



# Teacher-led Learning Circles Project: Research Framework

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## Introduction

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The Teacher-led Learning Circles project is led by Education International with funding from the Jacobs Foundation. The overarching goal of the project is to identify, codify, and disseminate effective formative assessment practices to support students' learning. This goal is especially important and timely to help teachers respond to the unprecedented global challenges they are facing in their classrooms as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This project will be implemented over three years in seven countries: Brazil, Columbia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Malaysia, South Korea, and Switzerland. The project involves participation in a Teacher-led Learning Circles process to support teachers' professional development, teacher leadership, and an inquiry process for teachers to apply, reflect on, and adapt formative assessment practices in their classrooms. Project participants include teachers, local facilitators, local union representatives, national researchers, international facilitators, and international researchers.

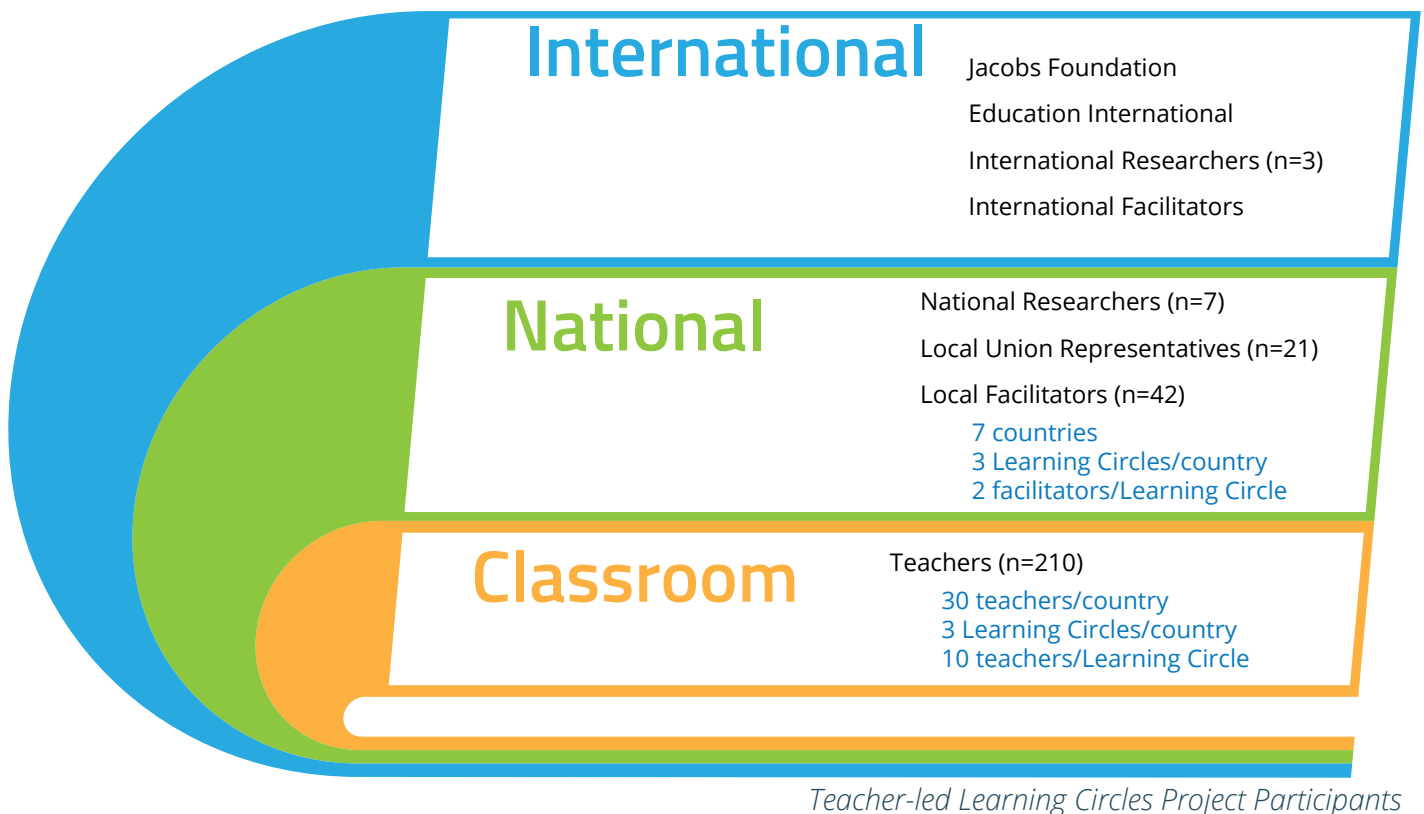
In Year 1 of the project, international researchers and international facilitators will work with Education International to create professional learning tools, frameworks, and resources to guide the Teacher-led Learning Circles processes and associated research in the project. The international researchers, in collaboration with national researchers, will develop an overarching research framework. National researchers will develop research plans for their own country and compile a Country Profile. In Year 2, the project will support three Learning Circles in each country, providing professional development and promoting teacher leadership among groups of teachers to support their understanding and use of formative assessment practices. In Year 3 of the project, national and international researchers will analyze and codify project data collected during Years 1 and 2, then report on key findings, both nationally and internationally.

