



# Armenia

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## **Principles and general objectives of education**

The main principles of the State educational policy are: (i) a secular and humanistic character of education; (ii) free development of the individual; (iii) education in citizenship and patriotism; (iv) concordance of national and universal human values; (v) continuing education; (vi) possibility to obtain an education corresponding to one's own personal interests and needs; (vii) multiple stages and forms of education; (viii) democratic management of education and exclusion of any State monopoly.

## **Current educational priorities and concerns**

The most important priorities in the development of the new education system are: improvement of management; democratization; separation of responsibilities of municipal and socially relevant bodies; increased autonomy of educational (especially higher education) establishments; securing priority for the financing of the system, allotting at least 10% of the national income for its development.

In the stage of transition, some factors have had a negative impact on the process of change of the education system. More than 40% of the Republic's territory was destroyed by the 1988 earthquake, as a consequence of which more than half a million people were left homeless. In addition, about 350,000 refugees have come from the neighboring Republic to settle in Armenia. The earthquake damaged wholly or partially 277 schools, 245 pre-school establishments and several higher and technical school buildings.

The education system has also been affected in the frontier regions of the Republic, where during the 1992/93 school year alone, fifty-nine schools and thirteen kindergartens were completely or partially ruined as a result of shelling and bombardment. Other schools and pre-school establishments have been shut down due to the lack of security.

Furthermore, the transition to a free market economy and the irregular operation of a great number of enterprises (because of energy and fuel shortages) have created unemployment. The real income of more than 85% of the population has shown a steady fall, resulting in a sharp decrease in their standard of living.

“The outcome of educational system reforms greatly depends on the social condition of the teachers, which is still precarious. Qualified professionals, mostly men, leave the sector. During the school year 1994-95 the number of teachers with higher education decreased by 15%, and that of male teachers by 5%. One out of every six teachers is of retirement age. One out of four employed teachers does not have a relevant university degree. Two and one-half percent of the teachers have only secondary education. Thus there is an increased number of teachers that require thorough professional training.” (UNDP, 1996).



“[...] Shortened school years and class schedules due to winter conditions, resignations of teachers, lack of methodological textbooks and aids, excessive school supply prices and other circumstances have rendered coverage of the school curricula impossible. [...] Compelled vacations force many students to engage in self-education. The economic basis of the schools is also in precarious condition, school buildings are deteriorating and becoming hazardous. Free secondary education is available to all children in the country. Opportunities for free higher education became limited due to decreased government subsidies. One of the positive elements of the reform process was fundamental substantive modification of the humanities. New educational programmes and textbooks have been created. One hundred and fifty schools practice operating in shifts to reduce costs.” (*Ibid.*).

Since the Declaration of Independence (1990), several steps have been taken towards the design of the new education system. The content of a number of teaching subjects has been revised. New programmes for the humanities and thirty of the fifty new textbooks written for secondary school students have been prepared. Methodological Councils have been set up at the Ministry of Education and Science to monitor the implementation of the new programmes. More than twenty new high schools and professional schools have started to operate at the secondary education level.

The reform of the higher education system has started in the 1990s. The Yerevan State University and the National University of Armenia have been re-organized and the new system of specialist training has been introduced. On the basis of the Yerevan Polytechnic Institute, the Engineering University of Armenia was set up. More than twenty private educational institutions have started functioning in the Republic; they enrol more than 15% of students. Alongside free education, tuition fees have been introduced in State higher education institutions. New lists of tutorial posts have been prepared. Qualifying and award-granting commissions have been set up, aimed at correspondence of qualifications, education content, curricula and degrees to international standards, which will enable to guarantee the equivalence of diplomas. A new system of working by contracts has been initiated for lecturers. State licensing, accrediting and certification commissions have started functioning.

The pilot project for the reform of the general education system was approved by Decision No. 377 of 1 June 1999. The objectives were: decentralization of the management of the general education system and increased autonomy of educational establishments; rationalization of the network of general education schools in accordance with established norms concerning class size and teachers' workload; introduction of a new mechanism of funds allocation to schools (i.e. per pupil financing on a lump sum basis).

