

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)

Evaluation Report
(Complete Revised Version)

of the

Regional Center for Educational Planning

Under the auspices of UNESCO

Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States

Beirut, 28/07/2011

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List of Abbreviations

ABEGS	Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States
DG	Director General
GB	Governing Board
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
IBE	International Bureau for Education, Geneva
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning, Paris
MOE	Ministry of Education
NatComs	National Commissions for UNESCO
RCEP	Regional Center for Educational Planning, Sharjah
TORs	Terms of Reference
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Hamburg
UNEDBAS	UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States, Beirut
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Montreal

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

1. In its 32nd session convened in 2003, the General Conference adopted a resolution in favor of establishing a Regional Centre for Educational Planning, in Sharjah-United Arab Emirates, under the auspices of UNESCO.
2. On October, 17, 2003, an agreement has been signed between UNESCO and the MOEY in the UAE concerning the establishment and functioning of the Centre (hereafter referred to as the Agreement). This Agreement was renewed on March 7, 2008, and remains in force until the end of 2011.
3. According to the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for UNESCO's engagement with Institutes and Centres under its auspices, a review of the Centre's work has to take place before the expiration of the Agreement and its possible renewal.
4. UNESCO Regional Office in Beirut was entrusted to manage the evaluation process. Two evaluators: Dr Habib Hajjar (team-leader) and Dr Ramzi Salamé have been chosen to carry out the evaluation. The team started its work in the second half of May 2011. The head of the team visited RCEP on May, 23, 2011, to meet its Director and staff, and to collect relevant information and documents. The team visited RCEP from 14-16 June, 2011, to meet H.E the Minister of Education and chairman of RCEP GB, RCEP Director and staff, and other persons as well, and to collect more information and documents.
5. The team adopted a combination of questionnaires, interviews and exchange of emails, to collect relevant information about RCEP and its activities from stakeholders. Two questionnaires were addressed to the RCEP GB members and to the Secretary Generals of the GCC countries National Commissions, and interviews were conducted, directly or by phone, with UNESCO Directors and staff members who have dealt with RCEP, at IIEP, UNEDBAS, UNESCO Cluster Office in Doha and UIS.
6. All the topics included in the TORs of the assessment have been covered, leading to the elaboration of three chapters grouped in part one of the report that deals with the description and diagnosis, i.e. legal status, organization and resources of RCEP, programmes, activities and publications, and the relationships between RCEP and UNESCO, all leading to part two of the report concerning the recommendations of the evaluation team.

PART ONE: DESCRIPTION AND DIAGNOSIS

Chapter One: RCEP legal status, organization and resources

- 1.1 According to the Agreement, the “Centre shall be an autonomous institution with the legal status of a non-profit educational institution within the legal context of the host country, the UAE. It shall enjoy on the territory of the UAE the personality and legal capacity necessary for the exercise of its functions, in particular the capacity to contract, to institute legal proceedings and to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property.”
- 1.2 The Resolution, 35C/103, 2009 related to the new Integrated Comprehensive Strategy, stresses the necessity to ensure, by the Government itself, the functional autonomy of a new centre or institute to be established, under the auspices of UNESCO, or that related to an existing one to be renewed.
- 1.3 The situation analysis of RCEP legal status shows that it enjoys limited functional autonomy, in terms of staff recruitment, contracting of experts and acquiring of property, the ultimate powers being held by the MOE. On the other hand, RCEP has its own bank account to which extrabudgetary funds could be channeled.
- 1.4 The structure foreseen for RCEP in the Agreement is intimately related to its objectives. Thus, three programmes sections and one support section have been foreseen. These sections were not provided with the necessary staff in due course.
- 1.5 As of March 2011, a new structure has been issued, previously approved by the GB, in the absence of the representative of UNESCO DG and of IIEP Director. Still not provided with the necessary staff, the new structure foresees the creation of a Scientific Council, i.e. an academic consultative body, composed of external experts, likely to assist the Director in reviewing and developing the programmes of the Centre in training, research, publications and consultations. It seems that the addition of the Scientific Council to the new structure stems from the difficulty to implement the collective leadership of RCEP as foreseen in the Agreement.
- 1.6 Since the official inauguration of RCEP, the GB has met three times. During these meetings, major topics related to the functioning of RCEP, such as its rules and regulations, annual budget and plans, organizational structure, were discussed and approved. However, important and relevant issues, likely to ensure effective planning and implementation of RCEP programmes, were lacking: hiring of qualified human resources, functional autonomy, integrated training programme, and the elaboration of training materials.

- 1.7 Appointed by the Chairperson of the GB, the Director of RCEP discharges the conventional duties and responsibilities related to a director of such a regional centre.
- 1.8 One could, however, highlight three major aspects in the directorship setting, according to the Agreement: the collective leadership, the proposals related to work plan, budget and staffing table, and maintaining relations with national and international organizations directly relevant to the work of the Centre.
- 1.9 According to the Agreement, the Government of the UAE “shall provide the Centre with appropriate space, furniture and equipment, technology, infrastructure and software.” The examination of the situation shows that the Government has fulfilled all its commitment, and the Centre has appropriate space and equipment to fully function as a distinguished training centre.
- 1.10 According to the Agreement as well, the Government of the UAE “shall cover the operating costs of the Centre, including the salaries and compensations of the personnel, maintenance and repair, and all goods and services required on a recurrent basis for the proper functioning of the Centre.”
- 1.11 As for extra - budgetary resources, and according to the Agreement which sets that RCEP may seek costs-sharing arrangements with other participating countries of the region, RCEP was able to raise such funds through its cooperation with the UNESCO Cluster Office in Doha, for the implementation of the Gulf States joint training programme.
- 1.12 With regard to human resources, the Agreement states that “the personnel of the Centre shall comprise on a regular basis: professional staff, administrative staff and other support staff.”

Chapter Two: Programmes, activities and publications.

- 2.1 According to the Agreement, the objectives of the Centre are:
- (a) To build national and regional capacity for modern educational planning;
 - (b) To facilitate access to information on educational planning and management.
- 2.2 In order to achieve these objectives, RCEP has to perform the following functions:
- (a) To do training in all aspects of educational planning;
 - (b) To do training in applied educational research;
 - (c) To do awareness-raising with regard to specific sector development issues.

- 2.3 Training in educational planning started mainly in 2010, with the beginning of implementation of the strategic plan 2010-2013. It rests on three major components:
- (a) The RCEP own training programme;
 - (b) The Gulf States joint training programme;
 - (c) The ad hoc training activities organized by UNESCO.
- 2.4 The RCEP own training programme comprised, in 2010, two regional workshops and one national workshop. This structure has changed in 2011 into a “common core” of six regional workshops, supported by five national workshops intended to UAE only. Once again, the structure would change in 2012, with regard namely the “common core”, which, in principle, shall comprise four training modules adopted from IIEP Advanced Training Programme common core. These changes from one year to the next attest the lack of a well-designed and coherent training programme.
- 2.5 The Gulf States joint training programme, organized in cooperation with UNESCO Office in Doha, is a support regional training programme, likely to respond to priority needs of GCC countries. Implemented already in five countries in 2010, it will be completed fall 2011.
- 2.6 The ad hoc training activities organized by UNESCO at RCEP, respond in principle to the priorities of UNESCO Offices and institutes in the region. Three workshops/seminars, including one on “Qualitative research”, have been organized in 2010, by IIEP, UNEDBAS and UIS, in cooperation with RCEP.
- 2.7 Apart from what has been mentioned earlier about the lack of a well-designed and integrated training programme, and the heavy recourse to external expertise, the training materials adopted by RCEP in its own training programme were not developed according to the Agreement. The latter states that these materials have to be prepared and tested with UNESCO-IIEP assistance.
- 2.8 According to the Agreement, the training in applied educational research is geared toward undertaking fact-finding and analysis work focused on specific needs of GCC countries. This fact-finding and analysis work could produce a body of knowledge likely to support the capacity building programme.
- 2.9 Only one regional workshop has been organized by UNEDBAS on “Qualitative research” in 2010, in cooperation with RCEP. No other training activity in applied educational research is foreseen for 2011.

- 2.10 Two scientific symposiums have been organized by RCEP in 2010, The success encountered in these symposiums pushed the Centre to plan for organizing four “educational forums” in 2011.
- 2.11 RCEP translated into Arabic three booklets of IIEP “Fundamentals in educational planning” series. Once approved by IIEP, the Arabic edition, both on-line and in hard copies, would be ready fall 2011.
- 2.12 Even before its official inauguration, the Centre was able to extend its services and to host a variety of seminars and short training courses organized by the MOE in Dubai by local community organizations in the UAE. As from 2007, some 289 activities have been organized making good use of RCEP premises and facilities.
- 2.13 The training activities organized or hosted by RCEP in 2010 and 2011, gathered some 343 participants from GCC countries (52.8% females). The regional dimension of these training activities was mainly ensured through activities organized by UNESCO offices and institutes (70%), in particular UNESCO Cluster Office in Doha.
- 2.14 With main reference to the needs assessment, one could say that RCEP is, generally speaking, in the good direction, but in a very unstable manner. Given that training activities are prepared on a yearly basis with a lot of changes from one year to the next.
- 2.15 The examination of the stakeholders’ replies (GB members and NatComs) shows that RCEP is able to competently organize regional training activities likely to bring benefits to the participants. However, these activities seem to be assessed as not sufficiently contributing to the achievement of RCEP objectives.
- 2.16 The rather low degree of acquaintance of GB members and of NatComs with RCEP programmes and activities indicates a lack of visibility and a problem of communication between RCEP and its immediate stakeholders.
- 2.17 When asked about the priorities for future action of RCEP, GB members stress, in particular, the need to enhance the regional character of RCEP, the need to move from short-term training toward more substantial training, and the need to develop high level competencies in educational planning.

- 2.18 The NatComs have expressed similar views with emphasis on more consultations with MOEs, through the NatComs, and on providing for a database on educational planning and for a regular electronic periodical about RCEP.
- 2.19 In terms of time, RCEP is almost at 50 % of its strategic plan implementation and its 2011 work plan. But, in terms of activities, the percentage is lower, given that many activities are scheduled to take place in the second half of 2011.
- 2.20 This rather heavy burden to implement activities coincides with the urgency to develop the training programme for 2012 which, as seen earlier, is still in a skeleton form. Notwithstanding as well the necessity to think of launching the lengthy process of preparing a new medium-term strategy for RCEP, which could cover a period of six years, covering two financial cycles.

