Chapter 3. Improving teachers’ classroom assessment practices

This chapter provides recommendations for improving the use of classroom assessment in Turkey so that it contributes more effectively to supporting student learning. At present, while teachers in Turkey regularly undertake assessments in the classroom, these tend to be dominated by short-answer, closed-question formats, like multiple-choice questions. This limits the range of students’ knowledge and skills that teachers can assess. The focus on summative assessments that result in a numeric mark also limits space for formative assessment, one of the most important types of assessment for learning. This chapter provides suggestions on how teachers can be encouraged to use a broader range of assessment formats and integrate more formative assessment practices into their regular classroom teaching.
Introduction

Teachers’ regular classroom assessments have a greater impact on student learning than any type of assessment conducted outside the classroom (Absolum et al., 2009[1]). Classroom assessments are particularly important to improve student learning, especially when they comprise formative feedback and help students to understand their own learning strategies. Classroom assessments also allow for the evaluation of competencies that cannot be easily measured using external, standardised assessments. When they are conducted on an ongoing basis, they provide a range of evidence which teachers can use to monitor student progress and to adjust teaching in response to students’ learning needs. This means that in countries with effective student assessment systems, greater emphasis is placed on what happens in the classroom and the role of the teacher (Clarke, 2012[2]).

Over the past decade, Turkey has taken positive steps towards improving the learning value of assessment. These include encouraging teachers to conduct formative and performance-based assessments to support a competency-based approach to teaching and learning. This chapter provides recommendations on how the use of assessment could be further strengthened to ensure that all students acquire essential competencies and provides students with the opportunities to develop and demonstrate achievement across the breadth of the country’s curriculum. This chapter suggests practical tools for feedback and assessment that Turkey can develop immediately to provide teachers with resources for effective assessment. These tools will need to be complemented by critical but longer-term measures, so that teachers have learning opportunities at the beginning and throughout their careers to develop a sound understanding of assessment and its practical application.

Context and main features of classroom assessment

Policy framework

The curriculum encourages teachers to use a broad range of assessments to support competency development

In 2005, Turkey introduced a new competency-based curriculum that emphasised a student-centred, constructivist approach to teaching and learning. This was a major shift from the previous curriculum that was much more prescriptive, content-heavy and structured around teachers’ transmission of knowledge within discrete domains (OECD, 2007[3]). Over the past decade, successive curriculum changes have further supported this transformation, with the most recent revisions in 2017 aiming to further lighten the content load and elevate the importance of transversal competencies like critical thinking and problem solving.

The 2005 curriculum reform and subsequent revisions have implied a major change in what students learn and how they learn, and with this of how teachers use assessment to support and measure their learning progress. In particular, the curriculum places a much stronger emphasis on teachers’ use of formative assessment practices, including student self-assessment, as central to a constructivist approach to learning. It also calls for teachers to use a wider range of assessments, such as projects, portfolios, role plays, quizzes and pen and paper written tests, as a means to engage students and evaluate a broader range of outcomes beyond knowledge recall (MoNE, 2013[4]). These changes in expectations of assessment practice have been reinforced by the decision to end the reliance on summative assessments and numerical marking in Grades 1 to 3, instead of requiring teachers to use
qualitative descriptors for students’ performance in line with similar reforms in many other OECD countries.

**A series of reforms in 2017 aims to support more effective classroom assessment practice**

While curriculum reforms have been accompanied by some training and resources to help teachers adopt new assessment methods, there is growing recognition within the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) that more needs to be done to support Turkish teachers in using a broad range of assessments to enable and monitor competency development. As of 2017, a number of important initiatives have been introduced in this area. The Ministry’s General Directorate of Measurement, Evaluation and Examination Services is undertaking a project to strengthen teachers’ classroom assessment capacity and has established provincial monitoring and evaluation centres to provide assessment guidance to schools and professional development to teachers. Planned changes to initial teacher preparation and continuous professional learning as part of the Teacher Strategy 2017-23 are also intended to improve teachers’ assessment skills, alongside other key teaching competencies (see Box 3.1). Finally, the decision to end the compulsory, high-stake Grade 8 examination is expected to create more space for teachers and students to use a wider range of assessments in lower secondary and, with this, focus on the breadth of intended curriculum outcomes.

**Box 3.1. Turkey’s Teacher Strategy, 2017-23**

Turkey’s Teacher Strategy provides a roadmap for teacher training and development based on three main objectives:

1. Ensuring a high-quality, well-trained and professional teaching profession: by improving initial teacher education and ensuring that only the most suitable candidates for teaching are selected from university graduates.

2. Ensuring teachers’ continuous professional and personal development: by regularly undertaking performance evaluation of teachers and improving the quality of teachers’ professional development activities.

   This will also include the introduction of a new School-Based Professional Development Model, where teachers will undertake a self-assessment of their learning and development needs, based on the teacher competencies, and complete an individual professional development plan. The Ministry of National Education will use this to help plan professional development opportunities, in response to teachers’ needs.

3. Improving the perception and status of the teaching profession: by improving the status of the teaching profession, improving teachers’ working conditions; reducing regional differences in teaching conditions; and improving the career and remuneration system.

   The objective is to develop a system where teachers are promoted to different steps in a career path, linked to increasing qualifications, status and completion of professional development. This will restructure the existing teacher career path based on teachers’ performance evaluation results, examinations taken, student achievements and other
criteria related to teacher competencies, teachers’ voluntary activities related to their field and profession, and completion of training in the newly developed Teacher Academies.

### Actions and Timeline in Turkey’s Teacher Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Updating teacher competencies</td>
<td>By the end of 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a mandatory performance evaluation system for all teachers</td>
<td>By the end of 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All teachers take a test according to the new competencies every four years</td>
<td>By the end of 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing all necessary training to evaluators for determining teachers’ development needs and supporting their professional development</td>
<td>By the end of 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Classroom assessment regulations and resources

**Central regulations reaffirm the importance of using varied assessment types**

In common with the majority of OECD countries, classroom assessment in Turkey is governed by central regulations (OECD, 2013[6]). The regulations provide a broad framework setting out the types and maximum and minimum numbers of assessments that teachers should undertake (see Table 3.1). The regulations also set out some principles for assessment such as ensuring that it reflects the curriculum’s principles for learning, is used to constantly monitor student learning, considers the development of broad learning goals like critical thinking and creativity and reasoning skills, and is valid and reliable with appropriate rubrics or scoring keys developed.

While central regulations reflect the curriculum’s expectation that teachers use a range of different assessments, in practice teachers still rely heavily on multiple-choice tasks that are easy to develop and mark. This is confirmed both by recent research (Kan, 2017[7]) and by interviews conducted with teachers, students, principals and policymakers as part of this review. The OECD review team’s discussions indicated that multiple-choice tests are conducted especially in the period leading up to the Grade 8 and 12 examinations to help prepare students. These tests focus narrowly on the subjects and knowledge that are covered in the central exams, while other non-examined subjects are given less attention. In 2016, the ministry introduced a clause in national regulations stating that teachers can only conduct one multiple-choice test per course per semester in upper secondary education. However, as long as high stakes examinations still rely on multiple-choice items the classroom focus on this format will be difficult to change.
### Table 3.1. Central regulations for classroom assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment type</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Other factors evaluated</th>
<th>Reporting student achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-school and primary education school regulation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 1-3</td>
<td>● No summative classroom examinations</td>
<td>● Attendance</td>
<td>Descriptive scale: “very good”, “good”, “should be improved”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Evaluations based on in-class performance and teachers’ observations</td>
<td>● Behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Grades 4-8                             | Exams                                                                    | ● Completion of course activities e.g. homework  | ● Mark out of 100 for each course, based on average assessment results (i.e. exams and projects) plus points for participation in course activities
|                                        | ● Two per course per semester                                             | ● Attendance                                    | ● Students also receive a mark for their behaviour based on descriptive scale (very good”, “good”, “should be improved”) |
|                                        | ● Teachers prepare different types of exam questions                      |                                                 |                                                                     |
|                                        | ● Exams cover topics from the beginning of the semester, with priority to topics most recently covered |                                                 |                                                                     |
|                                        | ● Exam duration is 40 minutes                                              |                                                 |                                                                     |
| Grade 5 onwards                        | Projects                                                                 | ● At least one project on one or multiple courses based on student preferences per school year | ● Mark out of 100 for each course based on average marks across assessments
|                                        | ● Based on individual or group work                                       |                                                 | ● Five-point grading scale: “very good” (85 to 100 points); “good” (70 to 84.99 points); “average” (60 to 69.99 points); “passed” (50 to 59.99 points); and “failed” (0 to 49.99 points) |
| **Secondary school institutions regulation** |                                                                            |                                                 |                                                                     |
| General and vocational                 | Written and applied exams                                                 | ● Two or more per course per semester. Written exams should consist of open-ended items, essays, etc. One exam per class can be based on short answer, paired questions or multiple-choice |
|                                        |                                                                            | ● For foreign language courses, the exams test students’ speaking, writing and listening skills |
|                                        |                                                                            | ● Priority is given to the most recent topics covered in the course |
|                                        |                                                                            | ● Attendance, preparation and behaviour          |                                                                     |
|                                        |                                                                            | ● Community service activities                   |                                                                     |
|                                        |                                                                            | ● National and international competition results |                                                                     |
| Performance studies                    | At least one performance study in all courses per semester                |                                                 |                                                                     |
| Projects                               | At least one project in at least one course per school year               |                                                 |                                                                     |
| Vocational                             | Skills exam (applied or written)                                          | ● One per course(s) per year                    | ● Internship file (20% of exam score)                               |
|                                        | ● Evaluates skills training                                               |                                                 |                                                                     |
|                                        | ● Carried out by a commission representing the profession                 |                                                 |                                                                     |


More central resources to help teachers create and use complex assessments are being developed. At present, some teachers rely on assessments in textbooks and that they find themselves on the Internet (Kan, 2017[7]). However, the ministry is progressively developing more resources to help teachers create and use more complex assessments. In particular, a new online portal to help teachers share teaching materials – EBA – allows teachers to share assessment resources with each other. The portal is intended to encourage
teachers to take more of a leading role in designing their own assessments on the basis of models that others have found effective. Another important pilot initiative is the school portfolio. The e-portfolio was still under development at the time of the OECD review but it aims to help teachers document not just students’ academic achievement but also participation in extra-curricular activities, with the possibility of taking this kind of information into account for assessment and high school and university placement decisions. A project is also underway, led by the General Directorate of Measurement, Evaluation and Examination Services in the ministry, to develop guidelines and grading rubrics for teachers to assess students’ writing skills, with the aim of building confidence and capacity among teachers to use open-ended assessment formats. While these are promising projects, at the time of the drafting of this review, the range of available assessment resources was limited, few curriculum subjects were covered and there was a lack of tools offering guidance to teachers on how to develop and conduct high-quality assessments.

**Responsibilities for classroom assessment**

The ministry determines all policies and regulations relating to classroom assessment. While the ministry overall is responsible for policies related to classroom assessment, within the ministry, responsibility for assessment policy is shared by many bodies. Different directorates set the requirements for classroom assessments depending on the level and type of education including the General Directorates of Basic Education, Secondary Education, Vocational and Technical Education and Religious Instruction. Assessment expertise is also located outside each of these directorates, in the Directorate of Measurement, Evaluation and Examinations (see Figure 1.1, Chapter 1). The latter has some responsibility for developing teachers’ assessment capacity, alongside the Directorate of Teacher Training and Development and the Council of Higher Education (with respect to initial teacher education). Finally, policy on diagnostic assessment – to identify students in need of additional teaching and learning support – is developed separately by the Directorate of Special Education and Counselling Services.

