively to a more sustainable future. As part of these reforms, many countries have been looking at the integration of 21st century skills not only in curriculum and assessment frameworks but, more specifically, in teaching and learning. The importance of 21st century skills integration has been highlighted in the UNSG Vision for TES and the Bangkok Statement 2022 under priority #2, “Transformation of Education and its systems to be more relevant, inclusive and resilient.” The Bangkok Statement 2022 was adopted by the ministers, vice-ministers, and other education stakeholders participating in the 2nd Asia-Pacific Regional Education Minister’s Conference (APREMC-II) held in June 2022 in Bangkok.
2. NEQMAP's efforts regarding 21st-century competencies are integrated into the UNESCO BANGKOK Framework for Transversal Competencies, which outlines the skills, attitudes, and values associated with five competency domains, namely critical and innovative thinking, interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills, global citizenship, media and information literacy, and other domains like physical health and religious values. This Framework was created by the Education Research Institutes Network (ERI-NET), which is coordinated by UNESCO Bangkok.
3. In recent years, NEQMAP has placed more attention on a particular subset of skills identified in the Framework, commonly referred to as 21st-century skills, including "collaboration," "creative thinking," "problem-solving," and "critical thinking." The decision to emphasize these skills was based on their frequent appearance in national curricula throughout the Asia-Pacific region and the abundance of research and well-defined explanations of their components.

Knowledge Sharing Sessions

NEQMAP maintains its longstanding practice of serving as a central hub for the exchange of experiences and research among members and partners. To facilitate this, NEQMAP arranged a session for knowledge sharing focusing on examples of 21st century skills integration in the Asia-Pacific region. The knowledge-sharing session included three presentations.

Knowledge Sharing #1: Integrating and Assessing Essential Learning Skills

- Dr. Claire Scoular, Senior Research Fellow at Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), set the scene by presenting an overview of ACER’s work on integrating and assessing essential learning skills in classroom practices. ACER’s work focuses primarily on the definition and integration into teaching and learning of six essential learning skills: critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration/social, emotional development, citizenship, and self-regulation. The presentation focused

on three key areas of work: 1. Skill development frameworks, 2. Skill development levels, 3. Embed skills in learning outcomes, assessment measures, and teaching strategies.

Knowledge Sharing #2: Measuring What Matters: PBL Approach for Assessing 21st Century Skills of Students in Pakistan

- Dr. Shehzad Jeeva, Chief Executive Officer, Munira Muhammad, Lead-Specialist Assessment, and Ali Aslam Bijani, Manager Teacher Support from Aga Khan University Examination Board (AKU-EB), presented a case of project-based learning (PBL) approach in Pakistan. Ms. Munira Muhammad presented how AKU-EB Project-Based Learning (PBL) framework can be embedded in the existing education system and translated into project development. Mr. Ali Aslam Bijani highlighted multiple tools for 21st century skills assessment used within the PBL model, such as rubric, self-assessment and peer-assessment. He also presented how the framework is translated into project implementation, the achieved results, and the way forward.

Knowledge Sharing #3: Integrating 21st century skills in teaching and learning policies and practices: The Philippine Experience.

- Dr. Marie Therese A.P. Bustos, Director of Assessment, Curriculum, and Technology Research Centre (ACTRC), presented the work undertaken by the Department of Education of the Government of the Philippines in collaboration with ACTRC, a partnership between the University of the Philippines and the Assessment Research Centre of the University of Melbourne. Dr. Bustos presented the process, challenges, and considerations the team had to develop the “Life and Career Skills” framework and the next steps. Some of the challenges included 1) defining 21st century skills and distinguishing them from content 2) need for a clear, consistent and comprehensive articulation of 21st century skills in the curriculum and Department orders 3) need to provide further pre-and in-service training and materials on 21st century skills for teachers 4) need for more opportunities to integrate 21st century skills teaching and assessment in the classroom. Dr. Bustos concluded that the process of integrating 21st century skills is not linear but rather recurring, like a spiral.