Chapter Three: Relationships between RCEP and UNESCO

- 3.1 The Director of RCEP, as well as its staff, show their pride to have a Centre operating under the auspices of UNESCO. All the persons met during the mission, starting with H.E the Minister of Education, have stressed the importance they attach to the status of the Centre and to its close collaboration with UNESCO.
- 3.2 Moreover, they have all requested that UNESCO play a more active role in the functioning of the Centre, particularly in the identification of highly qualified professional staff and their training, and in elaborating training materials. This besides their hope of maintaining and enhancing the relationships between RCEP and the various UNESCO components, in particular UNESCO office in Doha, UNEDBAS, and IIEP.
- 3.3 H.E the Minister of Education has stressed that RCEP should be considered by UNESCO as a partner that could “enhance UNESCO’s vision and objectives in the Arab region, in general, and in the GCC countries, in particular.”
- 3.4 RCEP, as other category II institutes and centers, is expected to contribute to the achievement of the strategic goals of UNESCO’s programmes and priorities.

- 3.5 In the field of educational policies and strategies that are the main thrust of RCEP, according to UNESCO documentation, “the current focus is put on strengthening national capacities to design coherent policies and credible sector-wide plans within the framework of EFA and with necessary inter-sectoral linkages.”
- 3.6 Except may be for the Gulf States Joint Programme, which seemingly fits the best UNESCO priorities, RCEP has been rather slow to start its contribution to UNESCO priorities and programme concerning capacity building in educational planning.
- 3.7 Within the framework of the “mutually agreed support to the operation of the Centre” defined in details in the Agreement, UNESCO-IIEP was supposed to provide a variety of technical assistance activities likely to help ensuring a smooth and efficient functioning of the Centre throughout its life.
- 3.8 The most salient activities of technical assistance relate to the identification and hiring of core professional staff (3-4) and their training at IIEP’s Advanced Training Programme, and the preparation and testing of course materials and selection of some material to be translated into Arabic. Unfortunately, these activities have not yet been implemented as foreseen in the Agreement.
- 3.9 As for the provision of materials published by the Organization, UNEDBAS would be ready, in the next few months, to provide RCEP with five modules of IIEP training materials translated into Arabic and ready to be used.

PART TWO: RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recommendation concerning the status of RCEP

1.1 RCEP has been originally established to satisfy the pressing needs of the GCC Member States in capacity development in educational planning and management.

1.2 Through a variety of training activities, some 343 educational planners and managers have benefited from short trainings during the last 2-3 years. However, the needs are still high and becoming more and more diversified.

1.3 The anticipated future developments of education in the Region are urging RCEP to expand the pool of educational planners and managers.

RECOMMENDATION 1A

The evaluation team recommends that the Agreement between the Government of the UAE and UNESCO on the operation of RCEP as a UNESCO Category II Centre be renewed according to the Resolution 35C/103, 2009 (¹).

RECOMMENDATION 1B

The evaluation team recommends the following:

- Article V of the Agreement, concerning the organization of the Centre, be respected as is, even though the foreseen sections are put in place progressively;
- The senior professional staff members (chiefs of sections) be hired as soon as possible, in order to enable them exercise, with the Director of the Centre, the collective leadership as foreseen in Article VII of the Agreement;
- The Scientific Council and the two administrative units proposed by the resolution of the Governing Board be considered as internal arrangements for the functioning of the Centre to which UNESCO is invited to adhere with no objections;
- The power structure of the Centre be defined according to the following lines:
 - The Director and the senior professional staff constitute, at the upstream level, the think tank of the Centre, in charge of preparing

¹ Resolution adopted by the General Conference concerning the new Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for UNESCO's Engagement with Institutes and Centres under its auspices (Category II) and its annexes.

and proposing the Centre's programmes of action, and, at the downstream level, the chief executives responsible for the implementation of the Centre's programmes adopted by the Governing Board;

- The Scientific Council, composed of external experts, to be endorsed by UNESCO as part of agreed upon modus operandi of the Centre, should act, as foreseen in the Governing Board resolution, as a consultative body that provide advice on the programmes of the Centre proposed by the collective leadership as defined in the Agreement;
- The Governing Board continues to hold the decision powers.

2. Recommendation concerning the functional autonomy of RCEP

2.1 According to the Agreement, the Centre shall be an autonomous institution, within the legal context of the host country, the UAE. This autonomy manifests itself through the legal capacity of the Centre to contract and to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property.

2.2 H.E. the UAE Minister of Education and Chairman of the GB, is in favour of granting the Centre the financial autonomy it needs, in terms of using the special account of the Centre, where extrabudgetary funds are channelled, to channel as well the financial contribution of the Government.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The evaluation team recommends that the functional autonomy of RCEP be strengthened in terms of staff recruitment and financial management, in order for RCEP to plan and implement more effectively its programmes and activities; the GB of RCEP should examine the appropriate modalities for granting the Centre with the necessary functional autonomy in terms of staff recruitment and financial management.

3. Recommendation concerning the regional character of RCEP

3.1 The regional character of RCEP is emphasized in the Agreement. Most of the training activities to be implemented should be of regional character.

3.2 The list of RCEP staff does not show any staff member coming from GCC countries.

3.3 On the other hand, the bulk of RCEP financial resources is being covered by the financial contribution of the UAE Government. Given, however, the anticipated expansion of RCEP activities in the future, RCEP might as well need additional resources.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The evaluation team recommends that the regional character of RCEP be enhanced by opening the leading positions in the Centre to regional candidates and by seeking financial contributions from GCC Governments, according to their needs and to the Centre's programmes of activities.

4. Recommendation concerning RCEP functions, programmes and activities

4.1 Since its official inauguration, the Centre was keen to maintain strong relationships with the MOE and the local community organizations by hosting several activities organized by them.

4.2 RCEP did the same as well by hosting some regional workshops organized by UNESCO entities in the region and elsewhere.

4.3 As seen earlier, the attempts made by RCEP to develop its own training programme are still in need of more integration.

4.4 This paramount issue coincides with the urgent need to develop the training programme for 2012 and to launch the process of preparing a new medium-term strategic plan which could cover a period of six years.

4.5 In order to deal with these urgent activities concomitantly, RCEP needs to prepare a well-conceived project document, in close collaboration with IIEP and in line with the respective clauses of the Agreement.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The evaluation team recommends that RCEP launches, as soon as possible, with UNESCO-IIEP and UNEDBAS assistance, the preparation process of its new medium-term strategic plan, in the form of a project document, including the design of a well-integrated training programme in educational planning and management and in applied educational research, that would be the base for strengthened presence in the GCC Member States and cooperation with their MOEs, UNESCO and other organizations and institutions at the sub-regional and local levels.

5. Recommendation concerning the development by RCEP of an effective communication strategy

- 5.1 Being a two-way process, communication is intended to ensure visibility of RCEP mandate, programme and activities, as well as to ensure feedback from stakeholders.
- 5.2 The assessment of RCEP programme and activities by the stakeholders has shown a lack of transparency and a problem of communication between RCEP and its immediate stakeholders, e.g. the members of the GB and the NatComs.
- 5.3 Besides the CD-Roms related to RCEP mandate and activities and the portal in progress of installation, RCEP should think of a varied set of communication formats likely to ensure reaching wide audiences that need to be clearly identified.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The evaluation team recommends that RCEP develop an appropriate communication strategy likely to ensure better visibility of RCEP mandate and activities, and valuable feedback from stakeholders.

6. Recommendation to UNESCO

- 6.1 According to the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy, RCEP should contribute to the achievement of the strategic objectives related to UNESCO's programme and priorities in education. This contribution needs to be identified in the Agreement to be renewed.
- 6.2 On the other hand, the Agreement mentions in detail the kind of technical assistance to be provided by UNESCO-IIEP in order to ensure quality and relevance of training activities and a high level of professional performance.
- 6.3 Given that the success stories of RCEP are directly linked to its association with UNESCO Offices in the region, it seems logical that RCEP be associated with the actions of these offices at all stages of the planning cycle.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The evaluation team recommends that UNESCO reinforces its support to RCEP, to enhance the contribution of the Centre to UNESCO's programmes and priorities, to ensure the quality and relevance of its training activities, and to assist it towards the attainment of the objectives for which it was established.

Notwithstanding the support to be provided by IIEP as concerns substantive matters, the Director General may wish to consider ways and means to involve more actively RCEP in the programming cycle of UNESCO activities in the GCC countries, as well as to consider involving UNESCO more actively in the programming cycle of RCEP through the designation of the Director of UNEDBAS as her representative to the GB of RCEP.

INTRODUCTION

- 0.1 The discussions on the need of the UAE for modern educational planning capacity and possible ways to build such capacity with support from the UNESCO IIEP began at the initiative of the UAE in early 2000. The Director of IIEP carried-out a mission to the UAE in June 2000 in order to explore the possibilities of cooperation in training in educational planning, management and evaluation.
- 0.2 During the visit of UNESCO Director-General to the UAE in March 2001, His Highness Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammed Al-Qassimi, Ruler of Sharjah and Member of the Supreme Council of UAE, offered to devote one of the buildings of the Sharjah Cultural City to house a regional centre for educational planning.
- 0.3 In June 2001, a joint mission of IIEP and MOE began fact finding work to explore the need for training in educational planning and management in the UAE, and the appropriate ways of meeting such needs, for example in the form of a training centre, with possible regional coverage.
- 0.4 The fact finding work together with an appropriate feasibility study concluded to the need to establish a regional training centre in educational planning, likely to assist GCC Member States and possibly other countries of the Arab region in building and developing their capacities in educational planning and management. It was then thought that this centre could also be under the auspices of UNESCO.
- 0.5 In its 32nd session convened in 2003, the General Conference took a resolution in favour of establishing a Regional Center for Educational Planning under the auspices of UNESCO in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates².
- 0.6 On October 17, 2003, an agreement was signed between UNESCO and the MOE of the UAE concerning the operation and the functioning of this centre. It was stated that the agreement would remain in force until the end of the year 2007.
- 0.7 On March 7, 2008, UNESCO and the Government of the UAE renewed the agreement which, in turn, would remain in force until the end of the year 2011.