The main strategic direction of the *State Programme for Educational Development 2001–2005*, prepared in accordance with Article 4 of the Law on Education, is the progressive development of an education system contributing to the formation of a harmonically developed, socially active and creative individual with a patriotic, public and humane ideology—as a factor for statehood strengthening and socioeconomic progress of the society. The Programme envisaged an increase of the state budget allocation to the education sector up to 4% of the GDP by 2005, a 30%



increase of teachers' salary every year, and free provision of textbooks to elementary school pupils by 2003.

Several changes are currently being introduced at the pre-school, secondary and professional education levels. An important aspect of education sector reforms is enhancement of efficiency. The government will continue and deepen rationalization measures. The need for rationalization is particularly evident in the general education sub-sector when projected demographic changes are taken into account. The measures target enhancing efficiency of utilization of human and physical resources as well as that of management. The following measures addressing efficiency issues are to be implemented in the general education system:

- Increasing pupil/teacher ratio to reach 1:16 in 2008;
- Increasing teachers' workload to reach 22 weekly hours in 2005 (according to some estimations, this indicator may be increased to 27 hours per week)
- Increasing pupil/non-teacher ratio to reach 1:24 in 2005
- Increasing the number of pupils per class
- Defining the optimal number of pupils per school, and merge schools if necessary.

## Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

With the Declaration of Independence adopted on 23 August 1990, the Parliament of the Republic of Armenia initiated new political, economic and social processes. In this stage of public and economic development, ensuring normal activities and progress of all education sub-systems, education institutions and organizations, required a legal basis for operations.

For this purpose legislation has been drafted, including, as a priority, the new laws of the Republic of Armenia on general (primary-secondary) and higher education. Such laws must set out and protect constitutional rights of individuals, establish guarantees for education, and clarify interrelations of state and private forms of education. One of the basic principles of primary-secondary education laws should be to ensure the availability of secondary education for every child, irrespective of family income. The higher education law should clarify the issues of autonomy, licensing and accreditation of higher education institutions. The **Law on Education** was finally adopted by the National Assembly on 14 April 1999. The Law stipulates the new structure of the education system and also that the state educational policy should be organized on the basis of a national programme for the development of education.

In the year 2000 the government approved the Regulations for educational activities, licensing and state accreditation of middle and higher professional education institutions and their professions. These documents regulate the activities of non-state educational institutions and other educational organizations in order to ensure the quality of the educational services provided. The Regulations stipulate the procedures for licensing and state accreditation issuance, requirements for educational institutions, etc.



The **Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education** was approved by the National Assembly in December 2004. The reforms envisaged in the document are related to the implementation of a two-cycle structure of higher education programmes in accordance with the Bologna process.

The **Law on Pre-school Education** was adopted in 2005 with the purpose of streamlining the legal, organizational and financial foundations for operating and developing pre-schools.

In 2004, the **Law on Crafts and Secondary Vocational Education and Training** (adopted in 2005) and the Strategy on Crafts and Secondary Vocational Education and Training were developed with the objective of creating an efficient system of primary and secondary vocational education in order to train qualified specialists in line with the demands of the economy and the labor market. The **Law on State Educational Inspection** was adopted in 2005; based on this law, the process of establishing the State Inspectorate of Education has been initiated.

According to Article 35 of the **Constitution** (1995), every citizen is entitled to education. Education shall be free of charge in state secondary educational institutions. Every citizen is entitled to receive higher and other specialized education free of charge and on a competitive basis, in state educational institutions. The establishment and operation of private educational institutions shall be prescribed by law.

Compulsory and free education lasts eight years (age group 7-15 years).

## **Administration and management of the education system**

The principal task of the **Ministry of Education and Science**, as the body responsible for management of the general (primary-secondary) education system, is the implementation of the national education policy, the preparation of legislative bills and draft regulations for State decision-making, and the creation of targeted programmes for resolving different problems within the education system.

The former centralized education system is being replaced by a decentralized system with emphasis on school self-management. The process of decentralization was initiated in 1996, when People's Education Divisions were dissolved and school management was transferred to the Education Divisions in *marzpet* offices. Currently, schools are managed by a Council responsible for approving the estimated budget, preparing the financial report and appointing the headmaster.

The higher education system is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, which has mainly organizational, financial, licensing, certification and monitoring functions.