**Principals and teachers report developing and using their own assessments less than in other OECD countries**

Teachers in Turkey come together in grade- and subject-based groups to discuss how classroom assessments will be used in the school. However, while national regulations on assessments give teachers some autonomy to develop and use their own assessments, teachers in Turkey report exercising this autonomy less than teachers in other OECD countries. According to data from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), just one in ten students attend a school where Turkish teachers use assessments that they have developed themselves more than once a month, compared to almost four in ten students on average across OECD countries (OECD, 2016[11]). Principals in Turkey also exercise little pedagogical leadership of assessment. In 2015, principals in Turkey surveyed by PISA reported that 92% of students attend schools where national education authorities, rather than principals or teachers, establish student assessment policies. This is the highest among all countries that participate in PISA and significantly higher than the average among OECD countries (25%) (OECD, 2016[11]).
Use of classroom assessment results

Assessments carry stakes for selection to the next level of education

The average of a student’s classroom assessment marks from Grades 9 to 12 is added to their marks in the examinations for university placement in Grade 12 to calculate a score to place students in tertiary education institutions and programmes. The marks from classroom assessments contribute a minimum of 30 and maximum of 60 points overall, meaning that individual marks can make a difference between a student gaining a place on their desired programme or not.

Under the previous TEOG (Temel Öğretimden Ortaöğretim Geçiş Sistemi – Transition from Elementary Schools to Secondary Schools Exam), classroom assessment results from Grades 6 to 8 contributed 30% to a student’s scores for high school placement, with the remaining marks based on results from a central examination. Under the new system for high school placement in 2018, classroom assessments will no longer carry stakes for those students who are placed in one of their preferred local high schools. However, the criteria to determine places in oversubscribed high schools will take into account student’s average grades from classroom assessments, among others.

Assessments have an important role for progression in upper secondary

Regulations restrict the conditions in which repetition can occur up to Grade 8, resulting in little repetition in primary and lower secondary, with rates significantly below the OECD average (OECD, 2016[11]). However, from Grade 9 onwards, students can be required to repeat a grade if their classroom assessment marks are not satisfactory and many students are required to repeat. The share of students who repeat in upper secondary school (7.7%) is much higher than the OECD average (1.9%) (OECD, 2016[11]). The high rates of repetition in upper secondary might be related to a number of assessment-related factors including students not being placed in a high school programme that reflects their strengths and interests, a lack of consistency between the expectations of teachers in lower and upper secondary schools, and classroom assessment not being used effectively in the preceding grades to ensure that all students progress in line with national standards, with appropriate support provided to students to ensure that they do not fall behind.

Students’ results are reported regularly. Teachers in Turkey report student performance to students and their parents twice a year (once per semester) in report cards, in addition to regular parent-teacher meetings. The report cards include student marks from classroom assessments and a comment box in which teachers are expected to provide their opinion of the student. Schools also record students’ results from classroom assessments and centralised exams and other information about students (e.g. attendance) into the e-school system which is accessible to teachers, principals and relevant ministry staff. There is also an electronic Parent Information System which parents can use to monitor student absenteeism, school or teacher announcements, and the grades awarded to students for their behaviour. However, neither the report cards nor the electronic reporting systems allow for the inclusion of qualitative feedback on student performance like descriptions of students’ strengths and areas for improvement, and learning strategies to help them improve.

Teachers’ assessment capacity

Over a decade after the new curriculum was introduced, teachers in Turkey need to be supported to develop a better understanding of assessment terminology and the purposes of different assessment methods. At present, many teachers prefer to use “short, easy and
practical” assessment methods and are not fully aware of the breadth of methods at their disposal (Kan, 2017[7]). Teachers also do not show a consistent understanding of what formative assessment is, how it should be embedded within teaching practice and how results should inform the teaching-learning process, including adjustments to teaching. Some teachers with whom the OECD review team spoke described continuous summative assessment practices when they were asked to explain how they conduct formative assessment. In order to conduct classroom assessments effectively, teachers should understand the different purposes of assessment, be able to employ a wide range of assessment types and judge which type of assessment is most relevant for different steps in learning and evaluating different learning outcomes (see Box 3.2).

### Box 3.2. Effective classroom assessment practices

The following effective classroom assessment practices are derived primarily from the American Federation of Teachers’ Standards for teacher competency in educational assessment of students (American Federation of Teachers, 1990[12]) and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership’s Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITS, 2011[13]).

- **Planning, selecting and designing assessments that are appropriate and of high quality.** This requires knowledge of a broad range of assessment methods in order to select assessments (e.g. from an assessment bank) or design assessments that are most appropriate to the school curriculum and for their intended purpose. For example, teachers need to know which methods are most appropriate for diagnosing students’ learning needs or for measuring students’ acquisition of specific competencies set out in learning standards or outcomes in the school curriculum. Being able to design assessments of high-quality means knowing what makes an assessment technically viable (e.g. valid, reliable), and having the capacity to design assessments that meet those requirements. It also means being able to incorporate formative assessment into regular, everyday teaching practice.

- **Conducting a range of assessments to gather multiple sources of evidence of student learning.** This means giving students opportunities to demonstrate what they have learned in a multitude of different ways, including through teacher observations, conversations and student products relating to traditional assessment methods (e.g. tests) and “alternative” assessment methods (e.g. portfolios). This enhances the reliability, validity and equity of assessments by increasing the likelihood that they will dependably reflect different students’ progress over time.

- **Making consistent professional judgements about students’ levels of performance.** Teachers who are effective at making judgements about student learning are able to use scoring rubrics, as well as develop their own assessment criteria, to accurately interpret the results of assessments in order to determine students’ performance levels, strengths and areas for improvement. They grade students fairly and are aware of external factors that can affect student results, as well as their own biases. They participate in moderation activities with other teachers (e.g. marking or reviewing each other’s students’ work) to improve the reliability of their judgements.
### Using assessment results for formative and summative purposes

Teachers who are skilled at using assessment results for formative purposes are able to provide helpful feedback to students on their learning and adjust their teaching to address students’ needs. They are also able to use summative assessments, like national assessments or exams, as well as their regular, everyday monitoring of student learning, for formative purposes. They can communicate students’ summative and formative assessment results to different audiences (e.g. students, parents, other teachers) in ways that are clear and accurate and connected to the curriculum.

**Sources:**
- American Federation of Teachers (1990), *Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students*, [http://buros.org/standards-teacher-competence-educational-assessment-students](http://buros.org/standards-teacher-competence-educational-assessment-students);

---

**Initial teacher education covers classroom assessment but is more theoretical than practical**

Turkey has both concurrent and consecutive initial teacher education programmes, which are offered by university faculties of education. Concurrent programmes last for four years and lead to a bachelor’s degree. Completion of a bachelor’s programme is a prerequisite for entry to the consecutive programme, which lasts one year and leads to a graduate degree.

The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) that is separate and independent from the ministry, governs the tertiary sector and establishes the core curriculum of initial teacher education programmes. These include a “Measurement and Evaluation” course that covers topics like basic concepts in assessment, assessment tools, “alternative” assessment methods relevant to the school curriculum, test development, the assessment of learning outcomes, and grading (Birgin and Catlioglu, 2009). The course was being revised at the time of the OECD review.

Outside YÖK, the Evaluation and Accreditation Association of Educational Faculty Programs (EPDAD), which is the external accrediting body for initial teacher education, sets the accreditation requirements for initial teacher education. Turkey’s current accreditation requirements for initial teacher education programmes reference preparation in classroom assessment, but only at a high level. They state that, at the end of the programme, teacher candidates must be proficient in monitoring and evaluation (EPDAD, 2016). However, the accreditation of initial teacher education programmes is not operational (Kamal, 2017).

Research in Turkey and the OECD review team’s interviews have highlighted that initial teacher education programmes lack content on the practical application of assessment methods (e.g. how to develop assessments and use assessment tools) (Eren, 2010; Aksit, 2016).

**The Ministry of National Education and the provincial directorates share responsibility for professional development**

The Directorate of Teacher Training and Development and the ministry’s provincial directorates share responsibility for developing and providing continuing professional development to teachers. Within the ministry, the different directorates are expected to work with the Directorate of Teacher Training and Development to develop training for...
teachers on assessment. This includes workshops and seminars in which classroom assessment is foregrounded and other training on changes to the school curriculum which also includes components on assessment. The Directorate of Teacher Training and Development and the provinces also conduct regular assessments of teachers’ learning needs (e.g. via questionnaires) to determine topics to be covered in new training sessions.

The continuous professional development offered by the ministry is free of charge for teachers and in most cases is optional (in-service training is sometimes mandatory, for example, linked to a teacher being re-assigned to a new post or as part of a continuing project). Where courses take place outside their school, teachers’ participation is contingent upon the approval of a school principal. Participation rates in professional learning activities devoted to classroom assessment are not high, signalling a gap between demand, the availability of professional learning opportunities and areas of greatest need. Studies also show that teachers do not consider the workshops and seminars on assessment and the coverage of assessment in the curriculum training to be adequate and would like more practical content (Birgin, Tutak and Türkdoğan, 2009[19]; Günes et al., 2011[20]).

Policy issues

This chapter suggests assessment tools and feedback strategies that Turkey can develop now, with limited additional investment, which could have a significant positive impact on teachers’ classroom assessment practice. Strengthening teachers’ preparation in assessment theory and practice within teacher initial preparation and ongoing training will require time and significant financial and human resources. This review recommends that Turkey prioritise improving continuous professional development opportunities, as these have the potential to reach more teachers in ways that impact their immediate assessment practice. However, with large numbers of new teachers recruited each year, measures should also be taken now to improve the quality of assessment modules in initial teacher education to ensure that new teachers begin their career with a better understanding of assessment. Making fuller use of existing quality standards – notably the new teacher standards and accreditation requirements – would be a good first step.

Policy issue 3.1. Providing teachers with richer assessment resources that support competency acquisition

At present, the main sources of assessment guidance in Turkey are the subject curriculum and central regulations (see Table 3.1). Both set some general parameters for classroom assessments, but teachers need far more practical support on how to use assessments to monitor learning in line with national standards and to assess a broader range of competencies. Once developed, these kinds of resources can be made available on line via Turkey’s new EBA portal, which currently provides limited tools but has the potential to become a valuable, accessible source of support for teachers across the country.

Recommendation 3.1.1. Help teachers to monitor learning in line with national standards

Fundamental to helping teachers assess and support learning is their understanding of the curriculum’s expectations. At present, teachers’ main reference for teaching and assessment are the learning outcomes in “gains tables” that list discrete knowledge and skills by subject. This contrasts with the learning standards in countries where a competency-based approach to teaching has been embedded, which emphasise the
application and integration of knowledge and skills. This review recommends that Turkey develop similar learning standards that focus on the development of more complex outcomes (see Chapter 2). This should be complemented by more guidance to help teachers integrate the standards in their daily teaching. Teachers reported to the OECD review team that they need more tools describing student performance to help them develop assessments and make fair and accurate judgements about student performance.