² Even though the Center is called “regional”, according to Article III of the Agreement signed in 2008 by UNESCO and the MOE of the UAE, “the Center shall be at the service of the States members of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) and possibly other States that, by their geographical proximity to the Centre and/or the nature of their educational development and planning needs, desire to cooperate with the Centre”. This practically means that the Centre is at the service of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia that were recently joined by Yemen. Also, since “the activities of the Centre [are mainly] conducted in Arabic” as set in Article V of the Agreement, the neighboring countries referred to in Article III concerning the geographical scope of the Centre would normally be limited to the Arab States of the Middle-East (Iraq, Jordan, Syria, etc.).

- 0.8 According to the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for UNESCO's Engagement with Institutes and Centers under its auspices, a review of the Centre's work has to take place before the expiration of the agreement and its possible renewal.
- 0.9 The UNESCO Office in Beirut has been entrusted to manage the evaluation process. For that purpose, Terms of Reference have been issued and two evaluators have been chosen to carry out the evaluation with the support of RCEP Director. The evaluators are:
- Dr Habib Hajjar, Consultant, Educational Planning Specialist, UNESCO Retiree, Head of the team;
 - Dr Ramzi Salamé, Consultant, Higher Education and Evaluation Specialist, UNESCO Retiree.
- 0.10 The team started its work in the second half of May 2011. The head of the team visited RCEP on May 23rd to meet its Director and staff and to collect information and documents likely to help in the evaluation process.
- 0.11 The team visited RCEP from 14 to 16 June 2011 to meet His Excellency Humaid Mohamed Al-Qutami, Minister of Education of UAE and Chairman of RCEP Governing Board, and to hold meetings with RCEP Director, Mrs Mahra Hilal Al-Mutaiwi, and her staff, to get in-depth knowledge about the Centre's programmes and activities, and future plans and, to collect relevant information and documents.
- 0.12 The visit served as well to meet with Dr. Obeid Bin Batti Al-Muhairi, Member of the Federal Council in the UAE and Member of RCEP GB, and Dr. Amr Abdel-Hamid, Special Advisor for Higher Education to His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah, and to collect feedback information concerning the Centre's work.
- 0.13 Given the time constraints – the evaluation report had to be submitted by end June 2011 – a combination of questionnaires, interviews, and exchange of emails has been adopted to collect relevant information about RCEP and its activities from stakeholders.
- 0.14 Within this framework, two questionnaires were developed and addressed respectively by the Director of UNEDBAS to the RCEP Governing Board members and to National Commissions in the GCC Member States.
- 0.15 Also, emails were sent explaining the purpose of the evaluation and interviews were conducted, directly or by phone, with UNESCO directors and staff members who have dealt with the RCEP in one capacity or the other, at IIEP, UNEDBAS, UNESCO Cluster Office in Doha and UIS.
- 0.16 The evaluation report puts the emphasis on the qualitative aspects, although the quantitative ones are not occulted. In this respect, and in conformity with the

TORs, terms such as quality, relevance, usefulness, participation, effectiveness, have been used as parameters for the evaluation.

0.17 All the topics included in the TORs of the assessment have been covered, leading to the elaboration of three chapters grouped in part one of the report that deals with the description and diagnosis, i.e. the legal status, organization and resources of RCEP, the programmes, activities and publications, and the relationships between the RCEP and UNESCO, all leading to part two of the report concerning the recommendations of the evaluation team.

0.18 The annexes to the report cover the following:

- TORs of the evaluation;
- List of persons met or interviewed;
- Composition of RCEP Governing Board as of June 2011;
- Questionnaire sent to GB members;
- Questionnaire sent to National Commissions;
- List of RCEP staff.

PART ONE - DESCRIPTION AND DIAGNOSIS

Chapter One

RCEP Legal Status, Organization, and Resources

1. Legal Status

- 1.1 According to Article II of the agreement between the Government of the UAE and UNESCO concerning the operation of the RCEP (hereafter referred to as the Agreement), signed on 7 March 2008, the “Centre shall be an autonomous institution with the legal status of a non-profit educational institution within the legal context of the host country, the UAE. It shall enjoy on the territory of the UAE, the personality and legal capacity necessary for the exercise of its functions, in particular the capacity:
 - to contract;
 - to institute legal proceedings; and
 - to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property.”
- 1.2 In its 35th session, 2009, the General Conference adopted a Resolution, 35C/103, concerning the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for UNESCO’s Engagement with Institutes and Centres under its auspices (category II). The annex 2 of this strategy, related to an agreement model to be applied by UNESCO and any Member State with regard to establishing a new institute or centre or renewing an existing one, stresses (article IV) the necessity to ensure the functional autonomy of the respective institute or centre to be created or renewed. This functional autonomy should be ensured by the Government itself within the legal context of the host country. It highlights, as mentioned above, the legal capacity of the Centre or institute to contract, to acquire movable and immovable property, and, more specifically, to receive funds coming from services it would provide.
- 1.3 The examination of the relevant documents shows that RCEP has been established by the UAE Council of Ministers decree No. 12/12 of 2002 to “be a regional branch of the IIEP to serve the GCC countries and the Arab world with the view to undertake educational research and training of educational personnel in planning for educational development”. In addition, the first agreement between UNESCO and the UAE Government concerning the creation and functioning of RCEP has been approved by the Council of Ministers in its decision No. 19/4 of 2004.

- 1.4 However, the situation analysis of RCEP legal status shows that it still appears as a “branch” of the Ministry of Education of the UAE, enjoying limited functional autonomy as stated in the above mentioned agreement and in the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy, having only some of the powers foreseen in the Agreement.
- 1.5 In fact, RCEP does not have, by itself and on its regular budget, the capacity to contract or to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property, nor it has the capacity to institute legal procedures. These powers, resulting, for example, in the hiring of staff and contracting of experts, and acquiring of property, are held by the MOE, on the basis of proposals made by the Director of the Centre.
- 1.6 On the other hand, RCEP enjoys a certain level of functional autonomy through the budgeting processes of the Ministry. In fact, RCEP has particular lines in the budget of the MOE adopted according to the proposals submitted by its Director to the Ministry and disbursed according to the Director’s requests without interference of the services of the Ministry, other than the approval of the Minister, who is at the same time the chairperson of the Governing Board of RCEP.
- 1.7 RCEP has also a bank account of its own to which extra budgetary funds could be channeled. It has the power to contract on these funds and disburse the relevant sums.
- 1.8 During the meeting of the team with His Excellency Humaid Mohamed Al-Qutami, Minister of Education and Chairman of RCEP GB, on 16 June 2011, the Minister made it clear that he is in favour of strengthening the functional autonomy of RCEP, within the legal context of the UAE. More specifically, he mentioned the possibility of RCEP to channel the financial allotments made by the Government and any other additional funds and resources, to the bank account of the Centre in order to assist RCEP in performing its functions more efficiently, and free it completely from the oversight of the MOE.
- 1.9 In fact, the trend towards more autonomy of RCEP vis-à-vis the MOE is strongly supported by the UAE representative in the GB and by the special advisor to H.E. Sheikh Sultan Bin Muhamed Al-Qassimi, Ruler of Sharjah and owner of the land and building devoted to RCEP. In addition, this autonomy does not pertain major risks for the financial resources allocated by the UAE Government to the Centre, since, by virtue of the agreement between UNESCO and the UAE Government, the UAE Minister of Education acts as chairperson of the GB, holding eventually the ultimate powers to contract, institute legal procedures, acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property, and disburse funds.

- 1.10 Hence, the necessity to study carefully this important issue and to move forward towards greater or full autonomy of the Centre, at the occasion of the renewal of the agreement between UNESCO and the Government of the UAE.

2. Organization

2.1. Structure

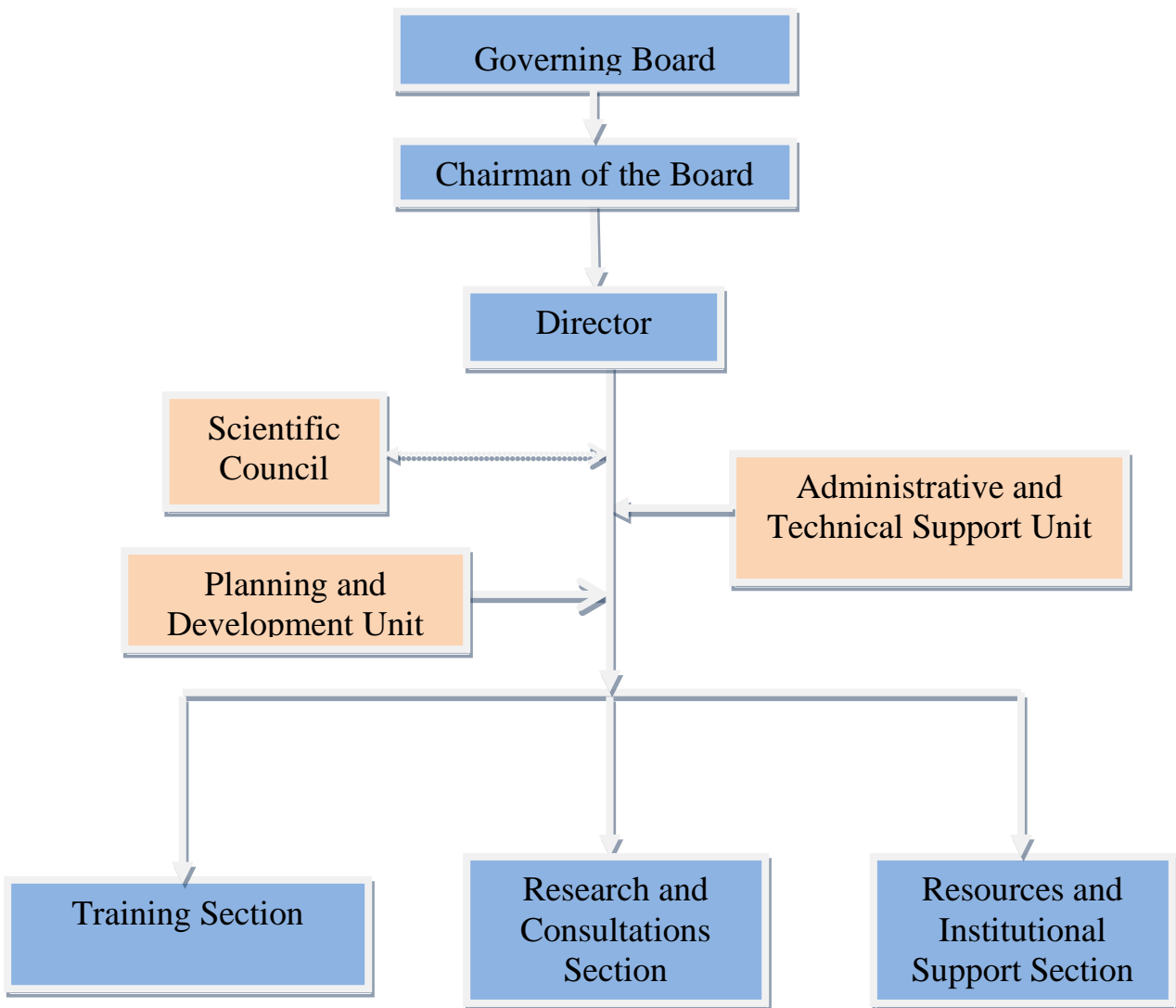
- 2.1.1 The organizational structure foreseen for RCEP in the Agreement is intimately related to its objectives: to build national and regional capacity for modern educational planning in all its aspects through training in educational planning, training in applied educational research, awareness-raising with regard to specific sector development issues and, to facilitate access to information on educational planning and management of other countries and relevant information published by international organizations and institutions, in particular the IIEP.
- 2.1.2 This structure, as defined in Article V of the Agreement, is thus composed of the following four sections:
- “Section 1: Educational Planning Training Section,
Section 2: Education Research Training Section,
Section 3: Educational Planning and Management Information Section,
Section 4: Administrative Support Section (including a translation/interpretation unit and a printing and publications unit)”.
- 2.1.3 All these sections are considered as executive bodies working under the authority of the RCEP Director.
- 2.1.4 As of June 2011, except for the Administrative Support Section, the above mentioned substantive sections were not really created and provided with the necessary staff. In fact, the staff of the Centre is presently composed of two professional staff, including the Director, two administrative staff, two technical staff, and one general services staff member.
- 2.1.5 On the contrary, the GB has approved the new RCEP structure in its second meeting held on 12 February 2009. UNESCO was represented by Mr. Khalil Mahshi on his status as a Deputy Chairman of IIEP and representative of UNESCO DG.
- 2.1.6 The new structure has three organizational units that will be directly linked to the Director, namely: the Administrative and Technical support Unit, the Planning and Development Unit, and the Scientific Council.