## Structure and organization of the education system

### Pre-school education

Pre-school education caters to children aged 3-6 and it is not compulsory.

### Primary education

Compulsory basic education covers a period of eight years and the admission age is 7. Basic education consists of two stages: elementary education, lasting three years, and intermediate education, covering five years. It should be noted that during the period 1995-1999 elementary education consisted of four years of study (Government of Armenia, 1999).

### Secondary education

General senior secondary education (high school) lasts two years. Professional secondary education is offered in vocational schools, technical-professional schools and colleges. Vocational and technical-professional schools require for admission the completion of basic education; the duration of programmes is two to five years, depending on the profession. Colleges provide three-year programmes for students who have completed senior secondary education.

At the postsecondary and higher education levels, junior specialists' courses take two to three years. Bachelor's degree courses normally take four years (five years in the case of medicine) and the first post-graduate degree (master's degree) requires another two years of study (four years in the case of medicine). The degree of "specialist with diploma" is conferred after five years of study in a given field. A further three years of study after the master's degree are normally required for the degree of "candidate of science" (*aspirantura*). Doctoral studies (*doctorantura*) in one of the research institutions of the Academy of Science usually last two to three years.

## The financing of education

"In 1990 public expenditure allocation for education was 6.6% of GDP. Because of the economic crisis of the transition period which entailed severe budget cuts, it went down to 1.3% in 1995. The maintenance and development of the education sector was not considered as a strategically important priority.

The national budget for 1996 displayed a changed approach of the government to the education sector. Two and one-half percent of the GDP has been allocated for education. Sixty-one percent of these resources will be targeted at primary, secondary and higher education which is in line with the objective of human development. However, the GDP education component per capita is only US\$ 13.3 which, of course, cannot ensure sustainable human development." (UNDP, 1996).

In recent years the budget for education represented about 2 to 2.5% of GDP and around 11% of the state budget. The share of 2003 state budget expenditures on education was projected 2.2% in GDP. The share of education in total budget



expenditures made up 9.5% of the total projected expenditures. About 5.3% of expenditures on education and science were financed by credit and grant projects. Budget allocations to the different sectors were as follow: general education (primary, lower and upper secondary), 72.3%; higher and postgraduate vocational education, 12.6%; upper secondary vocational education and training (VET), 6.3%; college education, 3.7%; boarding schools for general education, 2.1%; tertiary education, 2%; and VET, 1%. (*Source: Economic Development and Research Center. Simplified State Budget for Education and Science for 2003.*)

## The educational process

### Pre-primary education

Pre-school education aims at fostering conditions for the maintenance of children's health, developing children's intellectual, spiritual and physical abilities and providing a sound basis for educating a generation with national awareness and self-esteem. The objectives of pre-school education are:

- creating the foundation for children's physical, moral and intellectual development;
- enabling children to communicate in the mother tongue and learn foreign languages;
- developing elementary competencies in mathematics and elementary norms of ethics;
- providing basic knowledge of the natural environment, ecology, history of the nation and national culture;
- instilling love and respect for the Motherland;
- preparing children for school.

The network of pre-school education operates mainly through State funding. Parents are requested to pay for part of the services provided and payment levels are determined by the local authorities. Some pre-school institutions are funded by communities and managed by local self-governing bodies.

In 1998, the Open Society Institute Armenia started the *Step by Step Programme* for children aged 0-10 years and their families, advocating child-centered teaching and learning methodology. The Programme operates in 209 kindergartens in different regions of the country. In the course of the project, six preschool training centers were functioning in four regions of the country during 2003. With participation of international experts, training courses for kindergarten and school administrative employees were organized. In 2003, the Education for Parents component of the programme was launched designed to organize education of preschool age-group children at home. The programme works with the families whose children cannot afford to attend kindergartens.





Pre-school institutions include: nurseries for 2-3-year-olds, nursery-kindergartens for children aged 2-6, and kindergartens for children aged 3-6. There is a trend towards the creation of kindergarten-elementary schools. In 1998, the total number of pre-schools was 986 (1,334 in 1989). In the same year, the enrolment rate of children aged 3-6 years was 21% (40% in 1988). The teacher-children ratio was 1:8 (Government of Armenia, 1999).