Teachers in Turkey will also need more practical assessment tools to be able to monitor learning against national standards and diagnose students’ learning needs. The increase in repetition at the upper secondary level in Turkey suggests that many students in primary and lower secondary education move automatically to the next grade without having mastered the required knowledge and skills. This leaves many young adults at the end of their education in Turkey without important skills to enter the modern workforce. Results from the Survey of Adults Skills, a product of the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) shows that while most young Turkish adults can complete simple reading tasks such as locating information in a short text (PIAAC Level 1), nearly two in five 16-24 year-olds have trouble extracting information from longer and more complex texts (below PIAAC Level 2). This compares to 14% on average across OECD countries (OECD, 2016[21]).

Develop rubrics and exemplars to help teachers apply national learning standards in their classroom practice

Many OECD countries help teachers to apply learning standards by developing scoring rubrics. Rubrics contain descriptions of performance criteria and a scale of student performance levels to ensure that teachers are judging student work to a common standard. Countries also frequently provide exemplars of student work illustrating achievement at different levels. Rubrics help to ensure that classroom assessments reflect curriculum expectations, i.e. they are valid, reliable and support transparency (Nusche et al., 2011[22]); without them grading is more subjective and less inconsistent across teachers and schools. In Turkey, they would help teachers to prepare more accurate and reliable marking scales, where they have reported difficulties (Ak and Güvendi, 2010[23]).

Develop diagnostic assessments to ensure that students are meeting national standards

Turkey should consider providing teachers with simple diagnostic assessments that can be used at the beginning of a year, semester or unit of learning to ensure that students have the necessary skills and knowledge to master what is expected of them in the forthcoming unit(s). Diagnostic assessments are a type of formative assessment that assesses a student’s starting point or baseline. The information is used to adapt future teaching and learning. Diagnostic assessments can also be used to identify students who are at risk of failing to identify particular needs and put in place additional support or learning strategies (OECD, 2013[6]).

Providing primary school teachers with diagnostic assessment tools is especially important. Recent reforms in the first grades of primary to replace numerical marking with qualitative descriptors are in line with recent changes in many OECD countries to encourage more formative assessment and focus on competency development in the early grades. This needs to be matched by providing teachers in Turkey with alternative assessment tools to ensure that children are meeting appropriate development and learning milestones. Helping teachers to understand where students are in their learning in these early grades is especially
important in Turkey since children begin school with very heterogeneous levels of learning. Less than half of Turkish children (44%) attend pre-school programmes, in contrast to the vast majority (90%) of young children in other OECD countries (Eurostat, 2012[24]). Increasingly in OECD countries, these programmes are aligned with the primary school curriculum, especially in the last year of pre-school education, to help ensure that children develop basic cognitive competencies to master the school curriculum, alongside important social and emotional skills (OECD, 2017[25]).

Introduce early grade assessments that are age appropriate with a clearly defined formative function

Teachers in Turkey might be provided with centrally-developed diagnostic assessments to determine children’s educational levels when they begin school in Grades 1 or 2. These kinds of assessments carry no stakes for students and help teachers gather information about children’s knowledge, skills and understanding and their developmental stage. Diagnostic assessments in these grades are also an important tool to detect any learning needs early on. Increasingly, OECD countries use diagnostic assessments in the early years of primary school since support to address difficulties or learning needs is more effective the earlier it begins (see Box 3.3).

Box 3.3. Diagnostic assessments in French primary schools

In France students who enter elementary school (cours préparatoire) are evaluated as part of a national diagnostic evaluation in French language and mathematics. The French language assessment focuses on basic literacy skills and knowledge and evaluates a student’s ability to communicate orally, their phonological awareness and their knowledge of the alphabet. In mathematics, the assessment focuses on counting and reading numbers up to ten. The evaluation is a written assessment, with each student receiving a booklet where they respond to the questions. Teachers also receive a booklet that provides detailed guidance on how to administer the assessment to the whole class. Student booklets are collected in the end and evaluated by a student’s classroom teacher.

The diagnostic assessment provides the teacher with information so that they can adapt their teaching practices to students’ needs. It also provides school inspectors with information to understand the needs of the schools within their district, enabling them to provide relevant support to the teaching staff. The results are also shared with parents, and together parents and the student’s classroom teacher discuss how to best support the student’s learning and development needs. Results are also anonymised at the school-level and shared with the relevant district to provide direction for future professional development training for teachers.


Turkey would need to decide what form of diagnostic assessment is appropriate. Assessments should be designed in a way that is fun and engaging for children, without conveying any sense of a formal “test”, while still providing accurate information. Some countries use computer-based assessments and given Turkey’s commitment to promoting the use of technology in its schools, this may be an option in the longer term. In the short term, teachers might be provided with questions and prompts that they can use in an
informal way. The assessments would also contribute to teachers’ assessment capacity by providing them with examples of how to use more formative types of assessments in the first grades of primary. The assessments should be accompanied by guidance for teachers on how to interpret the information to plan teaching and learning throughout the year to meet children’s individual needs.

Similar, age-appropriate diagnostic tools might be progressively developed for teachers to use at the beginning of the year in the later stages of primary and at key stages in lower and upper secondary school. They would help to ensure that students do not move through grades accumulating major gaps in their learning, which at present is contributing to high repetition in upper secondary and low levels of skills acquisition. Again, these assessments should not carry any stakes for students. Recent initiatives introduced in association with Turkey’s new education vision for 2023 – namely, the Student Learning Achievement Monitoring Assessment; the Turkish Language Skills Study; and the Common Examinations initiative – hold promise in this area.

Provide additional resources to address the needs of students identified as being at risk of falling behind

Teachers in classrooms where many students are identified as struggling will need extra resources so that they can help their students catch up. These resources will be particularly important in urban areas, where classrooms can be very large. Other types of support might include teaching assistants, who can have a positive impact on learning when they are well trained and work with a small group of students or provide one-to-one support (Sharples, Webster and Blatchford, 2014 [27]). Students who are struggling can also be provided with additional learning opportunities before or after school, or over the summer. The ministry, in collaboration with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), is already piloting a Remedial Education Program for students in Grades 3 and 4 in basic literacy and numeracy competencies. Other options to extend learning support for students include making school staff available to help students with their homework or making rooms available for homework. Schools in Turkey provide these kinds of support less than most OECD countries (OECD, 2016 [11]). This will be particularly important in the transitional years (Grades 8 and 9) to prepare students for upper secondary and support them in the often challenging first months.

Support teachers to use the results from standardised assessments to monitor learning

Introducing a full cohort national assessment in primary, and possibly in lower secondary, would signal to teachers and schools when student learning is not meeting national expectations, indicating if and where extra resources are needed. The assessments would also provide nationally aligned, external standards which teachers can use as a reference to improve the accuracy of their classroom assessments. If the national assessments are designed in line with the curriculum, they will also provide teachers with examples of how to assess competencies, improving the validity of teachers’ classroom assessments over time. Teachers and schools might be supported through national reports and training on how to interpret assessment results so that they can use the results in this way (see Chapter 4). However, care should be taken to ensure that teachers use any information about individual student responses accurately. The General Directorate of Measurement, Evaluation and Examination Services would need to provide clear guidance for teachers around the extent to which student scores across different domains and skills (subscales)
and their responses to individual questions can be used accurately for individual diagnoses. Recent Student Learning Achievement Monitoring assessment initiative that was introduced in association with Turkey’s new education vision for 2023 holds promise in this area.

**Recommendation 3.1.2. Provide teachers with tools to assess a wider range of competencies**

Internationally, classroom assessments are seen as an important complement to standardised tests because they can assess a broader range of competencies than one-off examinations (OECD, 2013[6]). This is especially important when examinations are based predominantly on closed format question items, as they are in Turkey. Teachers in Turkey need far more support to be able to use a range of different types of classroom assessments. Some teachers have highlighted that they lack information about how to use assessments to measure more complex, higher-order competencies (Demir, Öztürk and Dökme, 2011[28]). In particular, teachers need more support to develop and implement performance assessments where students have to construct an answer, produce a product or perform an activity, rather than choose the right answer among a set of predetermined options. These kinds of assessments like essays, presentations, experiments and portfolios assess not only students’ knowledge and understanding, but also their ability to apply what they know to solve problems through critical thinking and reasoning.

**Develop nationally validated assessment instruments**

Nationally validated assessment instruments are developed centrally and connect to the curriculum’s learning standards. Teachers can use the assessments on a voluntary basis for formative or summative purposes when they determine that their students are ready to be assessed for their acquisition of competencies in the curriculum (OECD, 2013[6]). In Turkey, the ministry does make comprehension tests linked to the curriculum for each subject and grade available online but these tests are based on multiple-choice items (MoNE, n.d.[29]). As discussed above, closed format items like multiple choice questions can only assess a limited range of knowledge and skills, in contrast to the broadly-based competencies that Turkey’s curriculum emphasises. Making available a wider range of nationally validated assessment instruments would address a number of issues associated with teachers’ assessment literacy, including the reported practice among some teachers of borrowing assessment questions from the Internet without being able to ensure their validity and reliability (Kan, 2017[7]).

**Provide guidance to support the development and implementation of classroom assessments**

The above would need to be accompanied by assessment maps, which are descriptions of assessment tasks or methods that are most appropriate for assessing different learning outcomes in the curriculum. Also, of particular benefit in Turkey would be guidance regarding how teachers can incorporate formative assessment into their teaching practice and how they can develop and conduct authentic, performance-based assessments of competencies (e.g. portfolios, projects, group work, open-ended tasks, presentations, problem-solving assignments) (OECD, 2013[6]). The most helpful resources to support teachers’ skills, for example in formative assessment practices and providing feedback are concrete, “living examples” of strategies that teachers have implemented effectively in similar circumstances (Hopfenbeck et al., 2013[30]; Wiliam, 2010[31]).
Develop and fully implement the e-portfolio

The ministry is already piloting student e-portfolios in 19 provinces. Portfolios refer to a collection of samples of student work from classroom activities. Many other OECD countries also use portfolios because they can document a broad range of competencies. Since portfolios draw on work produced in a normal classroom setting across multiple occasions, they should also provide a more accurate reflection of what a student knows and can do, rather than time-pressured tests. The process of developing a portfolio likewise offers opportunities for students to evaluate their own learning, as they must critically evaluate their work to select those which best demonstrate their abilities. Finally, since portfolios collect work over time they highlight individual student’s growth and progress better than isolated test scores. However, portfolios can be difficult to implement nationally in a way that provides a meaningful and reliable assessment of learning.

In order to help teachers implement and use the portfolio, Turkey might consider providing national guidance for teachers on:

- **What is included in the portfolio by subject and type of task.** This might include a set of common performance tasks, for example, in a given year, each portfolio might include four writing tasks focused on different skills or tasks such as comprehension, analytical thinking and creative writing. Teachers could be provided with specific guidelines for each task and a rubric for marking. The set of tasks should cover a broad range of subjects and competencies.

- **How to organise portfolio interviews with students.** Accompanying portfolio development with teacher-student interviews can help to engage students’ in their learning, and provide an opportunity for self-assessment. During an interview, a teacher may ask a student why they have chosen a particular piece of work, what they learned when they were undertaking this task and which aspects they might improve in the future.