2.1.7 Three out of the four initially foreseen sections working under the authority of the Director have been maintained with slight modification of their appellations and mandates, namely: a Training Section, a Research and Consultations Section, and a Resources and Institutional Support Section, while the Educational Planning and Management Information Section no more appears in the new organizational chart (see Figure 1).³

Figure 1

The New Organizational Structure of RCEP adopted by the Governing Board

Source: RCEP-Job description of the organizational structure (in Arabic), 31 March 2011



³ Article V of the Agreement refers to the various organizational components of the Center as “sections”, while the Director of the Center prefers to use the term “Departments” to refer to its substantive components, in line with the practice in the UAE Government institutions. The evaluation team finds no objection to this shift in future reference to these components.

- 2.1.8 Except for the Administrative and Technical Support Unit which performs the functions of secretariat to the Director, the other two newly created units are supposed to assist the Director in elaborating the overall policy of the Centre and its strategic orientations, as well as the respective plans, programmes and assist in their implementation.
- 2.1.9 With regard to the Scientific Council, which plays the role of consultative academic council to the Director and to the GB of the Centre, it is composed of seven members chaired by the Director, six of them are coming mainly from the academic world and the seventh is the head of the training section in the Centre. The consultative academic work of the council relates mainly to the review and development of the Centre's programmes in training, research, publications and consultations. It was able to hold two consultative meetings on January 18th and March 9th 2011, under the chairmanship of the Director. During these two meetings, several topics have been discussed and agreed upon, such as:
- the training programme for 2011;
 - the annual conference on education reform (November 2011);
 - the four educational forums to be organized in 2011;
 - the two educational research works to be carried out in 2011.
- 2.1.10 Except for the training program, a part of which has already been implemented, as it will be mentioned later, most of the other activities are in progress or likely to be implemented in the second half of 2011.
- 2.1.11 With the exception of what has been relatively achieved by the Scientific Council in terms of meetings held, topics discussed and recommendations made, and the development of the "Dynamic Web Portal" under progress, it would be rather difficult to assess comprehensively the work being done by the various units and sections. This is because these units and sections are not yet provided with the necessary staff, especially the professional staff. Hence, the priority to be given to hiring the necessary staff with whom the work of a given structure could be assessed.
- 2.1.12 Furthermore, it seems that the addition of the Scientific Council to the structure stems from the difficulty to implement the collective leadership of RCEP as stated in Article VII of the Agreement and that will be discussed in a later section below. In fact, the Agreement has foreseen a kind of "think tank" to the Centre, composed of the Director and the four senior staff in charge of the four sections referred to in Article V of the Agreement. Should this core professional staff existed, it would have exactly done what has been done by the Scientific Council, in preparation for the decisions to be taken by the GB.

- 2.1.13 In fact, the new proposed structure may be interpreted as inducing a new philosophy concerning the intellectual leadership and management of RCEP, moving the center of thinking and preparation of substantive decisions from the core professional staff to external experts. Indeed, RCEP has submitted to the evaluation team a detailed description of the roles, duties and responsibilities of the departments and units foreseen in the new structure, including those concerning the Scientific Council. However, these descriptions are not congruent neither with the spirit of various articles of the Agreement nor with some of the actual texts of it. Hence, the conflict between what is foreseen in the Agreement and what has been assigned to the various components of the new structure.
- 2.1.14 Furthermore, since the proposed new structure entails modifications to the Agreement, this proposal shall “be discussed between UNESCO and the RCEP and agreed upon in writing” as set in paragraph 3 of Article XI of the Agreement.

2.2. Governing Board

- 2.2.1 According to Article VI of the Agreement, the Governing Board of RCEP is chaired by the Minister of Education of the UAE or his designated representative, and composed of the Ministers of Education of the GCC countries or their appointed representatives, specifically Under-Secretaries or their counterparts, a representative of the Director General of UNESCO, the Director of IIEP or his/her representative, and the Director of RCEP (who has no voting rights).
- 2.2.2 According to the same Article, “the GB meets in ordinary sessions at regular intervals, at least once every calendar year”. The role played by the GB of RCEP is very important from the following three points of view.
- 2.2.3 First: the mandate of the GB is to approve the long-term and medium-term programmes of RCEP, the annual workplan and budget, the staffing table, and, to issue the rules, regulations and procedures concerning the financial, administrative and personnel management of the Centre.
- 2.2.4 Second: by virtue of its composition, i.e. the Ministers of Education in the participating countries or their Under-Secretaries or counterparts, the GB is supposed to reflect the educational priorities of Member States and, consequently, it is supposed to provide a high opportunity to help putting into implementation the approved programmes and activities of the Centre.
- 2.2.5 Third: the presence of UNESCO DG representative and of IIEP Director or his/her representative in RCEP GB meetings, opens widely the door for effective partnership and cooperation between UNESCO as a whole and RCEP. In fact, in light of the “Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Functioning of

- Institutes and Centres under the auspices of UNESCO, (General Conference, 2005, Ref, 33C/22), RCEP is expected to contribute to the achievement of the strategic goals of UNESCO's programmes and priorities in its areas of concern. On the other side, UNESCO and, more specifically, IIEP are expected to provide technical assistance to RCEP in developing its capacity building programmes and activities related to educational planning and management, in light of the Agreement concerning the operation of RCEP.
- 2.2.6 Examination of available documentation shows that, since the official inauguration of RCEP on November 14, 2007, the GB has met three times in ordinary sessions: 14/11/2007, 12/2/2009 and 15/6/2010, skipping one calendar year (2008) during which it did not meet.
- 2.2.7 Only two out of the ten members of the GB participated in these three meetings, while five members participated in two meetings each, and seven other persons participated in one meeting each. One country has changed its representative at each meeting.
- 2.2.8 The level of representation of the various countries is quite high, the members generally being at the rank of Director General in the MOE or higher, with responsibilities generally akin to educational planning.
- 2.2.9 During these meetings, major topics related to the functioning of RCEP such as its rules and regulations, annual budget, organizational structure, etc. were discussed and approved, after submission by the Director of the Centre. This is mostly true since 2009, whereby the Centre, while attempting to reinforce its limited internal structure, launched the operation of needs assessment in educational planning and management in the GCC Member States, and the elaboration of its strategic plan 2010-2012.
- 2.2.10 It remains true, however, that important and relevant issues likely to ensure effective planning and implementation of the Centre's programmes were lacking: hiring of qualified human resources, functional autonomy of the Centre, integrated training programme, elaboration of training materials, etc. Through its mandate to approve the long-term and medium-term programmes of RCEP, the staffing table, the budget, etc., the GB is likely to give a push to the Centre in order to perform more effectively its functions. The acquaintance of the GB members with the Centre's main preoccupations and endeavors in educational planning, and training through different means and channels, is likely to help ensuring a better and more informed decision-making.

2.3. Director

- 2.3.1 According to Article VIII of the Agreement, the Director of RCEP is “appointed by the Chairperson of the GB after consultation with each member of the Board”.
- 2.3.2 According to the same Article, the Director “discharges the following duties:
- (a) direct the work of the Centre in conformity with the directives and programmes established by the GB;
 - (b) propose the work plan, budget and staffing table to the GB;
 - (c) appoint the staff of the Centre in agreement with the UAE Minister of Education, the Chairman of RCEP GB, and consultation with the Board especially when hiring senior staff;
 - (d) organize at regular intervals (at least once every calendar month) and chair meetings of the core group of professional staff in order to ensure consensus on major programmes and management matters;
 - (e) prepare and submit reports on the activities of the Centre to the GB;
 - (f) maintain relations with institutes, centres and national and international organizations directly relevant to the work of the Centre;
 - (g) submit proposals to the GB that he/she deems necessary for the efficient management of the Centre and which require Board consultation or approval;
 - (h) represent the Centre in law and in all civil acts.”
- 2.3.3 Examination of the available documentation shows that, under the aegis of the Agreement renewed in 2008, the GB has approved the nomination of the present Director in its second meeting held on 12/2/2009, replacing the former first director of the Centre who was nominated in 2005 and had resigned by that time. Thus, the incumbent Director has been on duty for about two years, although she was nominated to RCEP a year earlier and seems to have actively participated to the elaboration of the organizational, substantive, and financial issues that were discussed in the above mentioned meeting of the GB. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the nomination of the present incumbent to the Director’s position has given a push to the activities of the Centre.
- 2.3.4 In addition, Article VII of the Agreement concerning the personnel states that “the Centre shall have a core group of professional staff, including the Director, that shall exercise collective leadership in substantive matters, monitoring and guiding the training, research and information dissemination activities of the Centre, in order to ensure consensus on major programmes and programme management matters”.

