

## APPG for Schools Learning and Assessment – Meeting Note

### International perspectives on assessment

Date – 22 March 2023

Time – 4pm

#### Parliamentarians in attendance –

- Emma Hardy MP
- Flick Drummond MP
- Lord Watson of Invergowrie
- Baroness Blower
- Baroness Garden
- Lord Knight
- Lord Hampton

#### Agenda –

Time	Details
4.00 – 4.05	Welcome to meeting (chair Flick Drummond MP)
4.05 – 4.10	Opening remarks from Tim Oates
4.10 – 4.15	Opening remarks from Siv Gamlem
4.15 – 4.20	Opening remarks from Ng Pak Tee
4.20 – 4.25	Opening remarks from Bill Lucas
4.25 – 4.30	Video from Denis Fitzgerald
4.30 – 4.55	Q&A
4.55 – 5.00	Close of meeting

#### Summary –

Tim Oates made the first presentation by looking at the different components that make up the use value for assessment, stating the need to be confident in the validity, fairness, utility and impact of all assessment. He stated that it is possible to assess anything that we would like to and that there are examples of much of this already being done. Tim made clear that at all transition stages we need dependable signals to rely upon. However, he claimed that the examples of GCSEs and A-Levels in England are not unique, and in fact there are near identical examples of assessment taking place in other countries such as USA and Germany. His evidence showed that all of the highest performing systems have high-stakes assessment at 16. Tim questioned the use of teacher assessments as there is no measurement characteristic that is inherent within these. In summary to his remarks he stated that England is not out of line with other countries when it comes to the assessment system.

Prof Gamlem presented on the assessment practices in Norway. She stated that in Norway there had been a movement for change more than a decade ago, with part of this driven by the awareness that

good assessment will mean good assessment for learning, not necessarily only of learning. New regulations were launched in 2009, with further changes introduced in 2020. This included a stronger emphasis on pupil's participation in assessment. National program was driven by principles that pupils learn better when they know what they should learn and what is expected of them, receive feedback on quality of work, are given advice on how to improve and involved in their own assessment. The current system in Norway involves teacher assessment for the entirety of primary school, during which grades are not allowed. Once pupils move into lower secondary school (from age 13-15) this teacher assessment continues and they give preliminary grades with are reported twice a year. This leads on to teacher reported 'final grades' at the end of student's 10<sup>th</sup> year based on a holistic judgement of their work. This is supported by 1 or 2 external exams at the end of the same year, with subjects drawn up by the school district. From 16 education at upper-secondary school is no longer mandatory but a right for all students, with both a vocational and academic track. Teacher and pupil assessment continues with some mandatory final exams. These exams contribute to only a maximum of 20% of grades on a diploma, with the rest based on teacher given grades.

Prof Pak Tee Ng provided a cultural perspective on assessment from experiences in Singapore. He stated that in many ways Singapore has a robust and traditional assessment system, though there are nuances to this. There are major national examinations at the end of primary school (at age 12), secondary school (age 16) and junior college (age 18). Prof Ng stated that the preoccupation with these exams amongst parents and wider society is still very large was not as dominant as previously. He used the example of a student learning to play the piano but not enjoying the content because of exams to show that this focus on exams was not conducive to setting up young people for careers in these topics. He claimed that they are looking beyond good exam results and that Singapore has recently been reducing the emphasis on exam results. While they are still important they are not everything. He stated that lifelong learning and adaptability are much more important in the long run. In 2021 the first batch of primary school students experienced a new national level exam scoring system. This was based not on relativity but on 8 achievement levels, that were not referenced to the performance of others. One of the functions of Singaporean exams is for quality control and to act as a sorting-system for children's future educational pathways. Prof Ng claimed that while this is neat it comes with a very high-stakes nature, therefore Singapore have been looing for other ways to demonstrate success. However, he claimed that it is not as simple as the Government changing a law to implement this change, it is slowly changing but up to employers and wider society to embrace this change.

Prof Bill Lucas said that there is an emerging consensus on the knowledge and skills needed in society, and we do know quite a lot, but not yet enough, on how to evidence these. He stated there are many more assessment methods beyond those we tend to use and there is a huge interest in digital profiles and portfolios that could reduce the burden of end point assessment. Across the world there is a growing consensus that we need some things that are sometimes called 'character' or 'competencies'. This has been adopted in some countries such as Australia and Canada to assess capabilities. He referenced five of, in his view, the best evidenced frameworks on competencies that are needed. Prof Lucas showed that we do know the kind of processes that we need, which are extended, deeper, authentic, real-world ways of getting at these competencies. Higher education general uses project-based work in a positive way. Australia have been implanting processes to assess students on critical

thinking for a number of years. He showed examples of multi-modal practices from across the world which we could learn from, rather than implementing a mono-culture of end point assessment.

In the discussion that followed there were questions on the middle-ground between teacher assessment and end-point assessment, on how we can look to achieve the necessary change in assessment and the move towards more criteria-based assessment rather than ranking pupils.