The purpose of this report, prepared by the international researchers, is to describe the Teacher-led Learning Circles project's context and associated research framework.

# Teacher-led Learning Circles Context

The Teacher-led Learning Circles project will operate across classroom, national, and international contexts in seven countries: Brazil, Columbia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Malaysia, South Korea, and Switzerland (see Figure 1). In each country, the project will support three Learning Circles over one school year (Year 2 of the project) to provide professional development and promote teacher leadership among groups of teachers selected based on their interest in innovative formative assessment practices and commitment to the Teacher-led Learning Circles process. Figure 1 provides an overview of the Teacher-led Learning Circles project at international, national, and classroom levels.

**Figure 1. Teacher-led Learning Circles Project Participants at International, National, and Classroom Levels**



Each Learning Circle will be comprised of ten teachers, two local facilitators, and one local union representative. In total, the project will therefore include 21 Learning Circles (3 per country), 210 teachers (10 per Learning Circle; 30 per country), 42 local facilitators (2 per Learning Circle; 6 per country), and 21 local union representatives (1 per Learning Circle; 3 per country). The exact number of participants may vary as the project evolves.

Local facilitators and union representatives will be trained and supported by international facilitators from the HertsCam Network, an international organization



with an established teacher development programme. At the start of the project, the HertsCam international facilitators will conduct a virtual training session with the 42 local facilitators and 21 local union representatives; this session will include training on the Teacher-led Learning Circles process and provision of a toolkit, including handbooks for local facilitators and teacher participants. The HertsCam international facilitators will also conduct sessions with local facilitators and union representatives over one school year to plan for and reflect on how the Teacher-led Learning Circles project is unfolding.

Local facilitator pairs in each country, in collaboration with their local union representative and national researcher, will prepare and facilitate Learning Circles (virtually or in-person) for each group of ten teachers and provide ongoing classroom support to these teachers over one school year. Within the Learning Circles project, teachers will (a) create an Action Plan to guide their development project processes and formative assessment practices; (b) develop, apply, adapt, and review formative assessment practices; (c) complete ongoing reflections in a Record of Participation; (d) construct a Portfolio of evidence related to teacher leadership processes and formative assessment practices; and (e) create a Vignette to share their learning and experience within and beyond the project. The national researcher in each country will support teachers' data collection and analysis to help them identify and describe effective formative assessment practices and associated impacts on students' learning. At the international level, the Jacobs Foundation and Education International will foster regular exchanges between teachers regionally, nationally, and globally through in-person and virtual sessions, including Regional Hubs.

National researchers in each country will be supported by three international researchers from Canada, from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto and the Queen's Assessment and Evaluation Group, Queen's University. International researchers will meet virtually with national researchers to share and co-develop approaches to developing, implementing, researching, and profiling effective formative assessment practices and linked professional learning supports and leadership development processes. Within the overarching international research framework, national researchers will compile National Reports (Part 1: Country Profile in Year 1 and Part 2: Final Country Profile in Year 3), including identifying, codifying, and describing effective formative assessment practices and the linked Teacher-led Learning Circles experiences in their country. To compile these reports, national researchers will collect and analyze data from teachers, local facilitators, and local union representatives. In addition, international researchers will codify effective formative assessment practices and teacher development processes supporting teachers' use of formative assessment across participating countries to generate international findings for an overall final report in Year 3.