- 2.3.5 Within this wide spectrum of duties and responsibilities, one could highlight three major aspects in the directorship setting: working closely with the core group of professional staff (collective leadership), proposals related to the work plan, budget and staffing table, and developing and maintaining relations with national and international organizations directly relevant to the work of the Centre. These three major domains, together with the classical domains of managerial duties, are likely to ensure an efficient management of the Centre in order to achieve its stated objectives.
- 2.3.6 Concerning the collective leadership foreseen in the Agreement, one has to face the fact that, until now, this could not be achieved, not because of the lack of will of the Director, but because the core group of professional staff has not yet been nominated. In fact, as will be seen later on in the section concerning the personnel, besides the Director, RCEP has only one expert whose competencies are related to educational planning and applied educational research. In the absence of the core professional staff, the Director has relied for the development of the plans and activities on this expert as well as on other staff of the Centre who are not familiar enough with educational planning concepts and approaches. Also, as mentioned earlier, the Director was assisted as regards the substantive matters by the newly created “Scientific Council” that has seemingly replaced the “collective leadership” that was supposed to be played by the senior staff of the Centre.
- 2.3.7 Moreover, due to the lack of the core professional staff, the Director took sometimes directly part in the training activities as a trainer. However, despite the dedication and commitment of the Director and her staff, one could ask why the staffing table has not yet been prepared and, why the core group of professional staff has not yet been identified and hired? The evaluation team has been officially informed that an advertisement for one post in educational planning has been launched and will be closed by August 15, 2011. It is worth mentioning in this regard that the announcement for this post in educational planning contains a set of requirements concerning the qualifications of the sought after candidates but no indications about the duties and responsibilities that will be entrusted to the incumbent.
- 2.3.8 With the above in mind, it is not surprising to see, for instance, that the strategic plan 2010-2012 and more specifically the training program, lacks coherence and integration as it will be seen later.
- 2.3.9 In fact, starting in 2008, the Director was able, together with her limited staff, to prepare the strategic plan for 2010-2012, the annual work plans for 2010 and 2011 (2012 is in progress) and the corresponding budgets, and proposals to these effect were submitted to the GB.

- 2.3.10 However, bearing in mind that the professional staff of the Centre is limited to two (including the Director), in order to implement the different training activities which appear in the work plans, the Director had to have heavily recourse to external expertise (outsourcing).
- 2.3.11 All the above make salient the urgency to elaborate a comprehensive staffing table of the Centre, with clear descriptions of duties and responsibilities at the individual and at the collective levels, and to identify and hire the core group of professional staff in light of the future developments foreseen for the Centre.
- 2.3.12 With regard to developing and maintaining relations with institutes, centres and national and international organizations directly relevant to the work of the Centre, it is of high interest to the Centre to maintain and develop this kind of partnerships. This interest does not stem only from the desire to be well known but, mainly from the fact that the huge mandate given to the Centre would be highly covered through cooperation and partnerships. It is worth mentioning in that respect what has been specifically defined in the Agreement with respect to the technical assistance from IIEP concerning the hiring and training of the core group of professional staff as well as the preparation and testing of training materials. The most important components of resources, e.g. human and intellectual, are supposed to be covered through effective partnerships with IIEP. The same could be said about the cooperation of RCEP with other institutes, centres and national and international organizations directly relevant to the work of the Centre. With regard to the identification and hiring of experts and consultants, the network of national and regional centres and organizations could be of great help through their respective rosters.
- 2.3.13 The Director of the Centre was able to develop good relationships with UNESCO Offices in the Region and elsewhere. These offices have implemented a certain number of activities in cooperation with the Centre as it will be developed later when dealing with programmes and activities of the Centre. However, the issue of true and close partnership between RCEP and other institutes, centres and organizations needs the elaboration of a well defined long-term or medium-term strategy.
- 2.3.14 Apart from the above mentioned three fields of duties, the Director is directing and managing a list of activities, notwithstanding the supervision of the needs assessment study, the preparation of RCEP Annual Report for 2010 and the submission of proposals to the GB concerning administrative and financial matters. Here again, the lack of sufficient administrative staff in conformity with the organizational structure, makes it difficult to discharge effectively the managerial duties.

3. Resources

3.1. Material Resources

- 3.1.1 According to paragraph 2 of Article X of the Agreement, the Government of the UAE “shall provide the Centre with appropriate space, furniture, and equipment, technology, infrastructure and software”.
- 3.1.2 The examination of the situation of the Centre shows that the Government has, in this area of concern, fulfilled all its commitments towards the Centre.
- 3.1.3 In fact, the Centre has at its disposal quite large premises and facilities situated in a modern and independent building that was provided to the Centre by His Highness Sheikh Sultan Bin Muhamed Al-Qassimi, Ruler of Sharjah and Member of the Supreme Council of the UAE.
- 3.1.4 These facilities consist of two conference rooms for lectures to large groups, six seminars and training rooms, one multimedia room, in addition to library, offices, meeting areas, and related facilities.
- 3.1.5 A sum of around 134,000 USD was spent by the MOE to provide the Centre with modern furniture for 20 offices, library shelves, 2 trainers’ room, 2 meeting rooms, 3 waiting and informal meeting areas, 1 multimedia room, the 6 seminar rooms and the conference rooms. Also, a sum of around 190,000 USD was spent to provide the Centre with up-to-date IT equipment, including telephones, printers, 75 computers, 10 Smarttouch PCs, 120 interpretation wireless set units, amplifier and multiplexer, etc.
- 3.1.6 Therefore, one could affirm that RCEP has appropriate space and equipment to fully function as a distinguished training center.

3.2. Financial Resources

- 3.2.1 According to paragraph 1 of Article X of the Agreement, the Government of the UAE “shall cover the operating costs of the Centre, including the salaries and compensations of the personnel of the Centre (as defined in the Agreement), maintenance and repair, and all goods and services required on a recurrent basis for the proper functioning of the Centre (such as communications, utilities, transport and stationary)”. It shall also “cover all the expenses of holding the sessions of the Governing Board” (Paragraph 3 of Article X).
- 3.2.2 If we exclude the special budgets for IT equipment and for the international conference, the operations budget devoted by the MOE to RCEP for 2011 is around 1,300,000 USD; for 2012, the request presented by the Centre to the MOE

- amounts to 972,000 USD, the reduction concerning principally the training program that will be cut by around 220,000 USD.
- 3.2.3 It is worth mentioning that, in each case, the part of the budget allocated to training activities is about 50% of the total budget.
 - 3.2.4 In addition to the operations budget, and as set in Article X of the Agreement, the MOE takes care of the salaries and compensations of the personnel of RCEP. The sums allocated by the MOE to the Centre stand at around 750,000 USD for 2011 to finance 9 positions, while for 2012, the requested amount for personnel stands around 1,600,000 USD to finance 19 positions. Thus, the reduction in operating costs for 2012 will be largely compensated by the addition of staff members, among which 5 will have senior or junior professional status.
 - 3.2.5 Nonetheless, there are opinions among stakeholders that the financial support of the Government should have been and still should be more substantial, particularly as concerns the conditions of employment of the senior professional staff in order to attract highly qualified persons from UAE, the GCC countries, and abroad, and not only rely to fill in these positions on the secondment of employees from the UAE MOE.
 - 3.2.6 As for extrabudgetary resources, Article IX of the Agreement sets that RCEP may seek cost-sharing arrangements with other participating countries of the region, with regard namely to the implementation of training activities. To this effect, cost-sharing arrangements were adopted by the GB on 15/6/2010 covering only the travel, accommodations and living costs of trainees, to be borne by the participating countries, excluding tuition fees or arrangements for cost recovery. And these arrangements were implemented as regards the regional activities that have taken place since then.
 - 3.2.7 Also, as set in Article IX of the Agreement, RCEP could “receive gifts and legacies” (Paragraph 2 of Article IX), “market its own products and services, and build its own funds and foundations, in order to expand the capacity and capability towards the realization of its goals, bearing in mind that the Centre is a non-profit organization” (Paragraph 3 of Article IX).
 - 3.2.8 Examination of the available information shows that, until this moment, such a situation has occurred only once. In fact, RCEP has already received extrabudgetary funds from three different sources, two of which (from the UNESCO Cluster Office in Jakarta and from the Hamdan Award) were to perform duties that could be considered on the side of its main goals and purposes, while the third one (in virtue of a contract with the UNESCO Cluster Office in Doha) is indeed directly related to the realization of its goals since it concerns the implementation of the so-called “Joint Program” where RCEP

undertook and still is undertaking the implementation of capacity building workshops in educational planning in the seven Member States of the GCC (including Yemen), on behalf of the Doha Office.

3.3. Personnel

- 3.3.1 Article VII of the Agreement states that “the personnel of the Centre shall comprise on a regular basis: professional staff, administrative staff and other support staff”. However, except the enumeration of the four sections which constitute the organizational structure of the Centre, the Agreement does not mention the number of the different categories of staff. The same could be said about the new organizational structure adopted by the GB.
- 3.3.2 At present, the personnel of the Centre comprises on a regular basis: two professional staff members (including the Director), two administrative staff members, two technical staff members, and one services staff (see Annex 5) to which two other staff members were added recently. In order to implement especially its training activities, and as mentioned before, RCEP is heavily relying on external expertise. As far as symposiums, educational forums, annual conference and consultations are concerned, they are normally delivered by outside guests and lecturers.
- 3.3.3 With regard to the professional staff, the Agreement emphasized the support that UNESCO shall provide to the Centre for the identification of suitable professional staff and their training, especially during the preparatory phase. During the phase of normal operations, the Agreement states that UNESCO shall associate the professional staff of the Centre with relevant UNESCO activities in the region and elsewhere.
- 3.3.4 By putting the emphasis on appropriate training to be provided by UNESCO-IIEP to the core professional staff who shall be engaged for periods of at least three years, and preferably five years or more as set in the Agreement, the Organization is showing the most effective way for RCEP to ensure the building of solid professional quality and experience and ensure its sustainability. Almost all the success stories all over the world point out to the pre-eminence, among any institution’s resources, of its highly qualified team of committed and motivated staff, especially the professional staff.
- 3.3.5 In this regard, it appears that, until now, the Government has honored its commitments towards the Center as concerns material resources. However, it didn’t meet the expectations in one of the fields of foreseen contributions, that is providing the Centre with sufficient number of staff members to undertake the various functions foreseen in the Agreement. However, as mentioned above, the

plans prepared by the Director for 2012 foresee an at least partial correction to this situation, by adding a certain number of new staff members in all categories of employment, among which some professionals.