- **How to use portfolios to develop individual student plans.** Beginning in lower secondary, portfolios might include a section where students are required to set their own goals, reflect critically on their progress, and consider future educational and career options. Teachers can use the portfolio interview to discuss students’ future goals with them and provide them with practical advice to achieve them. In the final grades of lower and upper secondary, the discussions might focus more directly on future pathways, in consultation with guidance counsellors. A number of other OECD countries use similar approaches to encourage systematic reflection on a student’s current performance and future goals (see Box 4.1, Chapter 4).

Students might also be encouraged to take their portfolios home, perhaps alongside their report cards twice a year, to encourage parents and students to talk about their work. Parents might be prompted – for example by teachers, in their biannual parent-teacher meeting, or through guidance in the portfolio – to talk with their children about the kinds of tasks that they enjoyed. This can help parents to engage with their children’s learning, which positively supports student performance (Cooper et al., 2010[32]). From lower secondary onwards, parents should also be encouraged to use the individual student planning section of the portfolio to start discussing their children’s areas of interests with them, and related future pathways and career choices.
Chapter 3. Improving Teachers’ Classroom Assessment Practices

**Recommendation 3.1.3. Redesign the EBA portal to provide a broader range of better-quality resources**

The establishment of the EBA portal is a positive sign that Turkey recognises the value of online supports. An online portal is a particularly effective medium for providing classroom assessment guidance and material to a sizeable, spread-out teaching population like in Turkey, especially given that over 97% of schools in the country have Internet access (World Bank, 2013).[33] The portal contains materials provided by the ministry and teachers. While it is very positive that the EBA portal serves as a platform for professional exchange among teachers, Turkey would benefit from using it more intentionally to improve teachers’ assessment practices and the quality of assessments. In other OECD countries, ministries of education have invested significant resources to develop a variety of high-quality assessment resources that are made available on line (see Box 3.4).

**Ensure that the ministry leads the development of EBA**

Given the importance of providing teachers with high-quality assessment resources, the ministry should take a more leading role in redesigning the portal and developing content. Within the ministry, this would require collaboration across the directorates responsible for setting assessment requirements, as well as the Directorate of Measurement, Evaluation and Examination Services given its assessment expertise, and the Directorate of Teacher Training and Development given its responsibilities for teachers’ continuous professional development and to ensure that the resources reflect the revised teacher competencies for assessment published in 2017. This work should also be developed in consultation with the Board of Education, to ensure that it is in line with national curricula.

---

**Box 3.4. Online resources to support teachers’ assessment practices in New Zealand**

The New Zealand Ministry of Education’s website includes a section devoted to classroom assessment that offers a range of resources to schools and teachers. These include:

- **Assessment in the Classroom** ([http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Assessment-in-the-classroom](http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Assessment-in-the-classroom)), a collection of resources and information about formative assessment, including tools about how to put formative assessment into practice and inquire into the impact of teaching on students, as well as research literature on assessment for learning.

- **Assessment Online** ([http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Assessment-tools-resources](http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Assessment-tools-resources)), an assessment tools and resources portal, which provides, among other supports: an assessment tool selector, which allows teachers to search for the most appropriate fit-for-purpose assessment tool for every grade and subject of the curriculum; assessment resource banks, offering over 2,500 assessment resources in English, mathematics and science; learning progression frameworks, which illustrate learners’ developmental steps in reading, writing and mathematics from Years 1 to 10 of the country’s school system; and assessment tools designed specifically to support learners with diverse learning needs.

Involving teachers in the redesign of EBA

It will be essential for teachers to be involved in the redesign of EBA to ensure that the resources are useful for them. Turkey might create a consultation group that involves the ministry and representatives of the teaching community. In Denmark, for example, the government established a stakeholder group to develop the project “Strengthening Evaluation Culture in the Folkeskole” which included developing an evaluation portal (Schleicher, 2016[35]). Following the portal’s launch in 2007, teachers’ use of the portal was evaluated. In Turkey, the consultation group should also draw on existing evidence of teacher needs, such as the Directorate of Measurement, Evaluation and Examination’s recent project on strengthening teacher capacity in classroom assessment. A survey of teachers’ assessment needs in light of the new curriculum launched in 2017 should also be conducted.

While the ministry should take a lead role in developing EBA, it could continue to invite teachers to submit their own assessment tasks for posting on the portal. These tasks might be reviewed by individuals who are knowledgeable about what constitutes high-quality assessments that are appropriate to the curriculum. The ministry and teacher consultation group should develop a communications plan to make all teachers aware of the revised portal and how it will benefit them. As in Denmark, the ministry should consider evaluating teachers’ use of the portal once it has been in place for at least a year, to ensure that it is providing useful resources for teachers.

Identifying resources to be developed as a priority

As an immediate priority, the EBA portal should provide the following assessment tools developed by the ministry: scoring rubrics; diagnostic assessments to help teachers monitor learning in line with national standards; and guidance on how to use e-portfolios. The ministry can work with teachers to begin adding other resources that will be built up over time. These should include examples of student work demonstrating different performance levels in line with the national standards and a set of nationally validated assessment tools. These resources should be appropriate for teachers of different grades, subject areas, high school programmes and school contexts. Assessment instruments might also be adapted to take into account different teaching contexts, notably large classes.

This guidance might also be accompanied by videos and multi-media workshops. Videos are a valuable way to demonstrate effective classroom assessment techniques. Online workshops, which Turkey has already begun to use, provide teachers with opportunities to engage in distance learning. In Turkey, videos illustrating what formative assessment and feedback to improve student learning should look like would be of particular benefit to
address weaknesses in these areas. Individual teachers could participate in online workshops to develop assessment competencies to further their own learning and professional learning communities in schools could use these workshops as a form of collaborative professional development.

**Policy issue 3.2. Using formative feedback and reporting to better support student learning**

Studies have found that high-quality classroom feedback can accelerate learning significantly – students are able to learn in eight months what would normally take them a year. In particular, effective feedback has a powerful impact on lower achieving students (Wiliam, 2010[31]). Effective reporting instruments also play an important role in communicating learning expectations to parents, students and teachers, and supporting students’ learning by identifying their strengths and weaknesses, as well as learning strategies to help them improve (Santiago et al., 2012[36]).

Teachers in Turkey need more support and encouragement to consistently use assessment results to give meaningful and formative feedback to students. In interviews with the OECD review team, secondary school students noted that while teachers reviewed summative assessment results with them, telling them for example which quiz answers they got right or wrong, teachers were not providing regular feedback on their learning. At the same time, while Turkey uses report cards and online systems to regularly communicate student performance to parents and students, student performance is not reported consistently according to national standards. Reporting also does not allow for qualitative feedback, including what students need to do in order to further their learning.

**Recommendation 3.2.1. Encourage more formative feedback in the classroom**

Formative feedback that is effective in supporting student learning is specific, descriptive and constructive (Looney, 2011[37]) and engages students in their own learning (see Box 3.5). In Turkey, there are a number of system-level factors that currently limit the space for teachers to undertake formative assessment and provide quality feedback. These include high-stakes national examinations, an overloaded curriculum and large class sizes. Recent reforms such as the 2017 curriculum revisions and decision to end the compulsory Grade 8 examination should help to reduce some of these obstacles, as will this review’s recommendations for changes to the Grade 12 examinations (see Chapter 4). Equally, a national campaign that emphasises formative assessment and the development of 21st century competencies will also help to shift national perceptions as to what constitutes effective teaching and learning (see Chapter 2). But teachers will also need more practical help to integrate effective assessment practices into their classroom teaching.
Box 3.5. Effective formative feedback

The characteristics of effective feedback

To support student learning, effective feedback should be descriptive, constructive, timely and specific. Feedback that is descriptive and constructive clearly identifies students’ strengths and areas for improvement. For example, teachers can present feedback in the form of a comment sandwich: compliment, correct, compliment. Feedback that is timely is provided either during the learning process or directly after an assessment of work. Finally, feedback should also be specific by being clearly connected to an explicit action, driving students towards achieving clear learning goals by making them do something specific to improve their work (BOSTES, 2016[38]).

Involving students in the feedback process

Effective formative feedback also involves students as active participants in their assessment. Generally, this means teachers discussing learning goals with students and sharing criteria for success with them. Teachers can use these criteria (or rubrics) to provide feedback to students regarding where they have succeeded and where they need to improve, and students can use them for self-assessment and peer assessment purposes (OECD, 2005[39]). This ensures that teachers and students share an understanding of the curriculum learning outcome or goal to which students are working, students’ starting points in relation to that goal and how they should close the gap between the two (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017[34]).

Using student feedback to improve teaching

Effective feedback as part of formative assessment does not flow only from the teacher to students or, in the case of peer assessment, between students. It should also be directed from students to the teacher so that the teacher can use this information to adjust their teaching and determine when to move on to the next lesson. There are a number of simple techniques teachers can use to elicit this feedback at the end of each lesson, including asking students specific questions (e.g. What did you find easiest to learn?; What was difficult?; What would you do differently?) (BOSTES, 2016[38]) or having students complete “exit tickets”, which are notes in which students write a few sentences describing their understanding of the lesson (AITSL, 2011[13]).

Help teachers to learn about and practice different feedback techniques

A number of OECD countries provide information online for schools and teachers to encourage high-quality and specific feedback to students (see Box 3.6). Turkey could use the EBA portal to make similar resources available. Studies show that resources that demonstrate visually what best practices look like – such as videos or written examples of effective feedback – are the most helpful for teachers, especially when they are associated with specific curriculum content (for example, how to provide feedback on mathematics or Turkish language learning at specific grade levels) (Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner, 2017[40]). But alone, online supports will not be sufficient to help teachers understand the rationale for adopting different feedback approaches or provide them with expert feedback as they practice these approaches. As with other types of online professional development resources, the ministry and the provincial education directorates could provide face-to-face professional development workshops or seminars on effective feedback practices that complement online material. These sessions could present research on the impact of feedback and provide teachers with examples of practical feedback strategies for the classroom, along with suggestions of what teachers might do together to continue developing these new practices when they return to school.

Box 3.6. Website resources for effective feedback in Australia and New Zealand

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), Australia

AITSL is responsible for maintaining the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, which include a standard on assessment and sub-standard on student feedback. The AITSL website provides resources for schools to help them develop a school-wide culture that encourages the provision of effective feedback. These include summaries of research on practical feedback strategies and tools to support schools and teachers in implementing these strategies. The tools include documents and presentations that provide advice to schools to help them: confirm their readiness to introduce new feedback strategies; make a plan for implementation; enact the plan; and evaluate its impact. Resources also include video and written case studies, which provide “[r]eal-world insights into how feedback practices have been introduced into a range of educational contexts”. Each case study describes a school’s implementation steps, the key feedback practices they introduced, the enabling conditions that supported their efforts, and evidence of their impact.