According to national estimates, around 2003 there were operating 825 community and 19 departmental institutions with 51,905 and 996 children enrolled, respectively. The total number of pre-school institutions was 1,069. There were also 21 non-state kindergartens. The pedagogical staff amounted to 6,934 employees, including 4,866 tutors and 844 directors. An estimated 92% of the staff had professional education—34.2% had higher pedagogical education. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2002/03 the gross enrolment ratio at the pre-primary level was 34.6%.

### **Basic education (elementary and intermediate education)**

The main objectives of general secondary education are to:

- provide fundamental knowledge about nature, technology, production and ecology, by creating adequate conditions for self-education and self-development;
- familiarize students with international and national values, the national culture, morale and psychology and ensure that they are actively involved in civil matters;
- providing students with military-patriotic education and preliminary military training.

General secondary education lasts ten years and consists of three stages: elementary education (Grades I-III); intermediate education (middle school, Grades IV-VIII); and senior secondary education (high school, Grades IX-X). Basic education, i.e. elementary and intermediate education, is compulsory.

Elementary education aims at developing language and thinking skills, basic labour skills, and understanding of national and international values. At the end of elementary education, pupils' learning achievement is evaluated through two examinations—mathematics and Armenian. It should be noted that during the period 1995-1999 the duration of the elementary education programme was four years (Government of Armenia, 1999).

Intermediate education aims at teaching healthy lifestyles and providing pupils with scientific understanding of the world and the nature, and knowledge necessary for independent activities in society. At the end of basic education, students sit an examination in mathematics, Armenian and a foreign language. Successful students receive a certificate. In 2004, the gross enrolment ratio at the basic education level was estimated at 97% (99% in the case of elementary education).



Around 2003, there were 1,388 general secondary schools in Armenia of which 10 were elementary schools, 150 were Grades I–VIII schools and 1,228 full general secondary schools. 115 of the high schools had the status of specialized colleges. Some 56,000 pupils were enrolled in public schools. There were also 34 non-state licensed schools in the Republic, of which 26 were operational with 2,719 pupils enrolled.

### Senior secondary education

Upon completion of basic education, students may continue their studies at a school offering senior secondary education or a vocational school.

At the senior secondary level, differentiated curricula are offered in order to meet students' preferences, predilections and capabilities. Upon completion of senior secondary education, students sit the State examinations in mathematics, Armenian and history of the Armenian nation. In 2004 the gross enrolment ratio was estimated at 79%.

Professional secondary education (or intermediate professional education) is offered in vocational schools, technical-professional schools and colleges. Vocational and technical-professional schools require for admission the completion of basic education; the duration of programmes is two to five years, depending on the profession.

Colleges provide three-year programmes for students who have completed senior secondary education. At the end of the 1990s, the State run seventeen colleges, thirty-nine vocational schools and twenty-two technical-professional schools. A total of 24,271 students were enrolled in these institutions, and 46.5% of the students paid tuition fees. In addition, there were sixty-four private establishments with about 12,000 students enrolled. Professional secondary education institutions offer training programmes in more than 125 fields of study.

### Assessing learning achievement nationwide

In 2004, the government established the Assessment and Testing Center and developed a new Concept Note on Knowledge Assessment. The first pilot tests were developed by working groups created for designing both an implementation strategy for the new system of assessment of learners' achievement and the school graduation and university admission examination tests in different subject areas.

## Higher education

In the Republic of Armenia, higher education is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry ensures that higher education meets the requirements of the social, cultural and scientific development of the country with respect to the training of young specialists. It is also responsible for ensuring that students admitted to higher education meet the required academic standards.





In 1992, the higher education system included seventeen institutions. Three of these were branches of the Yerevan State Engineering University. Ten higher education institutions were under the responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science (now Ministry of Education and Science). Four higher education institutions were under the responsibility of relevant ministries or state committees (the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, the State Committee for Physical Training and Sports). All higher education institutions have equal rights to prepare specialists in different fields.