- 3.3.6 To this effect, it is hopeful that a comprehensive staffing table of the Centre be issued shortly, and that measures be taken to ensure the hiring of highly qualified personnel to each of the positions. In fact, according to the documents provided by the Director to the evaluation team, the staffing table foreseen within the framework of the preparation of the budget for 2012 comprises 19 positions, including the Director, two heads of sections, two senior experts and one junior expert, alongside with other professional and support staff. However, it is worth mentioning that the staffing table for 2012 does not foresee the hiring of a head of section for Research and Consultations as proposed in the new organizational chart of the Centre, nor it does link each of the positions foreseen to a specific component of the organizational chart, except for the heads of sections.

Chapter Two

RCEP Programmes, Activities, and Publications

1. Objectives and Functions

- 1.1 According to Article IV of the Agreement, the objectives of the Centre are twofold:
 - (a) To build national and regional capacity for modern educational planning, and
 - (b) To facilitate access to information on educational planning and management of other countries and relevant information published by international organizations and institutions, in particular the IIEP.
- 1.2. In order to achieve these objectives, RCEP has to perform the following functions:
 - (a) To do training in all aspects of educational planning by targeting senior officials and technical staff of the ministries of education at central and local levels (province, district), and other ministries concerned by the education sector, such as planning and finance ministries;
 - (b) To do training in applied educational research, by undertaking fact-finding and analysis work focused on specific needs of GCC countries;
 - (c) To do awareness-raising with regard to specific sector development issues which are of priority for the countries in the Region.
- 1.3. Examination of the available documentation and the interviews conducted with stakeholders shows that these objectives have been endorsed and widely disseminated through all publications, documents, plans, and reports of activities issued by the Centre. These objectives and functions call for the observations exposed in the following paragraphs.
- 1.4. Building national and regional capacity for modern educational planning is the more important objective assigned to RCEP. All the fact-finding work and the feasibility study related to the establishment of RCEP have pointed out to the urgent needs of GCC Member States for capacity building in educational planning and management, likely to help them in formulating their educational policies, in preparing plans, and in designing and implementing education programmes. The needs assessment recently carried out by RCEP in the GCC countries reiterates the same issue.
- 1.5. The training function is considered to be the most important part of the capacity building package. It aims at expanding the number of educational planners and managers trained, either in RCEP or in the countries themselves (intensive

- training courses). The diversity of target groups addressed as well as the diversity of national contexts call for the need to reflect on the necessary diversification of training programmes and models to ensure their relevance to national contexts.
- 1.6. The training in applied educational research is geared towards imparting the necessary skills for those who will undertake fact-finding and analysis work focused on specific needs of the GCC countries. This fact-finding and analysis work aims at identifying, for instance, the challenges facing the educational systems in the Region. The fact-finding and analysis work on these challenges will produce a body of knowledge likely to support the capacity building programmes.
 - 1.7. The activities related to awareness-raising would touch specific sector development issues which are of priority for the countries of the Region. According to the recent needs assessment, and to other sources as well, the issues of quality of education, life-long learning, educational change, leadership, etc. are commonly raised in the GCC countries.
 - 1.8. With regard to access to information on educational planning and management, one cannot but observe that the new knowledge produced by RCEP on some educational planning and management issues, is rather limited for the time being. The two research works sub-contracted to external agencies on “Challenges that educational development programmes are facing in the region”, and, “Abstention of UAE citizens from joining the teaching profession” will be implemented in 2011. Hence, the stressing need to benefit from other relevant sources of information and knowledge published by international organizations and institutions, in particular IIEP. This could be done by making relevant material available to the trainees of the Centre in English and Arabic, including selected translated material into Arabic, and by disseminating material on educational planning and management to education authorities in the region.

2. Training in Educational Planning

- 2.1 Training in educational planning per se, as a peculiar training programme for RCEP, started in 2010, with the beginning of implementation of the “strategic plan” 2010-2012. Yet, as will be seen later on, this training programme does not appear to be clearly defined and structured.
- 2.2 The approach to training, adopted by RCEP for 2010, rests on three major components:
 - (a) The RCEP own training programme;
 - (b) The Gulf States joint training programme; and

- (c) The ad hoc training activities organized in cooperation with UNESCO.
- 2.3 The RCEP own training programme is the first attempt made by RCEP to forge its role and identity as a regional centre for training in educational planning and management. Implemented in 2010, this programme consisted of three training workshops of four days duration for each:
- (i) School mapping and micro-planning;
 - (ii) Educational indicators and education system analysis; and
 - (iii) Strategic leadership.
- 2.4 The participants in the first two workshops came from three GCC countries, including UAE, while the last one was reserved to UAE nationals. These participants were different from one workshop to the other, as response to immediate needs of the concerned persons as revealed by the needs assessment performed throughout the GCC countries, rather than a strategic intervention to form a core of educational planners with basic skills related to the planning function, the training offered constituting a common core of planning competencies to be mastered by these planners.
- 2.5 The Gulf States joint training programme could be conceived as a support training programme to the one conceived by RCEP. Also, in view of its objectives and content, it could be considered as part of the common core of planning competencies. This programme has been organized in cooperation between RCEP and UNESCO Cluster Office in Doha to be implemented in each GCC individual country. It has already been implemented in five countries, the other two (including Yemen⁴) would be covered fall 2011. “Strategic planning and education sector diagnosis” has been chosen as the training topic. Of three days duration, the workshops target staff from educational planning departments.
- 2.6 The ad hoc activities organized in cooperation between RCEP and UNESCO, respond in principle to the priorities of the respective partners and their programmes of activities. With respect to training in educational planning, two workshops/seminars⁵ have been organized in 2010 at RCEP.
- 2.7 The first one concerns a regional seminar on “Education sector strategic planning”, organized in cooperation between RCEP, IIEP and UNEDBAS. Gathering participants from fourteen Arab countries, including all GCC countries, the seminar addressed the issue of common understanding of strategic planning concepts, techniques and methods.

⁴ Yemen is covered by this programme, being member of GCC in education related matters.

⁵ A third one was organized on “Qualitative research”. It will be dealt with in the section of “training in applied educational research.”

- 2.8 A second regional workshop on “Tertiary education statistical indicators”, organized in cooperation between RCEP and UIS and attended by participants from GCC countries, dealt with tertiary education core statistical indicators, following the survey done by UIS in 2009 on tertiary education.
- 2.9 In its session of June 15, 2010, the GB of RCEP adopted a resolution related to the structure of the training programme which shall consist of the following sub-programmes:
- (a) Basic programme composed of six training courses;
 - (b) Support programme based on priority needs of GCC countries as expressed in the needs assessment;
 - (c) Special programme which responds to specific needs of GCC countries.
- 2.10 More details about the basic programme are being provided by RCEP Annual report for 2010. The six “core” courses are conceived to equip the participants with the basic skills necessary for the planning profession. Of five days duration for each, the training courses are supposed to be implemented during a period of six months. The participants will be offered a certificate after successfully completing the core courses, meaning that the participants from each country are the same during the core courses.
- 2.11 As of 2011, RCEP started to implement this new basic programme by recapturing two of the training modules of its own programme for 2010, and the module related to the Gulf States joint programme. These recaptured three modules, together with another three, constitute what could be called the “common core” of the new basic training programme in educational planning and management. The six modules are:
- (i) Strategic analysis;
 - (ii) Evaluation of strategic plans;
 - (iii) Use of educational indicators in education sector diagnosis;
 - (iv) Human resources development;
 - (v) Economics of education; and
 - (vi) Quantitative research methods.
- 2.12 As mentioned earlier, the common core would deal with the same core group of educational planners, despite the fact that the delivery of the six training courses will take place during a period of six months. However, according to the information gathered by the evaluation team, this does not seem to be what is planned. In fact, only one training course of the “common core” has already been implemented in May 2011 (economics of education), the remaining ones will be

- implemented in the second half of 2011, and no details are available on these courses, especially as regards the provisional programme, the content, the training materials, the trainers, the profile of the potential participants, etc.
- 2.13 In addition to the above mentioned modules aimed at the training of the professionals from the various GCC countries, the support programme based on specific priority needs of GCC countries is offering a set of five training courses to be implemented in 2011, only in the UAE. Of five days duration for each, except for educational projects and knowledge management (ten days for each), the respective workshops cover the following topics: management of education projects, knowledge management, strategic leadership, education system analysis and performance improvement, and educational change. Only two workshops have been implemented, the remaining three would take place in the second half of 2011.
- 2.14 With regard to the special programme, supposed to respond to specific needs of GCC countries, nothing is being mentioned in the training programme of RCEP for 2011, issued on January 2011.
- 2.15 With regard to 2012, supposed to be a continuation of 2011, especially in its basic training programme, the team examined a draft entitled “Professional programme in educational planning” (June 2011). This programme consists broadly of four topics:
- (i) Educational planning: contexts and approaches;
 - (ii) Educational sector diagnosis;
 - (iii) Formulation, preparation and implementation of educational policies and plans; and
 - (iv) Monitoring and evaluation of educational policies and plans.
- 2.16 Each topic will last for ten working days during a period of six months for the whole programme. At the end of each topic, each participant will be requested to prepare an “operational” project likely to constitute with the three other projects a model of an educational plan. This means, in principle at least, that the training programme will be dealing with the same core of trainees in the four components.
- 2.17 No more information was available about this programme or any other programme of training activities for 2012, although the draft budget proposed for 2012 foresees the larger amount for what is called “the training plan”.
- 2.18 Although we are dealing with a strategic plan covering a period of three years, one can observe that the training programme in educational planning is changing from one year to the next. Besides this discontinuity, with special reference to the “core” programme, the latter lacks a lot of coherence and integration, especially in