The Ministry of Education’s “Assessment in the Classroom”, New Zealand

This website provides information to schools and teachers describing when the provision of feedback is most effective, resources to help teachers and students have conversations about feedback and links to relevant research. It also provides a professional learning presentation, which can be used to support individual teacher’s learning or learning sessions organised by a school. The presentation describes the purpose and value of feedback, suggests that staff observe each other’s classrooms to make note of the types of feedback they give to students and presents feedback strategies for teachers to try out in their classrooms. These strategies include:

- Ask key questions to engage students in feedback conversations and to check their understanding of the feedback and its adequacy (e.g. Do you know what to do next? Is that enough help? Do you need an example?).
- Try comment-only marking of students’ work by, for example, describing two or three positives and what can be improved; research shows that, unlike grades, comments prompt student learning gains.
- Require students to show evidence that they have self-assessed their work before you look at it.
- Allow students time to act on feedback during lessons in order to reinforce the value of the feedback and to provide them with the opportunity to make revisions in a supportive environment.


Resources and training will need to be adapted to a different classroom and school contexts in Turkey. Teachers need support in how to tailor formative assessment strategies like the provision of feedback to different age and ability groups, and also to different classroom realities (Dwyer and Wiliam, 2017[44]). For example, in large classes like those prevalent in certain urban areas of Turkey, useful strategies might include requiring students to record feedback from the teacher or their peers in portfolios, so that the teacher does not have to spend time on this task, and encouraging peer assessment and co-operative learning. Teachers can also be encouraged to divide large classes into groups of students in order to focus their attention on one group at a time and provided with support on how to develop lessons plans to manage this (OECD, 2005[39]). Older learners, in particular, may benefit from viewing examples of work that they can contrast with their own in order to identify where they need to improve (BOSTES, 2016[38]). Helping teachers to adapt their feedback approaches to different contexts will be important both for the effectiveness of these approaches for student learning, as well as for the likelihood of teachers embedding them in their daily classroom practice.

**Provide school-level support for effective feedback**

At the school level, teachers will need sustained support and encouragement to learn about and trial new practices in the classroom and develop their feedback skills over time, alongside other school-based efforts to improve teachers’ assessment skills (see Chapter 4, Recommendation 4.3.2). School leaders can facilitate teachers’ professional learning by providing opportunities to discuss feedback strategies and practice them in their classrooms, supporting teachers’ participation in professional learning inside and outside school, and highlighting helpful resources, research and examples of effective practice (AITSL, 2011[13]). But in order for school leaders to take on this kind of pedagogical leader role they will need to be supported to develop their pedagogical and leadership capacities, alongside reforms to the role of the school leader, that will take time. In the short-term, directing school-level efforts to improve feedback might be led by experienced teachers such as the ‘assessment leader’ that this report recommends.
The ministry could also develop resources for the revised EBA portal that schools can use to help improve their assessment practices and use of feedback, including:

- Case studies that describe how different schools in Turkey have introduced effective feedback practices.
- Guidance for schools on how to organise staff learning sessions to work through online workshop material together and to trial practices in the classroom.
- Resources and practices to support school-based professional learning on effective feedback strategies.

The new assessment centres in the provincial education directorates might provide support to schools to improve the provision of feedback, among other classroom assessment practices.

*Adapt teaching standards and regulations to ensure that formative assessment and feedback are central to teaching*

Teachers will be encouraged to develop their skills for formative assessment and feedback if these are clearly communicated as important aspects of the teacher role and a teacher’s professional competencies. Although Turkey’s recently revised competencies include using assessment results to inform teaching and learning and providing constructive feedback both could be expanded and made more explicit. In particular, it is not specified that feedback should be provided to students (simply “stakeholders”) and other aspects of formative assessment like undertaking assessments during the learning process without using marks to check for understanding are absent (MoNE, 2017[45]). Once revised, the competency on assessment should play a central policy in informing teacher policy, including teacher appraisal, the contents of initial teacher education programmes and professional learning programmes.

Central regulations for classroom assessment should also reinforce the importance of formative assessment. For example, this might mean that regulations require teachers to undertake at least one diagnostic assessment per semester or year, and specify that formative assessment is a regular and frequent aspect of classroom teaching. As part of teacher appraisal, teachers may be required to discuss or provide evidence of how they provide feedback to their students, and how they have used assessment results to shape future teaching and learning.

*Recommendation 3.2.2. Use reporting to help parents and students better understand learning levels and next steps*

Turkey’s system for reporting student results includes report cards, the e-school system, an electronic parent information system and regular parent-teacher meetings. Primary teachers also make themselves available to parents who cannot attend formal parent-teacher meetings. At present, these reporting systems provide little space for qualitative feedback such as individual strengths and challenges or suggested learning strategies to achieve future learning goals. The e-school system does not allow for the inclusion of descriptive information on student performance, nor are teachers required to provide it in students’ report cards. Teachers of Grades 1 to 3 have described the report card template for communicating student results as inadequate because it does not allow them to provide substantive feedback (Kan, 2017[7]). Qualitative feedback about students’ performance and progress is essential to support student learning at all levels of schooling, but it is
particularly important in grades where students do not receive numerical marks based on summative assessments, as in Grades 1 to 3 in Turkey (Nusche et al., 2011[22]).

Report student performance against national learning standards

School report cards provide students with a descriptor in Grades 1 to 3, or a mark out of 100 in Grades 4 to 12. However, teachers across different classrooms and schools in Turkey vary in how they interpret both the rating scale and the numeric scale (Kan, 2017[7]). Parents and students are also not provided with common definitions of what the descriptors or marks signify. Turkey would benefit from developing reporting scales that clearly define student performance levels in relation to the national learning standards. Many other OECD countries use similar descriptive levels based on national learning standards to help students and parents understand how far students are meeting national or state expectations (see Box 3.7). In Turkey, this approach would also help to focus students, parents and teachers on the competencies that each student is developing and their individual progress, rather than comparing students with their peers in classes or the school.

Consider how to report the development of transversal competencies

The ministry should also consider how transversal competencies could be reflected in reporting documents. In France, the livret scolaire introduced in 2016 provides an annual report on the development of skills that contribute to the development of broader transversal competencies, alongside subject-specific skills. For example, when reporting on the development of the French language in the second year of primary, subject-specific skills like spelling and grammar are reported alongside broader skills like reading and understanding. The livret scolaire also reports on the development of knowledge to question and understand the world, like time and space. Every three years throughout a student’s schooling, teachers report on the student’s mastery of eight broad competencies including the tools and methods that students have acquired for their own learning and their development as an individual and citizen (Ministère de l’Éducation Nationale, 2017[46]).

Incorporate qualitative feedback when reporting student performance

Turkey should modify the format of the report card templates, e-school system and parent information system to allow for more qualitative feedback on student performance. Research recommends that reporting documents provide information about students’ progress, strengths, areas where improvement is needed and any sources of concern, and recommendations for further learning to support students’ continued progress (Santiago et al., 2012[36]). Turkey might also provide students and parents with space to add their own comments to reporting documents (see Box 3.7). This would involve students as active participants in their own assessment and support parents’ role in their child’s learning.
Box 3.7. The reporting framework in Ontario, Canada

Ontario’s schools issue a progress report card and final report card for each student each year. The contents of the report card templates vary for Grades 1 to 6, Grades 7 to 8, and Grades 9 to 12, and for public and Catholic schools, but at the time of this review, all of them report on:

- students’ learning skills and work habits (i.e. responsibility, organisation, independent work, collaboration, initiative and self-regulation)
- students’ achievement against provincial curriculum expectations for each subject or course.

Guidelines outline the policies and practices district school boards, schools and teachers are required to follow in these areas and provides guidance to support completion of the report cards.

Reporting scales

A six-point letter grade scale is used for Grades 1 to 6 (see example), and 6-point numeric scales are used for Grades 7 to 8, and Grades 9 to 12, to report on students’ achievement of provincial curriculum expectations in each subject or course. Each point on the achievement scale is accompanied by a descriptor and aligns with a provincial standard level, which is the reporting scale used for province-wide student assessments. This information is included in the report card templates to help parents and students understand students’ results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Achievement of the Provincial Curriculum Expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A- to A+</td>
<td>The student has demonstrated the required knowledge and skills with a high degree of effectiveness. Achievement surpasses the provincial standard. (Level 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B- to B+</td>
<td>The student has demonstrated the required knowledge and skills with considerable effectiveness. Achievement meets the provincial standard. (Level 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C- to C+</td>
<td>The student has demonstrated the required knowledge and skills with some effectiveness. Achievement approaches the provincial standard. (Level 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D- to D+</td>
<td>The student has demonstrated the required knowledge and skills with limited effectiveness. Achievement falls much below the provincial standard. (Level 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>The student has not demonstrated the required knowledge and skills. Extensive remediation is required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Insufficient evidence to assign a letter grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A four-point rating scale is also used to report on students’ learning skills and work habits: E-excellent; G-good; S-satisfactory; and N-needs improvement.

Teachers’ qualitative feedback

Report cards provide space for teachers to comment on what students have learned, their strengths, and their next steps for improvement in relation to their learning skills and work habits and their achievement of provincial curriculum expectations for each subject or course.
Guidelines advise teachers on how to write these comments (e.g. use clear, precise language). A professional network in one region of the province has also developed a resource that provides teachers with examples of the kind of information the comments should contain.

**Student and parent comments**

At all grade levels, in either progress or final report cards, students are required to complete the statements: “My best work is” and “My goal for improvement is”. Parents are prompted to indicate whether they would like to be contacted by the teacher(s) to discuss the report card results. In Grades 1 to 8, parents are also required to complete the statements: “My child has improved most in” and “I will help my child to”.


**Clearly communicate changes to students, parents and teachers**

These changes will require significant communication to teachers and schools. Teachers will need clear material that explains the rationale for the change. Guidelines will also be essential to ensure consistency in reporting practices across schools (Nusche et al., 2011[22]). Turkey might begin progressively, by piloting the new reporting instrument in selected schools and/or provinces. In 2009, Mexico developed a new reporting system to provide qualitative information to parents and students and used a new five-point marking
scale to describe students’ level of performance in each subject. The report card template was piloted in 5,000 primary schools and 1,000 lower secondary schools (Santiago et al., 2012[36]). Care will also need to be taken to communicate clearly the change to parents to help them interpret the information in the new report card. As well as sending students’ e-portfolio home alongside the report card, efforts to communicate the changes to the school report card might be part of a wider public campaign that explains changes to teaching and learning as part of a competency-based approach (see Chapter 2).

Policy issue 3.3. Reinforcing in-service training on assessment

Teachers in Turkey participate in professional development far less than teachers in other OECD countries (OECD, 2016[11]). Participation in assessment-related professional development is especially low – between 2012 and 2016 less than 1% of teachers in Turkey attended courses and seminars on classroom assessment (MoNE, 2016[30]; MoNE, 2017[51]). The OECD review team’s interviews with teachers suggest that low participation is due to the perceived low quality and relevance of courses, and also because it is disruptive since teachers frequently have to attend courses outside the school during classroom hours. Studies in Turkey confirm this view (Günes et al., 2011[20]).

An important complement to courses and training on assessment are the learning opportunities provided within schools. Turkey already has some school-based discussion groups on assessment, but these are largely limited to developing summative assessments. Providing external support so that experienced teachers within each school can become an “assessment leader” would provide each school with assessment capacity and the impetus to help each school create its own policy towards assessment. Such a policy would make explicit for teachers what good assessment practice is and how they can integrate it in their classrooms.