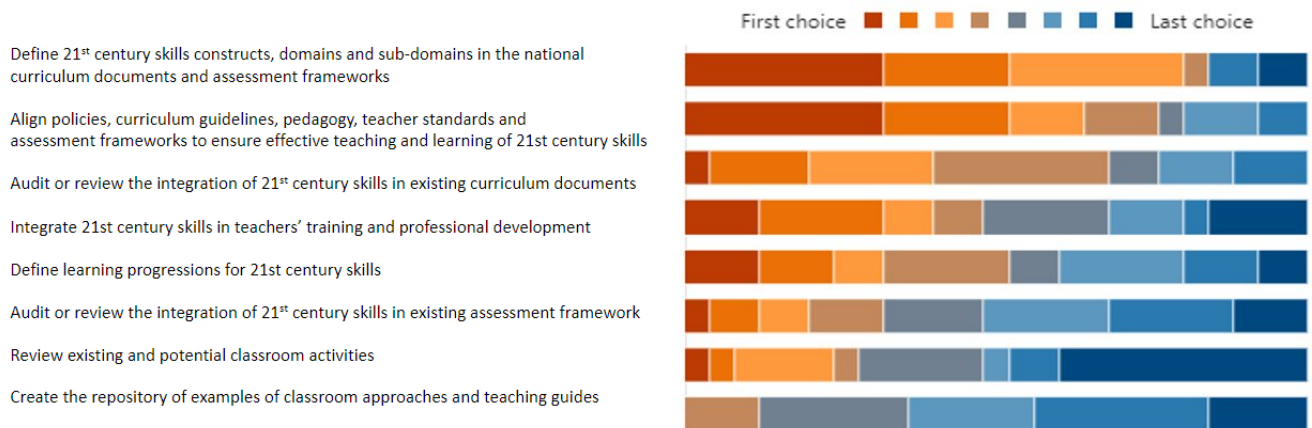
Moderated Discussion

The moderated discussion focused on identifying the needs in Asia-Pacific. Specifically, it focused on understanding how each country integrates 21st century skills in curriculum, assessment, and classroom teaching, what the key challenges, gaps, and priorities are in this integration process, and what the ways forward are.

- Soumaya Maghnouj, Focal point NEQMAP Secretariat at IQE UNESCO Bangkok, shared the poll results that asked the NEQMAP members to rank their country’s current priorities to integrate 21st century skills in teaching and learning practices in

order of importance. The main priorities remain around the definitions of 21st century skills constructs, domains, and sub-domains; alignment of policies, curriculum, and assessment as well as auditing of 21st century skills in existing curriculum documents:

Please rank your country's current priorities to integrate 21st century skills in teaching and learning practices in order of importance:



- All webinar participants were divided into break-out groups based on their registration preferences: “21st century skills in Curriculum and Assessment Design” or “21st century skills implementation in classroom teaching and learning.”
- The design group’s themes for discussion included:
 - Defining 21st century skills constructs, domains and sub-domains
 - Using standards and psychometric framework
 - Unpacking skills, concepts and competencies to ensure reliability, credibility, comparability and validity
 - Defining learning progressions for 21st century skills
 - Ensuring that target 21st century skills are embedded in subject areas
 - Alignment of policies, curriculum, pedagogies, teacher standards and assessment frameworks
- The implementation group’s themes for discussion included:
 - Integrating 21st century skills in teachers’ training and professional development
 - Mindset shift and practice change among teachers to see project-based learning as a platform, not a burden
 - School environment and student-teacher interaction
 - Providing proper materials, tools and resources for curriculum developers, teacher educators and teachers
 - Enabling technology for 21st century skills implementation
- Some of the shared challenges included:

- The definition of 21st century skills is not precise enough to help teachers implement and understand how to measure them.
- Too many frameworks in use with differences in concepts and definitions.
- Perception that implementing 21st century skills is costly and time-consuming.
- Perception of curriculum overload.
- Unequal teachers' capacity to implement the new curriculum, especially in disadvantaged areas such as remote or rural settings.
- Some of the suggestions to move forward:
 - Prioritizing a few subjects to embed some of the skills. Identifying specific skills (e.g., problem-solving and math)
 - Widening the examination model to include other modalities from classroom assessment to assess a wider set of competencies not able to be assessed with a standardized pen and paper test
 - Identifying champion schools from disadvantaged and /or remote areas to showcase that it is possible to implement PBL in disadvantaged contexts
 - More peer learning among Asia-Pacific countries to learn from each other's experiences and good practices.
 - More advocacy to reduce curriculum overload to better embed 21st century skills