- 2010 and 2011. The draft programme for 2012, imitating roughly that of IIEP, shows, on the contrary, more coherence and integration, leading in principle to the preparation of an educational plan by the trainees. It remains true however, that this draft programme needs to be more elaborated, in connection with other training programmes and activities, to respond more adequately to the decision made by the GB concerning the three foreseen components of RCEP training activities, i.e. a common core training programme, a support training programme responding to the priority needs of the GCC countries, and a provision for specific training activities responding to specific needs of the GCC countries.
- 2.19 Needless to say that the preparation of a coherent and incremental support training programme could rely on the needs assessment recently expressed by GCC countries that are surely still valid, and that RCEP should not undertake needs assessment on short term basis to develop its training programmes. In fact, together with other sources of consultations, the needs already expressed could be used as a sufficient basis for the design of a training programme that should aim at substantial capacity building of planners and managers to become autonomous professionals capable of dealing with daily planning and management matters with ease and competency, leaving to the ministries of education of each of the concerned countries the responsibility of organizing trainings with short term goals or scope.
- 2.20 Given, as mentioned earlier, the lack of core group of professional staff at RCEP, the latter had to rely heavily on external expertise to develop training programmes, to prepare training materials and to deliver the training. The need for a strong long-term core of high-level professionals is urgent. It does not mean putting an end to outsourcing, rather to ensure sustainability in addition to flexibility for particular projects.
- 2.21 The same could be said about training materials. According to the Agreement, the training materials would have been prepared and tested (with UNESCO assistance) on the basis of the training programme components. Some of them would have been translated into Arabic, in consultation with IIEP. Given that this endeavour did not materialize, one could hope that, for 2012 programme, which is rather an imitation of IIEP core programme, the corresponding training materials could be translated into Arabic and adapted to the local contexts. Once elaborated, the draft programme needs to be approved by the GB of RCEP. Hence the urgency to deal with this issue. In fact, although the preparation of the training materials, as foreseen in the Agreement, would be a joint venture between RCEP and IIEP, the initiative to this effect lies within RCEP according to the choices made in its training programme. To this effect, RCEP claims for a clear and stable plan regarding the technical support to be provided to it with due consideration to

- the mechanism of material preparation, and the assessment and testing to be tackled by UNESCO (i.e. procedures, timeline, etc.). Furthermore, RCEP expects that such technical support be provided by UNESCO free of charge, in order to devote the resources available to the Center to the implementation of the training activities.
- 2.22 The analysis of a sample of training courses being implemented by RCEP, with regard to the content and teaching methods, gives the impression that the training is mostly theoretical, teacher-centered, with less emphasis on work-based discussions, mixed with practical exercises. This could be explained partly by the short duration of the corresponding training course. Given that training is focusing mainly on improving the skills, competencies and the performance of individuals in charge of educational planning, the training approach should link learning to the expected tasks and outcomes of participants.
- 2.23 Apart from receiving an immediate feedback from each participant in the training course, through an evaluation form to be filled-in, the Centre does not have any feedback from those who have been trained and returned to their working places. The GB approved, in its session of 15/6/2010 a proposal submitted by the Director, to assess the effect of training. This important endeavour needs to be carefully elaborated together with any other model of assessment.

3. Training in Applied Educational Research

- 3.1 With reference to what has been mentioned earlier, the Centre should do training in applied educational research, as the training being done in all aspects of educational planning. This training should lead to undertake fact-finding and analysis work focused on specific needs of the GCC countries.
- 3.2 Within this framework, a regional workshop was organized in 2010, at RCEP, in cooperation between RCEP and UNEDBAS. Gathering nine participants from nine Arab countries (including Qatar, Sultanate of Oman, UAE and Yemen), the workshop on “Qualitative research” aimed at equipping the participants with the basic skills related to planning and implementing qualitative research work in school classrooms.
- 3.3 Unfortunately, no other training activity related to applied educational research has been organized and no follow-up has been undertaken with the participants to the workshop.
- 3.4 The needs assessment carried-out by RCEP led to the adoption by the Scientific Council (March 2011) of two research topics, to be carried out in 2011 and commissioned to external agencies:

- (i) Challenges that the development of education is facing in the GCC countries;
 - (ii) Abstention of UAE citizens from joining the teaching profession: problems and issues.
- 3.5 Needless to say in this respect that RCEP should resume its training in applied educational research as defined in the Agreement, in order to ensure a critical mass of “researchers” who could, through their work, produce a body of knowledge likely to support the capacity building programmes.

4. Awareness Raising with regard to Specific Sector Development Issues

- 4.1 Within the framework of its strategic plan, RCEP was able to organize in 2010, two “scientific” symposiums covering the two following topics: “Management and implementation of educational reform policies: challenges and best world practices” and “Planning for teachers’ professional development”. Attended by more than 132 participants, the two symposiums were aiming at developing an educational culture, and disseminating information and knowledge about best practices and experiences related to some issues at stake in the GCC countries, e.g. educational reforms and professional development of teachers. The success encountered in the organization of these symposiums, pushed the Centre, after consulting the Scientific Council, to plan for implementing four educational forums in 2011. These forums will deal with the following topics:
- (i) Role of society organizations in the development of education;
 - (ii) Building professional culture of teachers, administrators and school personnel;
 - (iii) Role of action research in teaching-learning process development; and
 - (iv) Making lifelong learning a reality in the GCC countries.
- 4.2. On the other hand, RCEP is planning to hold on November 22-23, 2011 an annual conference on “Education reform: policies, planning and implementation.” Several national, regional and international lecturers have been invited to participate in this important event.

5. Dissemination of Information on Educational Planning and Management

- 5.1 After negotiating with UNESCO, RCEP started in 2010, the translation into Arabic of the following three booklets of the IIEP “Fundamentals in educational planning” series:
- (i) Education privatization: causes, consequences and planning implications;
 - (ii) Reviewing quantitative research to inform education policy processes; and

- (iii)Monitoring educational achievement.
- 5.2. The Arabic edition of the booklets would be ready in the second half of 2011, after assessment of the quality of translation and revision of it by IIEP. Despite the fact that the Arabic version would be online, some one thousand hard copies of each booklet will be produced. Hence, the necessity to have a good distribution plan for these booklets.
 - 5.3. In addition, a Learning Resource Centre has been fully equipped to put at the disposal of trainees, participants, scholars, researchers, etc. all kinds of information and knowledge on educational planning and management available at IIEP or in the Region.
 - 5.4. The work is also in progress to set up a portal likely to facilitate the access to information available at RCEP on educational planning. The work on physical infrastructure, likely to be finished within 3-4 months would facilitate, as planned by RCEP, starting distance training in educational planning and management. However, knowledge resources are still lacking, particularly in Arabic language to feed up this portal.

6. Other Activities

- 6.1 Along with its training activities and even before, RCEP started, since its official inauguration, to extend its services to host a variety of seminars, workshops and short training courses. Some of these seminars and workshops were organized by the MOE in Dubai and many others by local community organizations in the UEA.
- 6.2 Together with the programmes and activities mentioned before (see table 1), these seminars and workshops constitute a wide spectrum of activities that strengthen RCEP relationships with different partners dealing with matters related to education and development, but are likely to increase the operational burden of the Centre.
- 6.3 However, although the service to local educational and social community makes good use of RCEP premises and facilities, it should not divert it from its original and most important function, which is to invest intensively in capacity building in educational planning and management.
- 6.4 It should also be noted that RCEP has been requested to chair a review panel of a research project on “Labour market requirements of national talented cadres” in the UAE. This research project was commissioned by Hamdan Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Foundation and it received the Award for Distinguished Academic

Performance. Chaired by a RCEP staff member, the panel comprised academic staff members from UAE and Sharjah universities.

- 6.5 Should the Centre have a distinguished core group of highly qualified professional staff, recourse to their services in related matters would have been more intense, leading to wider recognition of RCEP as “a house of expertise” able to provide authoritative consultations in its fields of concern, i.e. educational planning, applied educational research, and training skills.

Table 1
Distribution of RCEP activities by type of activity (2007-2011)

Type of activity	2007-2009	2010	2011	Total
Training in educational planning	2	8	17 ¹	27
Training in applied educational research	-	1	–	1
Dissemination of knowledge (scientific symposiums, forums and conferences)	-	2	5 ²	7
Translation of IIEP Fundamentals	-	3	–	3
Establishment of a Learning Resource Center	-	1	–	1
Consultation services	-	1	–	1
Hosting MOE meetings and workshops	40	30	–	70
Hosting other local community meetings and workshops	37	182	–	219
Total	79	228	22	329

Source: RCEP Annual Report 2010

Notes:

1. Eleven training courses are scheduled to take place in the second half of 2011
2. Four educational forums and one conference are scheduled to take place in the second half of 2011
3. The IIEP is presently looking at two translated booklets in order to judge the quality of translation.