Recommendation 3.3.1. Make training on classroom assessment a top professional development priority

Continuing professional development on classroom assessment is currently offered in response to demand, as determined by needs assessments (e.g. regular teacher questionnaires) conducted by the ministry’s Directorate of Teacher Training and Development and provincial education directorates. Except in a few specific circumstances, such as when a teacher is re-assigned to a new position, professional development is not mandatory. While this voluntary approach respects teachers’ authority to determine their own professional learning needs, something that the ministry has identified as important (MoNE, 2017[5]), this method has clearly been inadequate.

Require all teachers to undertake professional development on assessment

Given the need to significantly improve overall teaching competencies, and assess competency in particular, all teachers in Turkey should be required to undertake some professional development annually. Within this requirement, assessment should be highlighted as a core domain where teachers are encouraged to continually develop their knowledge and expertise. Turkey could do this by setting out the minimum number of hours or days that teachers are expected to devote to professional development, as is the case in ten education systems across Europe (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015[52]). Requirements should also specify that teachers should draw on both courses provided externally to their school and on-going, school-based professional development. The latter are particularly important because research shows that sustained, collaborative professional
development directly related to teachers’ classroom practice are among the most effective types of professional development (Schleicher, 2011[53]).

As recommended by this review, setting out minimum expectations for teachers’ assessment competency and using teacher appraisal to identify professional development requirements would help to ensure that teachers undertake professional development relevant to their needs. During their appraisal discussion, teachers would be expected to reflect upon how they are drawing on what they have learned in the classroom. Introducing a new appraisal for promotion, as part of a differentiated teaching career path in the future, would incentivise teachers to develop and demonstrate higher levels of assessment competency.

**Ensure that professional development reflects teachers’ needs**

To improve the quality and relevance of professional development, it should closely address teachers’ assessment needs. Currently, Turkey surveys teachers to inform the design of professional development. This helpfully focuses on where teachers feel they need further support, but requires teachers to diagnose their own needs, risking that teachers may not accurately identify their key needs. More direct evidence that reveals gaps in teachers’ assessment knowledge and skills would help to ensure the relevance of professional development. This could include similar workshops like the one recently organised by the General Directorate of Measurement, Evaluation and Examination Services and UNICEF, where teachers were asked to respond to questions about assessment terminology and how they use assessment. Better use should also be made of evidence from teacher appraisal and school evaluation on teachers’ learning needs for assessment.

**Connect professional development to teachers’ classroom practices**

In designing professional development, efforts should be made to directly connect content with teachers’ classroom practices, which research highlights is critical for its effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner, 2017[40]). This will mean providing opportunities for active learning where teachers can try out the assessment practices that they aim to use with their students and receive feedback, rather than lecture-based training that is disconnected from teachers’ classrooms and students. Teachers also need practical and specific examples of what effective assessment practice looks like, for example by looking at model lesson plans that indicate how and when teachers will check for students’ understanding, or by observing the provision of high-quality feedback through classroom observations or videos.

**Make professional development more responsive to national priorities to reduce summative testing**

Recent national regulations aim to reduce teachers’ reliance on summative testing, for example by ending the use of summative, numerical marking in Grades 1 to 3 and reducing the number of multiple-choice tests that can be used in secondary education. This review has recommended that the ministry develop new assessment tools, like diagnostic assessment, student portfolios and items banks of assessments items, so that teachers have a broader repertoire of assessment tools to complement these regulations (see Policy issue 3.1). But teachers will need support through professional development to help them understand the purpose of these tools and how they can be used to support learning if they are to make greater use of them, and rely less on summative testing. Professional
development should also give teachers the opportunity to practice using new assessment tools and receive feedback.

**Develop facilitators’ assessment expertise**

Developing more relevant, high-quality professional development will also depend on having high-quality facilitators who can deliver it. At present, professional development is delivered by school inspectors, ministry staff and university faculty members. To be effective, facilitators responsible for delivering professional development need to have practical knowledge of Turkey’s classrooms and strong assessment expertise. However, half of the teachers in a small Turkish study reported that they did not trust the expertise of facilitators (Günes et al., 2011[20]). Teachers have expressed particular concerns about the training delivered by inspectors because they were considered to be lacking both expertise in the subject matter and recent experience in the classroom.

One way to enhance the capacity of facilitators in the immediate term would be to require that they participate in the same continuing professional development courses made available to teachers. This is the case in Norway and helps to ensure that facilitators’ preparation relates to the classroom (European Commission, 2013[54]). A core function of the new assessment centres in the provincial education directorates might be to train facilitators on assessment. When they are established, the new teacher academies could also take on a role in training facilitators (Box 3.1).

**Make greater use of technology to expand professional development**

In order to significantly expand the availability of professional development, Turkey will need to consider using a broader range of delivery options. As part of the new Teacher Strategy 2017-23, the country already plans to create new teacher academies that will provide professional development to teachers, which could help. Another option is to make much greater use of technology to provide professional development that is blended with face-to-face training to reach the large and geographically disparate body of teaching staff in Turkey. Research from other countries that have used this model highlight the importance of face-to-face learning to orient teachers before they begin and ensure clear guidelines, like firm deadlines to ensure that teachers complete the courses (Dionísio, Cunha and Arqueiro, 2016[55]; Kovács, 2016[56]).

Online materials can also be designed to provide similar opportunities for interactive learning and practical examples that are important in more traditional types of professional development. For example, videos could also be used to illustrate effective assessment practices. Classroom contexts could also be simulated to require teachers to put what they have learned into practice, for example by indicating the kind of feedback that they might provide to a student or writing a plan for how they would assess learning in a given topic. To ensure the quality of these materials, Turkey might ensure that any new standards for professional development include specific standards for online materials.

**Proceed with plans to adopt standards for effective professional learning**

As part of the new teacher strategy, Turkey also plans to create standards for the new teacher academies and their facilitators. This will be an important quality assurance measure, especially if the range of professional development providers is to expand in the future to include private providers, as Turkey is considering. In Ontario, Canada, for example, providers of additional qualification programmes for teachers must meet certain regulated standards in order to be accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers. These
requirements include that the majority of educators teaching the programme have teaching experience in Ontario relevant to the programme (Ontario College of Teachers, 2002[57]).

**Recommendation 3.3.2. Develop school-based professional learning on assessment**

Professional learning opportunities that are job-embedded, collaborative and sustained over time are the most effective at improving teachers’ competency (Schleicher, 2011[53]). These include opportunities at the school-level like group discussions about teaching activities, joint preparation of instructional material, classroom observations and coaching (Darling-Hammond and Rothman, 2011[58]). These activities allow teachers to learn and practice over an extended period of time within their school and classroom environments. Providing support at the school-level in this way also makes it easier for teachers to fit this learning into their schedules and receive support on assessment when they need it (OECD, 2013[59]). It would also support the professional learning of teachers in Turkey’s rural, isolated schools.

Turkey already has some school-based discussion groups on assessment, but these could be improved so that they encourage more the kinds of collaborative reflection, inquiry and experience sharing that will help to improve teachers’ assessment practices. Schools in Turkey will need actors at the school level that can help to organise these kinds of groups, with the assessment expertise to be able to direct the discussions. Teachers will also need to be encouraged to see these kinds of activities as a legitimate and important use of their time. Finally, to ensure that collaborative activities are useful, they need to be directed to focus on shared challenges that teachers are facing in the classroom.

**Provide leadership for school-level professional development activities on assessment**

Schools will need impetus and support to be able to create collaborative activities that help teachers to use assessment more effectively. This can be provided through a range of actors within and outside the school such as:

- Designating an experienced teacher(s) as an assessment leader or coach in each school. This individual would act as an “assessment resource” for the school by organising and directing teacher discussion groups and helping teachers navigate the online assessment materials and resources so that they can draw on them effectively to meet their particular needs as a school. Assessment leaders could receive some initial training and support from the assessment centres in the provincial directorates to enable them to take on this role.

- Using the assessment centres to develop the provincial directorates’ assessment capacity, for example providing training to school inspectors on assessment use. This would mean that over the medium-term, the directorates’ capacity would grow so that they can provide more support to facilitate and direct schools’ professional development on assessment.

- Using school evaluation to “challenge” schools on their assessment practices (see Chapter 5).

- Providing targeted and integrated support to schools in greatest need. The wide disparities in student outcomes across different regions and types of schools in Turkey mean that some schools will need far more support to improve teaching and
learning. Turkey could provide integrated, targeted support for these kinds of schools like more external support from local assessment centres (see Chapter 5).

Finally, school leaders can play an instrumental role in planning professional development activities at the school level and developing collaborative working cultures (Schleicher, 2012[60]). In Turkey, where school leaders occupy a primarily administrative role at present, they will need significant support to become pedagogical leaders, including reform of the school leader role in terms of selection, initial preparation and appraisal to focus on pedagogical and leadership competencies.

**Provide dedicated time for teachers to work together on assessment**

Evidence from the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) shows that internationally, engaging in collaborative professional development activities or collaborative practices five times a year or more has a positive impact on teachers’ perception of their own efficacy and their job satisfaction (Schleicher, 2015[61]). Since teachers in Turkey spend less time teaching than their counterparts in all other OECD countries except one (Poland) (OECD, 2017[62]), they may have time to dedicate to these kinds of collaborative activities, However, they will need to feel that is a legitimate and valued use of their time.

This can be supported by requiring all teachers to engage in some kinds of collaborative activities. In Japan, for example, all teachers participate in lesson studies where groups of teachers review their lessons and discuss how to improve them, in part through analysis of student errors (Schleicher, 2012[60]). In Singapore, 20 hours per week are built into teachers’ schedules for shared planning, learning and classroom visits (Darling-Hammond and Rothman, 2011[58]). Given the centralised organisation of education in Turkey, encouraging more collaborative activities might require specifying that teachers devote a certain proportion of their time to these kinds of activities. Recognising teachers’ participation in school-based collaborative activities as part of teacher appraisal criteria will also help to ensure that teachers and school leaders recognise the importance of these activities.

**Develop school-based moderation practices**

The teacher groups in Turkey’s schools should be encouraged to focus on issues that matter to teachers and which are important for their classroom practice. Assessment leaders in schools might initially work with their local provincial directorates to help identify the kinds of issues that are important nationally but also reflect the local and school context, for example by drawing on the results from school evaluations. Important and useful areas to focus on in the short term include how to diagnose student learning at the beginning of the school year using the new diagnostic assessments, how to use the new student portfolios effectively and how to moderate student work across the school. The latter brings teachers together to discuss the standard of student work and review marking procedures to encourage consistency in teachers’ judgements of student work. It is particularly important in Turkey, given variations in teachers’ classroom assessment because it can help to improve the reliability of teacher assessments across a school. It is also an important form of collaborative professional learning that encourages teachers to reflect on and deepen their understanding of student assessment, learning goals and performance criteria (Nusche et al., 2011[22]).

To support the development of school-based moderation practices, the ministry might provide external resources for schools. In New Zealand, the Ministry of Education has
provided school teams moderating assessments in reading, writing and mathematics with resources that include:

- Questions for schools to consider in establishing moderation procedures (e.g. who should lead the moderation and how? How can we ensure our procedures are consistent? To whom can we turn for help?).
- Examples of moderation practices drawn from the research literature.
- Case studies of effective moderation teams.
- Online professional learning modules for teachers describing why moderation is important and how it can be conducted (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017[34]).