## Research Overview

The overarching purpose of this research framework is to guide the collection, analyses, and reporting of evidence on effective formative assessment practices, including consideration of teachers' practices, students' learning, and the professional learning processes that supported improvements in teachers' assessment practices. The framework employs a multiple methods research design to test, iteratively develop, and codify effective formative assessment practices. Project data collection and analysis will occur at three levels: classroom, national, and international. The framework can be adapted based on collaboration with the international and national researchers to ensure an appropriate research plan and design is applied in each country.

- 1. Classroom Level:** The research framework will guide and support teachers' data collection and analyses to help them identify and describe effective formative assessment practices and teacher development processes, as well as associated impacts on teachers' practices and students' learning. Classroom level findings will inform teachers' classroom practices and ongoing professional learning and be used by national researchers to generate Final National Reports for the project.
- 2. National Level:** The framework will guide and support data collection and analyses within and across participating countries' Learning Circles in order to identify, describe, and codify effective formative assessment practices and teacher development processes that supported changes in teachers' assessment practices and had beneficial impact for students' learning and related student outcomes. National findings will be used to create National Reports (Country Profile in Year 1 and Final Country Profile in Year 3), which will also be included in the overarching international analyses and reporting.
- 3. International Level:** The framework will guide specific international data collection and analyses activities in order to identify, describe, and codify effective formative assessment practices and teacher leadership and professional learning processes that supported changes in teachers' assessment practices and had beneficial impact on students' learning and related student outcomes across the seven participating countries.

# Research Questions

This research framework is rooted in two broad research questions and associated guiding questions.

**1. In the Teacher-led Learning Circles, what promising teacher-led formative assessment practices were identified?**

- a) What teacher-led formative assessment practices were used, and how were they implemented?*
- b) How did technology support the implementation of formative assessment practices?*
- c) Which teacher-led formative assessment practices provided effective feedback to students?*
- d) What benefits from using formative assessment were identified for teachers' practices?*
- e) What benefits from using formative assessment were identified for students' learning?*

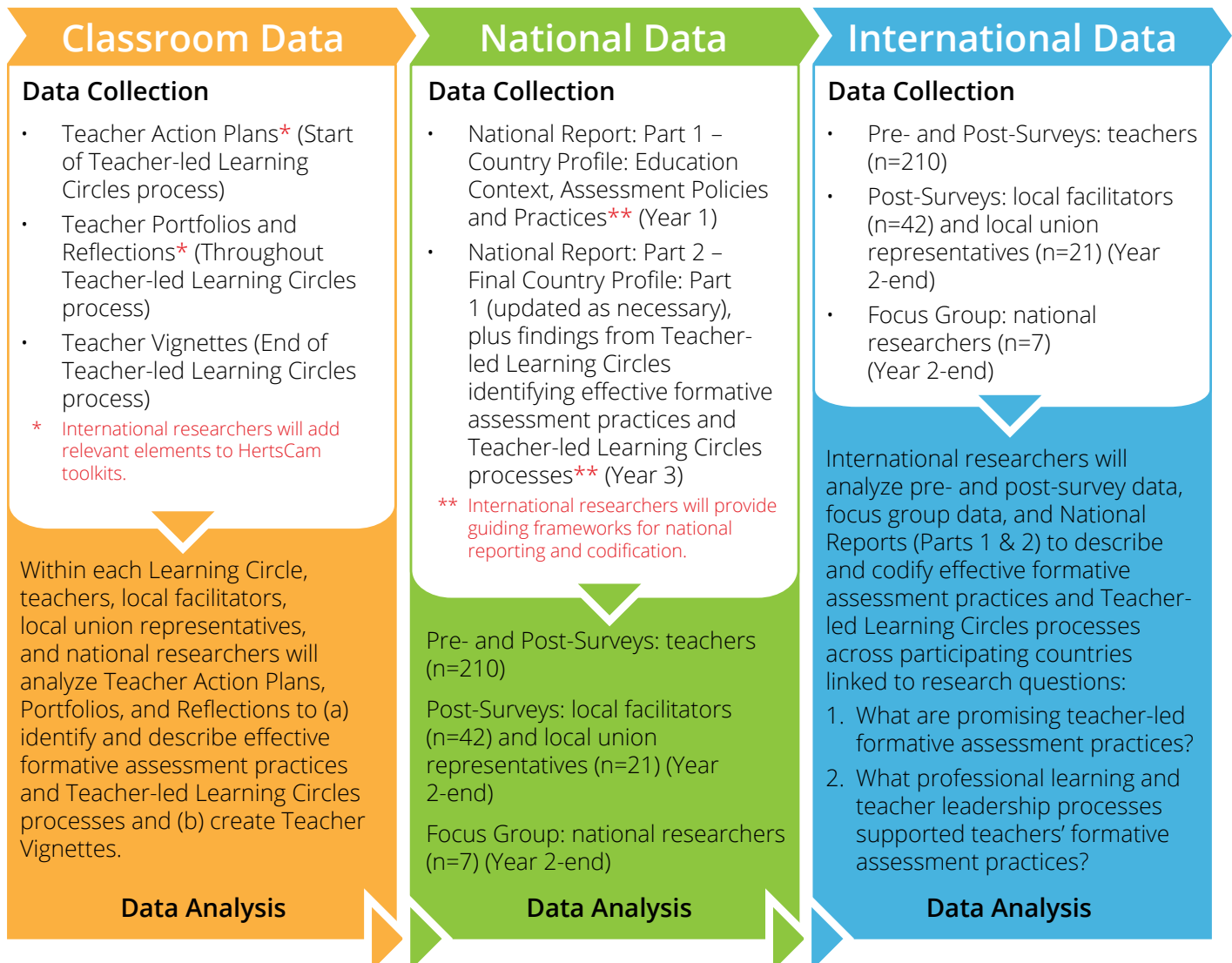
**2. In the Teacher-led Learning Circles, what professional learning and teacher leadership processes supported teachers' formative assessment practices?**