A transition has taken place from the former two-level (college–higher education institution) system to a unified four-level system of higher education:

- Junior specialist programme: as first-level higher education institutions, junior colleges offer programmes lasting two to three years and prepare students to qualify as junior engineers, junior agronomists, nurses, etc. Graduates are awarded the qualification of junior specialist.
- Bachelor’s degree programme: second-level higher education institutions function as four-year two-stage educational establishments. The overwhelming majority of the students obtain a professional diploma after three years of study. A small number of students study one additional year and are awarded a bachelor’s degree according to their chosen academic programmes.
- Master’s degree programme: third- and fourth-level higher education institutions prepare professional, scientific, and scientific-pedagogical specialists in a variety of fields. At least two years of additional study beyond the bachelor’s degree are required for a master’s degree. Some graduates (about 20%) can continue their studies at the *aspirantura* level (post-graduate programme) on a competitive basis.
- Postgraduate programme: is offered at the *aspirantura* level, which is aimed at training scientific-pedagogic personnel. A two- to three-year programme is completed with the defence of a thesis leading to the degree of “candidate of science”. Graduates (particularly in technical higher education institutions) who do not defend a doctoral thesis obtain the degree of engineer-researcher.. Doctoral studies (*doctorantura*) in one of the research institutions of the Academy of Science usually last two to three years.

Higher education institutions normally require for admission the possession of a secondary school-leaving certificate, high scores in secondary school subjects, and success in a competitive entrance examination. Successful candidates do not pay tuition fees. Those candidates with insufficient scores on the entrance examination may be admitted, if vacancies exist, and if they agree to pay tuition fees.

During the period 1990-1995, the number of students at higher education institutions decreased. The absolute number of female students decreased, but in percentage terms registered an increase (54.4% in 1995). In 1993-1995, universities offered admission in thirty-six new specialities, and cancelled admission in several specialities.

### Enrolment in State universities and higher education institutes 1965-1992

Institution	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1992
Yerevan State University	8,700	11,900	7,700	7,500	6,500	9,000	8,600
Armenian State Engineering University with Branches	10,700	16,200	19,600	22,600	21,200	20,900	15,600
Yerevan Architectural Construction Institute	-	-	-	-	-	2,400	2,800
Yerevan Institute of National Economy	-	-	3,800	3,800	3,900	6,400	6,000
Armenian Pedagogical Institute n/a Kh. Institute n/a Kh.	2,500	4,700	5,300	5,600	5,200	6,200	5,000
Yerevan Institute of Foreign Languages n/a V. Bryussov	1,800	3,400	2,700	2,700	2,800	2,600	2,500
Pedagogical Institute of Gyumri n/a M. Nalbandian	-	1,400	1,400	1,300	1,100	1,500	1,400
Vanadzor Pedagogical Institute	5,100	4,500	2,800	2,500	2,300	2,700	2,500
Yerevan State Conservatoire n/a Komitas	600	1,000	900	800	800	1,200	1,100
Yerevan Artistic-Theatrical Institute	200	400	400	400	400	500	500
Yerevan Medical Institute	2,200	3,200	3,000	3,200	3,800	4,200	5,000
Armenian State Institute of Physical Training	700	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,100	1,200	1,400
Armenian Agricultural Institute	4,100	4,100	3,100	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,400
Yerevan Veterinary and Zootechnics Institute	2,100	2,400	2,300	2,200	2,300	2,400	2,600
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,700</b>	<b>54,600</b>	<b>54,400</b>	<b>58,200</b>	<b>55,400</b>	<b>65,200</b>	<b>59,400</b>

In 1999, there were 16 state higher education institutes (universities and institutes) with a total of about 36,000 students enrolled, of whom about 18,000 students enrolled on a fee-paying basis. In addition, there were 84 private higher education institutes with a total enrolment of 23,809 students. The teaching staff in State-owned institutes amounted to 4,009 teachers, of whom 735 were professors. (Government of Armenia, 1999).



In 2004, there were 16 state universities with 10 regional branches and 73 private universities (of which 33 accredited by the state) with 59,563 and about 22,500 students enrolled, respectively. In accordance with the Law of 2004, a two-cycle structure (bachelor's and master's degree), is being introduced within the framework of the Bologna process. It is envisaged that by 2010 all public and private higher education institutions will offer two-cycle degree programmes.