**Policy issue 3.4. Improving teachers’ initial preparation in classroom assessment**

Good quality initial teacher preparation on classroom assessment ensures that teachers start their career with a sound understanding of different assessment approaches and the confidence and skill to use these appropriately. In Turkey, this solid foundation is particularly important because new teachers are often assigned to rural, disadvantaged areas, where drop-out rates are higher and students have lower basic skills and face other forms of disadvantage (see Chapter 1). In these contexts, effective classroom assessment (especially formative assessment) can have a substantial impact on learning outcomes (Looney, 2011[37]) and student motivation. Initial teacher preparation can also be a powerful vehicle for education reform, to ensure that the next generation of teachers can assess the competencies valued in the new curriculum and modern societies. Again, this is important in Turkey, where a significant number of new teachers will need to be recruited to respond to system expansion, especially at the secondary level.

At present, Turkey’s initial teacher education programmes include a measurement and evaluation course, and assessment is also covered as part of pedagogical content courses. However, teacher graduates are reported to lack knowledge of the assessment approaches required by the constructivist curriculum, including alternative assessment methods like portfolios (Aksit, 2016[18]). They also have difficulty understanding how these assessment approaches can be applied in the classroom (Eren, 2010[17]). Interviews carried out by the OECD review team confirmed this research, with policymakers reporting that initial teacher education is more theoretical than practical, leaving teacher candidates with insufficient preparation in the application of assessment methods like how to use assessment tools or write assessment questions. The Council of Higher Education is developing a new module on classroom assessment for initial education programmes and the ministry’s Teacher Strategy 2017-23 states that efforts will be made to make initial education programmes more practical. However, since the Council of Higher Education sets the requirements for initial teacher education, the ministry has limited ability to ensure that the new module is aligned with its Teacher Strategy and addresses classroom needs and national curriculum goals.

**Recommendation 3.4.1. Ensure sufficient coverage of classroom assessment in initial teacher preparation**

Setting clear standards, through assessment competencies and accreditation, will be important in Turkey given that multiple bodies exercise authority in this area. This will help to create a framework that ensures the quality of initial teacher education programmes...
and their alignment to national priorities. Ensuring that these standards reflect the importance of practical preparation in classroom assessment will also help to ensure that this is embedded in the curriculum of initial teacher preparation.

Use new teacher competencies to inform the development of initial teacher education programme content on assessment

Turkey’s teacher competencies have reportedly never been used to inform the curriculum of the country’s initial teacher education programmes (Köksal and Convery, 2013[63]). While Turkey has recently developed new teacher competencies, these do not reflect all the important aspects of teachers’ assessment competencies like using a broad range of assessment types or clearly specifying expectations for formative assessment. They also do not provide specific expectations in terms of what beginning teachers need to know and understand classroom assessment (MoNE, 2017[45]). Turkey will need to consider addressing these gaps, as recommended in this review (see Chapter 5). This would mean that the Council of Higher Education and initial teacher education providers could then use the new teacher competencies to inform the development of initial education programme content on assessment. They could also be incorporated into the country’s accreditation requirements. In so doing, Turkey could look to Australia’s professional standards for teachers, which include assessment-related standards for graduate teachers, as well as the work of the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) (now the New South Wales Education Standards Authority), the initial teacher education programme accreditation body in New South Wales, Australia. In 2013, BOSTES conducted a study to determine how the state’s initial teacher education programmes were covering student assessment and reviewed the research literature identifying gaps in teachers’ student assessment competencies in Australia. BOSTES then established 24 key elements of assessment knowledge, skills and understanding, or competencies, that beginning teachers should develop in their initial teacher education programmes (see Box 3.8). These elements provided a framework for assessment content that initial education programme providers are now expected to cover in their programmes.

Box 3.8. BOSTES’ key elements of assessment knowledge, skills and understanding for beginning teachers

Below is a selection from the 24 key elements of knowledge, skills and understanding that BOSTES determined new teachers needed to develop in their initial teacher education programmes in the area of classroom assessment. These key elements expand on the Australian professional standards for graduate teachers, which set out what new teachers should know and be able to do in relation to assessment. They emphasise, in particular, that new teachers need to be able to conduct assessments that are appropriate to the state’s school curriculum.

- Beginning teachers need to understand how teaching, learning, assessment, feedback and reporting can be aligned and integrated in practice.
- Beginning teachers need to know the purposes of summative and formative assessment and how the two can be brought together. They need to know how to incorporate both purposes for assessment into teaching and learning programmes.
Beginning teachers should have a working knowledge of the vocabulary of assessment. They should understand and be able to apply concepts of validity and reliability to the development of their own assessment activities and tasks and to broader measures such as examinations and standardised testing programmes.

Beginning teachers should understand the importance of developing criteria for judging different levels of performance in response to assessment activities or tasks.

Beginning teachers need to be able to formulate questions to help them analyse student performance for feedback to students and, just as importantly, to feed forward into their teaching.

Beginning teachers should know about ways that the reliability of their judgements can be improved, for example through moderation.


**Implement the tertiary accreditation process, and incorporate new teacher assessment competencies into the accreditation requirements**

In 2005, Turkey established a cyclical, five-year external accreditation process for tertiary education institutions requiring initial teacher education programme providers to demonstrate that their programmes meet certain standards. This included one standard that references classroom assessment, which includes being proficient in the monitoring and evaluation of students’ learning and development. However a decade after the accreditation process started to be developed, it has still not been finalised (EPDAD, 2016[15]; Kamal, 2017[16]). In interviews, the OECD review team was told that the quality of the country’s consecutive initial teacher education programmes varies, more so than that of the concurrent programmes. This may be leading to disparity in how well teacher candidates, particularly those in consecutive programmes, are prepared in classroom assessment.

Turkey should proceed with the systematic implementation of its cyclical tertiary accreditation process and incorporate new teacher assessment competencies into the accreditation requirements. Providers could, for example, be required to demonstrate how they will develop teacher candidates’ knowledge of the theory underpinning assessments (and the school curriculum to which they relate) and their practical skills to conduct assessments. This would address any disparity across programmes while also ensuring teacher candidates’ sufficient and appropriate practical preparation in classroom assessment. Such an approach would be consistent with the practices of education systems around the world that have established decrees, frameworks or guidelines to which initial teacher education providers are required to adhere. These include New South Wales (Australia) (see Box 3.8), the French and Flemish communities in Belgium, Ontario (Canada), Ireland, Norway and Sweden (see Box 3.9) (OECD, 2013[6]).

**Establish an advisory committee with representatives from the ministry and the Council of Higher Education to enhance the initial preparation of teachers**

In working to establish requirements for the coverage of classroom assessment in initial teacher education programmes, Turkey will need to address a systemic challenge: separate bodies that do not necessarily work closely with each other are responsible for tertiary
education, accreditation, teacher training, classroom assessment policies and the school curriculum. These include: several bodies within the Ministry of Education; the Council of Higher Education; the National Council for Teacher Training, which is tasked with co-ordinating between the ministry and the council; and EPDAD (YÖK, 2015[65]; OECD, 2013[66]; OECD, 2007[3]).

Turkey should consider establishing an advisory committee with representatives from each of these organisations, like the one Ireland created to revise its initial preparation of teachers, to work together to address the difficulties associated with the governance of initial teacher education (see Box 3.9). On an ongoing basis, this advisory committee could also ensure that initial teacher education programmes keep pace with reforms to the basic education system. The importance of ensuring that representatives of initial education providers are included as full partners in this collaborative process cannot be overstated. Teachers and principals will also have valuable input to contribute. If appropriate, the National Council for Teacher Training could chair the committee. This would reinforce both the council’s important role as a bridge between the bodies responsible for basic and tertiary education and the goal of these efforts: the effective training of the next generation of teachers.

Box 3.9. Ireland’s initial teacher education criteria and guidelines

In 2010, the Teaching Council in Ireland, which accredits initial teacher education programmes, established an Advisory Group on Initial Teacher Education as part of the country’s efforts to revise initial teacher education by engaging relevant stakeholders and co-ordinating their input. The advisory group consisted of representatives from the Teaching Council, Ireland’s Department of Education and Skills, initial teacher education providers and schools. Its main responsibility was to advise the council on new criteria and guidelines to be followed by providers of initial teacher education programmes. The group also formed a bridge between the Teaching Council’s policy and the development and implementation of initial teacher education programmes.

The criteria and guidelines the Teaching Council established emphasise that programmes should prepare teacher candidates “for teaching, learning and assessment” related to the school curriculum. Specifically, a number of criteria and guidelines highlight preparation in classroom assessment. For example, initial teacher education providers must ensure that:

- Teaching, learning and assessment are mandatory elements of the programme.
- School placements provide opportunities for teacher candidates to practice teaching, learning and assessment using a wide range of strategies.
Graduates of initial teacher education programmes achieve knowledge of key principles of planning, teaching, learning, assessment, reflection and self-evaluation (e.g. knowing the theory, concepts and methods of formative and summative assessment; understanding students as active learners). Graduates should also have developed skills in planning, teaching, learning and assessment (e.g. using a range of strategies to assess students’ progress; assessing students’ achievement of curriculum objectives and adapting their teaching accordingly).


**Recommendation 3.4.2. Ensure that initial preparation in classroom assessment is practical and connected to the school curriculum**

It is positive that Turkey’s initial teacher education programmes include mandatory coursework on measurement and assessment. However, the extent to which classroom assessment is also covered in the practicum and courses on the teaching methods or practical didactics of different subjects of the curriculum is not clear. This may be one reason why teachers reportedly consider that initial preparation in classroom assessment is not sufficiently practical. Best practice in how assessment is used varies across curriculum subjects, making it particularly important that teacher candidates be prepared in classroom assessment in ways that are practical and connected to the curriculum they will be teaching.

**Cover classroom assessment in the practicum**

In Turkey, accreditation requirements set out standards for delivery of the practicum component of initial teacher education programmes. They are general in describing what should be covered in the practicum (e.g. classroom management; performance), and they do not reference classroom assessment (EPDAD, 2016[15]). Since the late 1990s, Faculty School Co-operation Guidelines have set out expectations for initial teacher education providers and schools in relation to the practicum. The guidelines are reportedly unclear regarding a number of processes, and as a result, implementation of the practicum varies from programme to programme (Gürsoy, 2013[68]). New teachers in Turkey also have a much shorter practicum than their peers in other OECD countries. New teachers for lower secondary in Turkey, for example, have a 30 days practicum which is the lowest among all OECD countries except one (Japan) (OECD, 2014[69]).

The practicum should provide teacher candidates with multiple opportunities to put what they have learned about classroom assessment into practice in ways that are directly connected to the school curriculum. Teacher candidates should also receive feedback and be assessed on their classroom assessment efforts and have opportunities to reflect on them. New Zealand emphasises preparation in classroom assessment during the practicum, as well as during the initial induction phase of teaching (Nusche et al., 2011[22]). A practicum handbook for the University of Auckland’s primary initial teacher education programme, for example, specifies learning outcomes and criteria to evaluate teacher candidates on their classroom assessment practices. Teacher candidates in their final in-school placement are expected to demonstrate that:
• Their planning is informed by the curriculum, policy documents, appropriate learning and teaching approaches, inclusive practice and current assessment information.

• They are consistently monitoring, analysing and evaluating students’ learning using a range of assessment procedures.