- a) How were teachers supported in understanding, developing, and using formative assessment practices?*
- b) What helped or hindered effective use of formative assessment practices?*

# Method

Multiple methods will be used to collect, analyze, and codify data on teachers' formative assessment practices that benefited students' learning and related student outcomes; and how the Teacher-led Learning Circles process supported changes in teachers' assessment practices. The various data sources that will be consistently collected and analyzed from each of the seven countries include: Teacher Action Plans; Teacher Portfolios; Teacher Reflections; Teacher Vignettes; National Reports; participant surveys for teachers, local facilitators, and local union representatives in each country; and a focus group with national researchers. The following sections describe the data collection plan and tools, summarize the research framework, and map the research questions to the international data source. Teacher data collection will be integrated within Learning Circle sessions. Additional information about key data sources can be found in Appendices A through D. In Figure 2, we provide an overview of the research framework data collection plan.

**Figure 2. Summary of Research Framework Data Collection Plan**



# Mapping of Research Questions to International Data Sources

Table 1 maps the broad and guiding research questions to the associated international data sources.

**Table 1. Research Questions and Data Sources**

Research Question	International Data Source
<b>1. In the Teacher-led Learning Circles, what promising teacher-led formative assessment practices were identified?</b>	
a) What teacher-led formative assessment practices were used, and how were they implemented?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Pre- and Post-Surveys (Year 2-beginning &amp; end)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers (n=210)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
b) How did technology support the implementation of formative assessment practices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Post-Surveys (Year 2-end)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local facilitators (n=42)</li> <li>• Local union representatives (n=21)</li> </ul> </li> <li>o Focus Group (Year 2-end)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National researchers (n=7)</li> </ul> </li> <li>o National Reports (Years 1 &amp; 3):                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part 1: Country Profile to include review of existing policies, practices, and research on formative assessment in each country.</li> <li>• Part 2: Final Country Profile to include identification, codification, and description of effective formative assessment practices and findings linked to research questions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
c) Which teacher-led formative assessment practices provided effective feedback to students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o National Reports (Years 1 &amp; 3):                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part 1: Country Profile to include review of existing policies, practices, and research on formative assessment in each country.</li> <li>• Part 2: Final Country Profile to include identification, codification, and description of effective formative assessment practices and findings linked to research questions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
d) What benefits from using formative assessment were identified for teachers' practices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o National Reports (Years 1 &amp; 3):                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part 1: Country Profile to include review of existing policies, practices, and research on formative assessment in each country.</li> <li>• Part 2: Final Country Profile to include identification, codification, and description of effective formative assessment practices and findings linked to research questions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
e) What benefits from using formative assessment were identified for students' learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o National Reports (Years 1 &amp; 3):                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part 1: Country Profile to include review of existing policies, practices, and research on formative assessment in each country.</li> <li>• Part 2: Final Country Profile to include identification, codification, and description of effective formative assessment practices and findings linked to research questions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>2. In the Teacher-led Learning Circles, what professional learning and teacher leadership processes supported teachers' formative assessment practices?</b>	
