

23-25 September 2013, Geneva

1. Context

Despite differences in approach, national education authorities around the world are looking for innovative solutions to improve the quality and relevance of student learning. The curriculum is increasingly viewed as the foundation of comprehensive educational reforms that are aimed at achieving high quality learning outcomes.

The curriculum establishes a systematic selection of knowledge, skills and values and shapes the way teaching and learning processes are organized by addressing questions such as what students should learn, as well as why, when, how and how well. Contemporary curriculum reform and development processes increasingly involve public discussion and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. The curriculum has evolved into a topic of considerable debate – with frequently conflicting visions – engaging policy-makers, experts, practitioners and society at large. From this perspective, the curriculum can also be viewed as a political and social agreement that reflects a society's common vision while taking into account local, national and global needs and expectations.

The complexity of curriculum development processes and the range of issues informing the 'what' and the 'how' of teaching and learning presents major challenges for policy-makers and curriculum developers. Since curriculum development processes are influenced by both local needs and by broader, transnational trends and models, a comprehensive international perspective on curriculum issues, trends and approaches is critical. Professionals leading curriculum reform, development, and implementation at the national level must be equipped with a broad range of curriculum-related information, knowledge, expertise and experience. The ultimate goal of enhancing student learning most effectively through an inclusive quality curriculum is integrally connected to strategic inputs such as upstream policy advice, technical support, capacity development, effective networking and cooperation, and enhanced knowledge-sharing in the field of curriculum.

The growing demand for these strategic inputs is even more relevant in light of the current global debates on the post-2015 education and development frameworks. UNESCO has taken a leading role in these debates, and the IBE can make a valuable contribution to the post-2015 education agenda on issues related to curriculum and learning.

2. Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this meeting is to assist the IBE in fulfilling its mission as UNESCO's Centre of Excellence in Curriculum. Specifically, the IBE seeks to draw on the collective experience and vision of a group of leading experts in educational policy and curriculum to identify key contemporary curriculum trends, issues and challenges around the world, as well as discuss the results of curriculum-related research, in order to refine its programme of activities for the forthcoming years.

Specific objectives and outcomes include:

- ❑ the identification of key curricular issues, globally and regionally, which could be considered in the post-2015 education agenda;
- ❑ the identification of research priorities regarding these curricular issues which the IBE could address in cooperation with partner institutions and a reference group of experts;
- ❑ the definition of a comparative framework for analyzing curriculum development trends and issues around the world;
- ❑ the possible preparation of a publication on key issues in curriculum development in the context of the post-2015 education agenda; and
- ❑ the development of closer ties between an active community of educators, curriculum experts and the IBE.

3. Participants and format

The meeting will gather 25 to 30 high-level experts from different regions, including policy-makers, educators, curriculum specialists and researchers. They will have the opportunity to review and discuss curriculum trends and issues related to fostering student learning. All deliberations will take place in plenary sessions.

The discussions will be organized around four sets of questions (see the Agenda below). As initial contributors to the discussions, four pairs of experts will address critical curriculum issues. All participants are expected to engage in the discussions and perform different roles either delivering short presentations, synthesizing ideas/proposals and/or facilitating the discussions. The exchanges should help in gaining a better comparative understanding of key contemporary curriculum-related issues, trends and challenges in different countries across the world, from both a global and regional perspective.

Participants are expected to reflect on the four sets of questions prior to the meeting. Background documents will be circulated to inform their reflection. Participants are encouraged to share relevant materials.

4. Final Agenda

Monday 23 September 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

First day morning session 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

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| 9.00 – 9.10 | Welcome remarks and presentation of the meeting agenda by Ms. Clementina Acedo, IBE Director |
| 9.10 – 9.20 | Introduction of the participants |
| 9.20 – 10.30 | A series of short presentations that will inform the discussions on curriculum and learning.