• They are planning, implementing and evaluating extended teaching/learning experiences across a range of curriculum areas with multiple groups and the whole class (University of Auckland, 2017[70]).

In Turkey, the advisory committee should consider revising the accreditation requirements and Faculty School Co-operation Booklet in order to clarify practicum requirements and ensure that teacher candidates use their time in the classroom to conduct classroom assessments, as well as receive feedback and be assessed on them. Turkey should also consider lengthening the duration of the practicum to provide teacher candidates with more practical teaching opportunities.

Model the assessment practices teachers will need to use in the classroom

Initial teacher education programmes can develop teacher candidates’ understanding of the specific assessment methods they will be expected to conduct in the classroom by using some of those same methods to assess teacher candidates during their initial preparation. Research in Turkey has found that teacher candidates who adopt a critical thinking learning strategy (e.g. consciously analysing, reasoning and using knowledge to solve problems), which is encouraged in the school curriculum, preferred alternative assessment methods (Dogan, 2013[71]). A small study found that the use of portfolios for assessment in initial teacher education programmes put “the constructivist philosophy…into practice,” and encouraged teacher candidates to be active learners and faculty members to be more student-centred (Aksit, 2016[18]).

This can be encouraged systematically through the accreditation requirements for initial education programmes which should explicitly include the modelling of assessment methods relevant to the school curriculum. In Ireland, the criteria and guidelines for accreditation for initial teacher education providers require initial teacher education providers to model the active teaching methods they would like teacher candidates to emulate and to involve teacher candidates in activities similar to those they will use with their students (The Teaching Council, 2017[67]).

Build the classroom assessment capacity of initial teacher education providers

It is important that teacher candidates are exposed to education faculty members who have an understanding of the realities of Turkey’s classrooms and expertise in student assessment. There are indications that faculty members in Turkey may not possess this knowledge and experience. The OECD review of Turkey’s basic education system (OECD, 2007[3]) found that the initial teacher education faculty did not work closely with schools because of the demands of their university work. In interviews with stakeholders during the current review, the team heard that there are a limited number of graduates in assessment and evaluation in Turkey and that not every university has an expert in this area.

Turkey could employ a number of different measures to ensure that initial teacher education providers have the necessary capacity in classroom assessment methods relevant to the school curriculum. The Council of Higher Education and the ministry could encourage the development of strong assessment-focused networking and research links among initial
teacher education providers, and between providers and schools. The Norwegian Network for Student and Apprentice Assessment provides an example of a similar network aimed at building assessment capacity among teacher training institutions. Each training institution designated its own assessment experts to work with teacher education faculty on assessment. This initiative also stimulated research and development in assessment, connecting staff of teacher training institutions with international assessment experts (Nusche et al., 2011[22]).

In Turkey, this kind of network might involve strengthening the relationships that already exist between universities and the schools in which they place their teacher candidates for the practicum. Within these networks, faculty and school staff should be encouraged to meet regularly to exchange information and ideas about assessment and to collaborate on assessment-related research projects. This would be consistent with the government’s aims in its recent Teacher strategy (MoNE, 2017[5]) for initial teacher education instructors to conduct more research and observations in schools. Through accreditation requirements, initial teacher education providers can also be encouraged to employ faculty who have studied evaluation and assessment at an advanced level and to consider offering lecturing opportunities to practising teachers who are seconded from their schools (Coolahan, 2002[72]). Turkey will need to ensure that there are sufficient places available nationally in master’s programmes in assessment subjects like psychometrics so that there are qualified people to take on these roles in initial teacher education programmes. Initial teacher education faculty members can also be invited to participate in the same types of professional development opportunities on curriculum and classroom assessment that are provided to teachers.

*Use the induction period to continue developing the capacity for assessment*

During the induction period for new teachers in Turkey, more experienced supervisor teachers provide new teachers with advice and feedback. New teachers are also required to participate in 168 hours of seminars on the education system, teaching and legislation (MoNE, 2017[8]; ERI, 2017[73]). However, professional learning on classroom assessment does not appear to be a feature of the induction. It is unclear whether guide teachers are instructed to work with new teachers on their assessment practices. The seminar topics are broad, so it seems unlikely that they cover classroom assessment in-depth.

The MoNE’S Directorate of Teacher Training and Development should consider how induction could better build new teachers’ capacity in classroom assessment. Ontario, Canada, provides an example of an education system where classroom assessment is covered in the province’s one-year, school-based induction programme (see Box 3.10). In Turkey, this could include the development of seminar content on classroom assessment based on assessment competencies for new teachers, as well as areas of need identified by teacher candidates. It could also include the development of learning material and tools to help guide teachers and principals to talk to teacher candidates about their assessment practices and provide them with feedback and advice to improve.

**Conclusion**

Turkey has already recognised the need to better support teachers in the use of assessment. At the same time, changes in 2017 – aimed at reducing the dominance of the high stakes examinations and improving teachers’ professional competencies through a new teacher strategy – will address some of the systemic challenges that have hindered teachers’ ability to use a range of assessments to effectively support learning in the past. This provides a
strong foundation for the country to start implementing the changes that will help Turkish teachers use assessment to improve outcomes in a range of ways, from helping teachers track who is falling behind, to making students more conscious of their learning strategies, to concentrating more attention on critical 21st century competencies.

**Box 3.10. Professional learning on classroom assessment in Ontario’s new teacher induction programme**

In Ontario, Canada, the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) requires district school boards to provide professional development to new teachers on topics they have identified as areas of need, including “planning, assessment and evaluation”, as well as topics related to provincial education initiatives. The Ministry of Education provides school boards with funding for the programme, including funding for supply teacher release time so that new teachers and their trained mentors have opportunities to observe each other’s classrooms and engage in professional learning together.

The Ministry of Education has developed resources for school boards and educators to support new teachers’ professional learning on “planning, assessment and evaluation”. These include a list of the core content school boards should cover in the professional development for new teachers, such as:

- Selecting and using classroom assessment strategies that are appropriate to the curriculum and learning activities, to inform instruction and plan appropriate interventions.
- Helping students and parents understand assessment strategies and giving them meaningful feedback for improvement.

A self-reflection tool related to professional development, which new teachers are encouraged to use in conversation with their mentor. It contains a list of questions like:

- How can I use ongoing assessment strategies during a lesson to determine if students are learning what is being taught?
- In what ways do I give my students feedback for improvement? How do I provide class time for students to implement the suggestions for improvement? How can I monitor students’ use of feedback? What type of feedback has proven most successful?

A list of “conversation starters” for principals to use when talking to new teachers about their classroom assessment practices, including:

- What kind of student assessment data are you using to plan instruction and select learning resources?
- What support do you need to analyse the student achievement data you gather?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy issues</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3.1. Providing teachers with richer assessment resources that support competency acquisition | 3.1.1. Help teachers to monitor learning in line with national standards          | • Develop rubrics and exemplars to help teachers apply national learning standards in their classroom practice  
• Develop diagnostic assessments to ensure that students are meeting national standards  
• Introduce early grade assessments that are age appropriate and have a clearly defined formative function  
• Provide additional resources to address the needs of students identified as being at risk of falling behind  
• Support teachers to use the results from standardised assessments to monitor learning |
|                                                                              | 3.1.2. Provide teachers with tools to assess a wider range of competencies       | • Develop nationally validated assessment instruments  
• Provide guidance to support the development and implementation of classroom assessments  
• Develop and fully implement the e-portfolio |
|                                                                              | 3.1.3. Redesign the EBA portal to provide a broader range of better-quality resources | • Ensure that the ministry leads the development of EBA  
• Involve teachers in the redesign of EBA  
• Identify resources to be developed as a priority |
| 3.2. Using formative feedback and reporting to better support student learning | 3.2.1. Support more formative feedback in the classroom                         | • Help teachers to learn about and practice different feedback techniques  
• Provide school-level support for effective feedback  
• Adapt teaching standards and regulations to ensure that formative assessment and feedback are central to teaching |
|                                                                              | 3.2.2. Use reporting to help parents and students better understand learning levels and next steps | • Report student performance against national learning standards  
• Consider how to report the development of transversal competencies  
• Incorporate qualitative feedback when reporting student performance  
• Clearly communicate changes to students, parents and teachers |
| 3.3. Reinforcing in-service training on assessment                            | 3.3.1. Make training on classroom assessment a top professional development priority | • Require all teachers to undertake professional development on assessment  
• Ensure that professional development reflects teachers’ needs  
• Connect professional development to teachers’ classroom practices  
• Make professional development more responsive to national priorities to reduce summative testing  
• Develop facilitators’ assessment expertise  
• Make greater use of technology to expand professional development  
• Proceed with plans to adopt standards for effective professional learning |
|                                                                              | 3.3.2. Develop school-based professional learning on assessment                  | • Provide leadership for school-level professional development activities on assessment  
• Provide dedicated time for teachers to work together on assessment  
• Develop school-based moderation practices |
| 3.4. Improving teachers’ initial preparation in classroom assessment          | 3.4.1. Ensure sufficient coverage of classroom assessment in initial teacher preparation | • Use new teacher competencies to inform the development of initial education programme content on assessment  
• Implement the tertiary accreditation process and incorporate new teacher assessment competencies into the accreditation requirements  
• Establish an advisory committee with representatives from the ministry and the Council of Higher Education to enhance the initial preparation of teachers |
|                                                                              | 3.4.2. Ensure that initial preparation in classroom assessment is practical and connected to the school curriculum | • Cover classroom assessment in initial teacher education coursework  
• Cover classroom assessment in the practicum  
• Model the assessment practices teachers will need to use in the classroom  
• Build the classroom assessment capacity of initial teacher education providers  
• Use the induction period to continue developing capacity for assessment |
Notes

The Student Learning Achievement Monitoring assessment was introduced under the Ministry of National Education’s 2023 Education Vision. It is intended to provide schools with diagnostic information on students’ strengths and weaknesses in Turkish, mathematics and science. As of mid-2019, some 300,000 students in grades 4, 7 and 10 have participated in the assessment. The Turkish Language Skills Study assesses the competencies of students in four areas: listening, reading, writing and speaking. It has so far been conducted in 15 provinces prior to the nationwide placement exams, providing students with feedback on their Turkish language proficiency and suggestions on areas where they need to improve. The Common Examinations initiative refers to newly introduced joint examinations conducted at the provincial level. The purpose is to provide large-scale, comparable data on student performance as well as information for students themselves to better understand their proficiency gaps. The Ministry of National Education expects that the results obtained from these initiatives will be examined at the school level and used to inform the design of weekend courses to help students address areas of weakness. These initiatives were introduced after the analysis for this review was completed and are therefore not addressed in this report.
CHAPTER 3. IMPROVING TEACHERS’ CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT PRACTICES | 163

References


BOSTES (2016), Learning Assessment: A Report on Teaching Assessment in Initial Teacher Education in NSW. [38]


EPDAD (2016), Öğretmen egitiminde program değerleme ve akreditasyon el kitabi [Programme Evaluation and Accreditation Book in Teacher Education], EPDAD, Ankara.


MoNE (2013), *İlköğretim Kurumları (İlkokullar Ve Ortaokullar) İngilizce Dersi (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Ve 8. Siniflar) Öğretim Programı [English Language Programme, Grades 2-8]*, Ministry of National Education, Ankara.


