

## Perceptions, policies and practices

### Assessment for learning in the Singapore context

Wei Shin Leong, Kelvin Tan, Hui Yong Tay, Christopher Charles Deneen, Gavin William Fulmer, Karen Lam, Rongchan Lin and Anastasiya Lipnevich

#### KEY IMPLICATIONS

- Key personnel, preferably with the support of senior/lead teachers, should be involved in the professional learning and integration of assessment for learning (AfL) practices into the school assessment policy and classrooms.
- More deliberate efforts can be made to develop teachers' and students' capability to self-assess learning so that they can be more involved in using different evidence of learning informatively (beyond tests and examinations).

#### BACKGROUND

AfL implementation faces resistance in environments where sociocultural codes of summative assessment are entrenched (Kennedy, Chan, Fok, & Yu, 2008; Leong, Ismail, Costa, & Tan, 2018). Investigating the perceptions and practices of AfL in relation to the wider societal and global context helps practitioners and policy-makers bridge the gap between the enactment of AfL in schools and the intended AfL policies.

#### FOCUS OF STUDY

This study sought to investigate the perceptions, policies and practices of AfL in Singapore secondary schools to establish a systematic understanding of AfL that may inform research, policy, practice and development.

#### KEY FINDINGS

Teachers reported valuing learner-centred AfL (e.g. self and peer assessment) more than they reported practising or feeling proficient in it. The qualitative data showed that teachers constantly toggle between AfL practices that focus narrowly on exams (more predominant) and those with deeper learning goals. Overall, the findings suggest that, while AfL has gained traction among secondary-school teachers, they also reflect ambivalence in negotiating the formative and summative expectations of policy and practice.

School leadership and culture are the most direct mediating influences affecting teachers' perceptions of AfL. School leaders and key personnel have a more heightened awareness of alignment issues of formative and summative assessment, and they are more able to exercise certain forms of assessment leadership to support their teachers in enacting AfL sustainably.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

The findings highlight that teachers need more coordinated support within their school (beyond attending workshops) in negotiating priorities to plan and execute AfL practices that are not too narrowly focused on exams. With an increase

in curriculum spaces created from the recalibration of weighted assessment across all schools, we are optimistic that a 'broader alignment' version of AfL can be more widely introduced with appropriate assessment leadership. Based on the findings, the research team has recommended an AfL process ('Explaining Intended Learning Outcomes', 'Exploring Learning', 'Engaging in Quality Feedback') in a brochure and poster to be sent to secondary schools (see: <https://sites.google.com/view/ctl-assessment/AfL>).

## PARTICIPANTS

In total, 1119 school leaders, key personnel and teachers from 13 secondary schools participated in the survey. From the 13 schools, 7 schools participated in the second phase, where a school leader, middle manager, 3 teachers and 15 students from each school were interviewed and/or observed.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

This research used a mixed-method design. Quantitative data was collected using a survey, while the qualitative interview and observation data was coded inductively.

## REFERENCES

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## About the authors

Wei Shin LEONG, Kelvin TAN, Hui Yong TAY and Rongchan LIN are with the National Institute of Education, Singapore.

Karen LAM is with the Ministry of Education, Singapore.

Christopher Charles DENEEN is with the RMIT University, Australia.

Gavin William FULMER is with the University of Iowa, United States.

Anastasiya LIPNEVICH is with the City University of New York, United States.

Contact Wei Shin Leong at [weishin.leong@nie.edu.sg](mailto:weishin.leong@nie.edu.sg) for more information about the project.

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