a) How were teachers supported in understanding, developing, and using formative assessment strategies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Pre- and Post-Surveys (Year 2-beginning &amp; end)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers (n=210)</li> </ul> </li> <li>o Post-Surveys (Year 2-end)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local facilitators (n=42)</li> <li>• Local union representatives (n=21)</li> </ul> </li> <li>o Focus Group (Year 2-end)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National researchers (n=7)</li> </ul> </li> <li>o National Reports (Years 1 &amp; 3):                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part 1: Country Profile to include review of existing policies, practices, and research on formative assessment in each country.</li> <li>• Part 2: Final Country Profile to include identification, codification, and description of effective formative assessment practices and findings linked to research questions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
b) What helped or hindered effective use of formative assessment strategies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o National Reports (Years 1 &amp; 3):                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part 1: Country Profile to include review of existing policies, practices, and research on formative assessment in each country.</li> <li>• Part 2: Final Country Profile to include identification, codification, and description of effective formative assessment practices and findings linked to research questions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Note. See Appendix A for proposed Teacher Survey Framework and Appendix B for proposed National Report Framework.

# Appendices

## Appendix A

### Pre/Post Teacher Survey Framework

As part of international data collection, teacher participants will complete a 20-minute survey during designated Learning Circle sessions (pre-survey during Session 2 and post-survey during Session 7). Completing these surveys will stimulate discussion and reflection during Learning Circles facilitated professional development. Teacher survey data will be collected and analyzed by international researchers to inform the final project report. The teacher survey will consist of three broad sections, based on Education International and UNESCO's Global Framework of Professional Teaching Standards (2019) with items contextualized for this project, plus demographics. The following is a draft outline of teacher survey content. The teacher survey will be co-designed by the international researchers and national researchers to ensure a consistent approach internationally, while also being relevant to each country's context and approaches to formative assessment, professional development, and teacher leadership.

Pre/Post Survey Framework for Teachers (n=210)	
<b>Part 1: Formative Assessment Knowledge and Understanding</b>	- AfL Survey (Dublin) *adapted for project to ensure relevance across national contexts <a href="https://researchoutreach.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Michael-OLeary.pdf">https://researchoutreach.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Michael-OLeary.pdf</a> <a href="https://pdf.ijem.com/IJEM_3_2_103.pdf">https://pdf.ijem.com/IJEM_3_2_103.pdf</a>
<b>Part 2: Teaching Practice in Assessment</b>	<i>(approx. 10 items)</i> - assessment goals/impacts on practice and students - technology-based strategies - feedback strategies - assessment supports and challenges
<b>Part 3: Teaching Relations</b>	<i>(approx. 10 items)</i> - current professional learning experience/approach - teacher leadership processes - supports and barriers to changes in teachers' assessment practices
<b>Part 4: Demographics</b>	

## Appendix B

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### National Report Framework

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National researcher(s) are to provide two country profile reports. Part 1 (Year 1) is to provide an overall profile of the context of the education system, assessment policies, and formative assessment practices in each country. Part 2 (Year 3) will, as necessary, include an updated version of the Part 1 report plus provide evidence, analyses, and findings from the Teacher-led Learning Circles within each country to address the overarching research questions:

- In the Teacher-led Learning Circles, what promising teacher-led formative assessment practices were identified?
- In the Teacher-led Learning Circles, what professional learning and teacher leadership processes supported teachers' formative assessment practices?