## Special education

Article 12 of the Law on Social Protection of the Disabled specifies that: "The State shall guarantee the right of the disabled to education and professional education as well as prepare adequate specialists for that. Together with the State bodies responsible for social welfare and health, the bodies in charge of education shall create adequate conditions and provide pre-school, secondary, professional secondary and higher education to the disabled in line with the individual handicap rehabilitation project."

Disabled children (both physical and mental) are taught in different types of boarding schools, where children receive general education and rehabilitation services in order to overcome their physical and mental impairments and develop their potential abilities. There are thirty-three types of special boarding schools catering to students up to 18 years of age (20-22 years in the case of students with hearing impairments). At the end of the 1990s the total enrolment was estimated at 4,800 students. (Government of Armenia, 1999). Around 2003, there were 51 state boarding institutions, of which 38 are designed for those needing special education, 5 institutions for children without parents and from socially vulnerable families and 8 institutions for the gifted and talented. The total enrolment was estimated at 11,244 students.

In senior school special classes, special groups and individual programmes are being created especially for gifted students. Opportunities are granted to learners to make a choice of disciplines according to their predilections.

## Private education

In 1995, forty-two licensed private educational institutions functioned in the country. Private universities have been more flexible in adapting and responding to labour market requirements.

"The private secondary education in the country is at a nascent stage. In 1995, there were only eight private establishments with about 700 students. This was due to the lack of adequate laws and legal norms regulating the activities in this sector, resulting in a chaotic and ephemeral private educational system. Lack of officially established criteria is also an impediment to development of private schools. All these factors restrain individual choice in the market for education services." (UNDP, 1996).

## Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure

The table below refers to the classroom use of computer technology:

Year	Number of primary-secondary schools with computer classes	No. of pupils with computer classes	No. of primary secondary schools teaching "Information Science and Computers"
1986/87	48	683	1,023
1987/88	138	1,565	1,040
1988/89	217	2,606	1,052
1989/90	226	2,873	1,054
1990/91	268	...	...

During the period 1991-1993, more than fifty textbooks were published, mostly concerning languages and the humanities. Since September 1997, the Ministry of Education and Science has put in place a rental system of textbooks for general education which is funded from a World Bank credit (about US\$8 million). The four-year Textbook Project aimed at ensuring that all pupils in public general education schools are supplied with textbooks in core subjects at reasonable prices. Schools are expected to establish a self-financing system for the purchase of textbooks using the collected rental fees. (Government of Armenia, 1999). A Textbook Revolving Fund has also been established. Overall, during the 1997-2000 period 85 textbooks and 34 teachers' manuals have been published and distributed to schools.

A large volume of construction and renovation work was carried out in the public education sector during 2004. The government financed the construction of 25 new schools and the complete renovation of another 187. Projects co-financed by the Armenia Social Investment Fund supported the construction of 16 and the complete renovation of 148 school buildings.

## Adult and non-formal education

Information is not available.

## Teaching staff

In 1990, there were approximately 51,000 teachers in primary-secondary schools, of whom 40,000 were women. In 1993, the number was 58,000 teachers (43,000 women). Eighty-three percent of the teachers and 88% of the specialists teaching in technical-professional and secondary-professional schools had higher education diplomas. More than 60% of teaching staff in Armenia's institutions of higher education have post-graduate degrees or similar academic qualifications.

The average salaries of teachers have increased considerably with a view to reducing the turnaround of competent human resources, providing adequate quality of



education, and improving the social situation of teachers. Compared to 12,600 drams in 2000, the average salary increased to 18,600 drams in 2003, 30,600 drams in 2004, and is expected to exceed 50,000 drams in 2005. The average salary of administrative staff of public educational institutions has increased as well.

Special attention is being paid to teacher training and upgrading methodology and technical facilities in schools. In 2004, about 28,000 teachers attended training courses, and 70% of them were from the regions outside of Yerevan. General Public Education Criteria have been developed and the Knowledge Assessment Center has been established with the aim of modernizing educational contents and introducing a knowledge assessment system.

## Educational research and information

Information is not available.

## Sources

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## Web resources

Ministry of Education and Science: <http://www.edu.am/> [In Armenian. Last checked: October 2007.]

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>