15 minutes per pair of experts

Group 1: Expanding educational opportunities across levels of the education system: the role of curriculum frameworks and cycles, by Mr. Alan Armstrong and Mr. Godswill Obioma

Group 2: Curriculum and assessment systems to support learning: a controversial and sensitive link, by Ms. Irmeli Halinen and Mr. Aaron Benavot

Group 3: Advances and challenges regarding the role of capabilities/competencies/skills in the processes of curriculum development: an overview, by Mr. Philip Stabback and Mr. Philippe Jonnaert

Group 4: Citizenship education at the heart of the education system: critical issues and pending challenges, by Ms. Margaret Sinclair and Mr. Cristián Cox |
| 10.30 – 11.00 | Coffee/tea break |
| 11.00 – 12.30 | Continuation of the presentations followed by discussion.

8-minute presentation
Guiding principles for learning: developing a framework for 21st century learning in international education, by Mr. Conrad Hughes

Reactions to the presentations

10-minute presentation
Wrap-up session by Mr. Jan van den Akker and Mr. Juan Carlos Tedesco |
| 12.30 – 13.00 | Discussion on the first set of questions (1) |

The IBE shares some main themes originating from the post-2015 education agenda.

Questions (1):

- What quality and learning issues are the most and least visible in the current debate on the post-2015 education agenda?
- Is learning understood in a broad or narrow sense regarding the range of learning experiences to which students should be exposed?
- Should the focus on learning help in refining the EFA agenda or in moving beyond it?
- Is it linked to a change in the educational paradigm?

Lunch break

First day afternoon session 2 p.m. – 5 p.m.

14.00 – 15.30 Continuation of discussions on the first set of questions (1)

15.30 – 16.00 Coffee/tea break

16.00– 17.00 Discussion on the second set of questions (2)

Questions (2):

- What is the role and importance of curriculum in the current debates on educational quality and learning beyond 2015?
- Is curriculum linked to the discussion about educational policies?
- What are the main curriculum issues and problems regarding the democratization of educational opportunities and the enhancement of learning in the different countries?
- Can we identify the main needs in the field of curriculum development in the different regions?

17.00 – 19.00 *Cocktail reception hosted by the IBE*

Tuesday 24 September 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Second day morning session 9 a.m. – 12.30

9.00 – 9.10 Summary of discussions from the first day by Mr. Govinda and Mr. Farstad Halfdan

9.10– 10.30 Continuation of discussion on the second set of questions (2)

10.30 – 11.00 Coffee/tea break

11.00 – 13.00 Discussion on the third set of questions (3)

Questions (3)

- Which role should the IBE play regarding the main curriculum development issues and needs identified?

- Which products should the IBE further develop and/or create in terms of knowledge production and dissemination, training and technical assistance?
- Which partners and type of cooperation schemes should the IBE pursue and strengthen?

Lunch break

Second day afternoon session 2 p.m. – 5 p.m.

14.00 – 15.30	Continuation of discussions on the third set of questions (3)
15.30 – 16.00	Coffee/tea break
16.00 – 16.10	5-minute introduction A proposal on conducting a situational analysis of curriculum development, by the IBE
	5-minute presentation Experience in the field of comparative analysis, by Mr. Aaron Benavot
16.10 – 17.00	Discussion on the questions about the situation analysis (4)
	Questions (4)
	➤ What would be the value added of a situation analysis provided by UNESCO-IBE?
	➤ Who would be the target audience(s)?
	➤ What would be the scope and scale?
	➤ What instruments (e.g. desk study, questionnaire, case study) would be most effective for gathering information and evidence?
	➤ What types of partnership and support would be required?
	➤ What products are envisaged? and their dissemination?

Wednesday 25 September 9 a.m. – 12.30

9.00 – 9.10	Summary of discussions from the second day by Mr. Philip Stabback and Mr. Alan Armstrong
9.10 – 10.30	Continuation of discussions on the situation analysis (4)
10.30 – 11.00	Coffee/tea break
11.00 – 12.20	Ms. Clementina Acedo, IBE Director and Mr. Jan van den Akker supported by the rapporteurs team: Mr. Aaron Benavot, Ms. Silvina Gvirtz, Mr. Hugo Labate and the IBE
	<i>The way forward: what's next?</i>
12.20 – 12.30	Concluding remarks by Ms. Clementina Acedo, IBE Director

Further information

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List of Participants

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