The following is a guide of content to be included (and sources of data to be considered) for each report. National researcher(s) can adapt the specific content of their reports as appropriate to their national and local contexts and available information.

#### *Country Profile Report (Part 1, Year 1)*

##### ***Content to be included:***

- Overview of national education system, governance, education policies, demographic information (number of schools, number of students, student demographics), and other contextual information considered important for national and international readers (for example, professional, media, and public opinion about education in country);
- Summary and discussion of current national (and/or local as relevant) assessment policies (1-2 paragraph overview of primary through secondary policies);
- Discussion of existing professional learning context and professional development for teachers' use of formative assessment (emphasis on primary);
- Examples of formative assessment practices currently being used by teachers (emphasis on primary);
- Review of relevant research literature on above topics within specific country to be integrated in report.

##### ***Data sources to include:***

- Review and analyses of relevant policy and professional documents (and online sources if available), review of relevant research literature, and evidence from practice if available.



**Estimated length:**

- Approximately 6 to 10 pages (single-spaced lines).

**Final Country Profile (Part 2, Year 3)**

**Content to be included:**

- Information from Profile Report 1 (updated as necessary);
- Evidence, analyses, and findings to produce report answering overarching research questions:

**1. In the Teacher-led Learning Circles in [name of country], what promising teacher-led formative assessment practices were identified?**

- a) What teacher-led formative assessment practices were used, and how were they implemented?
- b) How did technology support the implementation of formative assessment practices?
- c) Which teacher-led formative assessment practices provided effective feedback to students?
- d) What benefits from using formative assessment were identified for teachers' practices?
- e) What benefits from using formative assessment were identified for students' learning?

**2. In the Teacher-led Learning Circles in [name of country], what professional learning processes supported teachers' formative assessment practices?**

- a) How were teachers supported in developing and implementing formative assessment practices?
- b) What helped or hindered effective implementation of formative assessment practices?

**Data sources to include:**

- Further updated analyses of relevant policy and professional documents and research literature; data from development and implementation of Teacher-led Learning Circles, including Action Plans, Portfolios, Reflections, and Vignettes created by participating teachers; plus any further observations and evidence gathered by national researcher(s) during implementation of Learning Circles. Analyses will seek to identify, codify, and describe effective formative assessment practices for supporting improvements in students' learning and linked professional learning processes to support teachers' practices.



***Estimated length:***

- Twenty to thirty pages (single-spaced lines).

The international research team and national researchers will collaborate to co-develop a project-wide approach to the codification and analyses of data for the Final Country Profiles and for the International Final Report. The approach will need to establish some consistency in coding data across all Teacher-led Learning Circles and countries, while being flexible to adapt to specific national and local contexts.



## Appendix C

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### Teacher Action Plan Questions

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#### *Teacher Action Plan Questions*

International researchers will collaborate with international facilitators (i.e., HertsCam) to add 3-4 questions to the Teacher Action Plan framework. These questions will contribute to national and international data while concurrently supporting teachers' professional learning and practice within the project.

#### *Sample questions include:*

What problem of practice have I identified in my classroom/school?

- What is my evidence of this problem of practice?
- How might formative assessment/assessment for learning strategies address this problem of practice?
- What are my next steps in assessment learning and/or practice to address this identified problem?
- How will I know if I am addressing the identified problem through assessment learning and/or practice (i.e., what classroom data will I collect and analyze)?

## Appendix D

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### Teacher Reflection Questions

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#### *Teacher Reflection Questions*

International researchers will collaborate with international facilitators (i.e., HertsCam) to add 3-4 reflection questions to the Record of Participation at the end of three Learning Circle sessions. These questions will contribute to national and international data while concurrently supporting teachers' professional learning and practice within the project.

#### *Sample questions include:*

##### ***Formative Assessment Practices***

Thinking about a formative assessment strategy you implemented in your classroom since our last Learning Circle...

1. Describe the formative assessment strategy.
2. How did the formative assessment strategy support your teaching?
3. How did the formative assessment strategy support your students?

##### ***Professional Learning and Teacher Leadership Processes***

Thinking about your participation in this professional learning project to date...

1. Describe two things that have supported your professional learning and leadership as a teacher.









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