7. Extent to which GCC Member States benefited from RCEP Activities, and Contribution of RCEP to Meeting Regional Needs in Educational Planning and Management

- 7.1 As originally foreseen in the Agreement, RCEP shall be at the service of the Member States of the GCC, and possibly other States, to achieve the overall objective of building national and regional capacity for modern educational

- planning. The achievement of this overall objective shall be made possible through training in all aspects of educational planning, and training in applied educational research. The training shall target senior officials and technical staff of ministries of education, local level education officers, and staff concerned with educational planning at other ministries directly related to the education sector, such as planning and finance ministries.
- 7.2 The strategic plan for 2010-2012, with special reference to its training component, was mainly built on the needs assessment carried out by RCEP in the GCC Member States. This is true as well, and to a large extent, for the workshops organized in 2010 at RCEP, by the various UNESCO institutes and offices. The respective workshops and seminars are converging towards building national and regional capacity in educational planning and management (see Table 2).
- 7.3 The analysis of the different workshops and training courses organized in 2010 and part of 2011, shows that some 343 participants took part in these workshops and courses (52,8% of females), 51,6 % of them are UAE nationals. This rather high percentage could be explained by the fact that the UAE are the host country and that the support programme for 2010 and 2011 has been developed to respond to the priority needs of the UAE only.
- 7.4 In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the regional dimension of the training activities implemented in 2010 and 2011 was mainly ensured through activities organized by UNESCO offices and institutes or in cooperation with them. In fact, as may be seen in Table 2, 70% of the participants to the training workshops of regional character organized by the RCEP or at it (a total of 250) concern such activities, the essential bulk of them (a total of 130) being those participating in the Gulf States Joint Programme implemented by RCEP by virtue of a contract with the UNESCO Cluster Office in Doha. Thus, the real coverage of the GCC countries has been only achieved through the association of RCEP with UNESCO offices and institutes.
- 7.5 Generally speaking, the participants to these workshops and courses are coming from educational planning departments, education statistics, and education supervision. A special reference needs to be made to the Strategic leadership workshop, and to the Strategic Planning and Education Sector Diagnosis implemented within the Gulf States Joint Programme. The first one gathered executive leaders and supervisors coming from the central administration as well as from educational districts in the UAE. The second one gathered senior staff of planning departments (directors, deputy-directors, heads of sections), and educational supervision in the GCC countries.
- 7.6 The intensive participation, in terms of number of participants, in the Strategic Planning workshops within the framework of the Gulf States Joint Programme,

- refers to the fact that, the different workshops are being implemented locally, in cooperation with UNESCO Office in Doha. Saudi Arabia and Yemen would be covered during fall 2011, and this would increase the total number of participants to this programme.
- 7.7 The immediate assessment made by the participants at the end of each workshop and training course, with regard mainly to the content and level of achievement of course objectives, is rather positive in general. RCEP is intending to go beyond and to assess the effect of training on individuals in their respective working places. Given its importance to the design of training programmes, this endeavor, together with other models of assessment, needs to be carefully studied and prepared.
 - 7.8 Given the changes that are occurring from one year to the next in the structure of the training programme, the most pressing need is to put the emphasis on the preparation of a well integrated programme of training, based on a thorough analysis of needs and a wide consultation of partners. A thorough review of the individual evaluation forms filled in by the participants, may give also a clearer idea about the needs of educational planners and managers who took part in the different courses already organized. The same could be said about future workshops and courses.
 - 7.9 With the above in mind, it would seem rather important to recall that translating needs and consultations into well designed and specialized training programmes is not an easy task. It requires specific expertise, experience and familiarity with educational planning and management matters, in particular training.
 - 7.10 With main reference to the regional needs expressed by GCC countries, in terms of training in educational planning and management, one could say that RCEP is, generally speaking, in the good direction, but in a very unstable manner. As seen earlier, the training activities are prepared on a yearly basis and are changing from one year to the next, let alone the lack of information still reigning with regard to 2012 training programme.
 - 7.11 As far as training in applied educational research is concerned, only one workshop has been organized by UNEDBAS in cooperation with RCEP, to start building the capacities of the GCC respective countries.
 - 7.12 The main problem, therefore, is not the availability of training or the number of courses and workshops, but the existence of a well-designed and integrated training programme, be it in educational planning or applied educational research.

Table 2

Distribution of participants by training workshops, country and gender in the GCC countries (2010-2011)

Training Workshop	COUNTRY														Grand Total	F
	Bahrain		Kuwait		Oman		Qatar		Saudi Arabia		UAE		Yemen			
	T	F	T	F	T	F	T	F	T	F	T	F	T	F		
RCEP Regional Programme for GCC Countries																
School mapping					3				5		11	7			19	7
Educational indicators					4				3		21	13			28	13
Economics of education	3	3			3	1	2		3		18	14			29	18
RCEP Support Programme - National UAE Activities																
Strategic leadership											27	14			27	14
Management of ed. projects											28	17			28	17
Knowledge management											38	10			38	10
Cooperation with UNESCO Institutes and Offices																
Strategic planning & ESD (Doha Office)	27	14	22	17	33	12	25	20			23	19			130	82
Strategic planning (IIEP and UNEDBAS)	2	1	2	1	2		2	1	2		3	1	2		15	4
Tertiary indicators (UIS)	2	2	1		4	2	2		2	1	4	2	2	1	17	8
Qualitative research (UNEDBAS)	2	1			2	1			2	1	4	4	2	1	12	8
Grand total	36	21	25	18	51	16	31	21	17	2	177	101	6	2	343	181

Source: RCEP-Report of activities-2010 and workshops files for 2011.

8. Assessment of RCEP Programmes and Activities by the stakeholders

- 8.1 The questionnaires sent to the members of the GB and to the Secretary-Generals of the National Commissions in the GCC countries (except Yemen that have recently joined the GCC and that is not represented in the GB and has marginally participated in the activities of the Centre) tried to tackle the opinions of these RCEP stakeholders concerning various aspects of its functioning (see full details in Annexes 3 and 4).
- 8.2 Satisfaction as regards the organizational aspects of the functioning of RCEP, such as the preparation of the strategic plan and other documents of the Centre, mechanisms of cooperation, and organization of activities (12 items for the members of the GB and 7 items for the NatComs);
- 8.3 Satisfaction towards and usefulness of the various programs and activities implemented by the Centre (9 items for each category of stakeholders);
- 8.4 Contribution of RCEP to the achievement of the objectives for which it was established (4 items for each category of stakeholders);
- 8.5 The nature of the competencies developed by the participants to the activities of RCEP, in terms of acquisition of knowledge, development of skills, and acquaintance with experiences (3 items for the NatComs only).
- 8.6 In each case, the respondent was provided with a choice indicating that he/she has no knowledge about the concerned item.
- 8.7 Table 3 provides the results of the survey that were answered by about 64% of the concerned persons.

Table 3

Acquaintance and Satisfaction of the RCEP Governing Board Members and National Commissions in the GCC Member States with Various Aspects concerning RCEP

		Governing Board Members		National Commissions	
		Acquaintance (%)	Satisfaction (%)	Acquaintance (%)	Satisfaction (%)
1	Organizational Aspects	79	67.8	90	81
2	Programs and Activities	57.3	64.3	67	72
3	Achievement of Objectives	68.7	65.9	100	77.5
4	Benefits to Participants	--	--	100	82.5

- 8.8 The examination of the stakeholders replies show a higher level of overall satisfaction among the National Commissions than among the members of the Governing Board, the highest score being the one related to the competencies acquired by the participants to the activities of the Centre according to the National Commissions that stands at 82.5%, closely followed by a score of 81% provided by the National Commissions to the organizational capacity of the Centre.
- 8.9 It is striking to discover that the lowest scores are the ones expressed by the GB members as regards all the aspects that were assessed. In fact, these scores stand between 67.8% for the organizational aspects and 64.3% for the programs and activities, while the satisfaction concerning the achievement of objectives stands at 65.9%.
- 8.10 The above mentioned two highest scores mean that RCEP is able to competently organize regional activities and that, when these are implemented, they bring benefits to the participants, whereas the proposed programs and activities themselves seem to be assessed as not sufficiently contributing to the achievement of the RCEP objectives.
- 8.11 It is however striking to see that the National Commissions of the GCC countries are aware of the various programs and activities of RCEP at only 67% and that the members of the GB themselves indicate to a relatively low degree of acquaintance with the RCEP programs and activities (57.3%), and the achievement of objectives (68.7%).
- 8.12 The above mentioned figures indicate without doubt lack of transparency and a problem in communication between RCEP and its immediate stakeholders.
- 8.13 When asked about the priorities for future action of RCEP, members of the GB express the following views:
- The need for a closer cooperation with national partners in the various ministries of education in the GCC countries, through the establishment of efficient networking mechanisms to enhance joint actions and multiply cooperation activities and benefits;
 - The need for the programs and activities, and publications to be closer, in terms of relevance and quality, to the best practices around the world in general, and to what is offered by the IIEP in particular, to the benefit of the Member States of the Region;
 - The need to enhance the regional character of RCEP programs and activities to better respond to the needs of the various GCC countries;

- The need for RCEP to develop high level competencies in educational planning, inside it and in relation to it, to become a true “house of expertise” in educational planning;
- The need for RCEP to move from short-term training towards more substantial training aiming at the constitution of a critical mass of highly competent planners in the various aspects of educational planning, with the enforcement of professional conditions for the participation in its training activities;
- The need for RCEP to enhance the communication with the various stakeholders within the ministries of education in the GCC countries, particularly through the development of its website and the provision in it of information about its activities as well as the provision of substantive materials concerning its mandate.

8.14 The National Commissions in the GCC countries have expressed similar views as to the following aspects of RCEP functioning and activities:

- Increase regional activities to widen the opportunities for the planners and trainees from the different GCC countries to meet with planning experts, and benefit from the various experiences and innovations;
- More consultation with the MOEs of the GCC countries, through the NatComs, in order to design training programs and activities that better respond to the needs of these countries;
- Move from short-term training to more substantial training;
- Provide for a data base on educational planning in the region and documentation on best practices, including the good ones in the GCC countries;
- Provide for a regular electronic periodical about RCEP programs, activities, and publications to be widely disseminated to all stakeholders across the GCC countries.

8.15 However, in view of their role as link between RCEP and the ministries of education, some of the NatComs have expressed the need for RCEP to develop a comprehensive program of activities well ahead of the time of its implementation and to disseminate it across the GCC countries, in order for the various ministries to undertake the necessary administrative actions to ensure participation in the foreseen activities.

9. Future plans

- 9.1 In terms of time, RCEP is almost at 50 % of its strategic plan implementation and its 2011 work plan. The picture is somehow different when it comes to the activities. A lot of them are being planned for the second half of 2011: training workshops, educational forums, consultations, annual conference, hosting meetings and workshops etc. One could ask, to what extent RCEP would be able, with its limited staff, to cover and manage effectively this wide range of activities:
- (i) The design and preparation of the training programme for 2012, last and final year of the strategic plan;
 - (ii) The design and preparation of a well integrated training programme as a whole; and
 - (iii) The preparation of a medium-term strategic plan (starting in 2013) that could go beyond three years, the financial cycle adopted in the UAE, and may cover six years of time.
- 9.2 All the points mentioned above, and many others, constitute real challenges to RCEP when it comes to future plans, given their implications on the orientations of RCEP strategy, programmes and activities.
- 9.3 Except for the budgetary proposal for 2012 that provides for the titles of the main projects proposed to be implemented, no action has so far been initiated by RCEP to plan for the future that will start in six months. Apart from the intention to launch in the near future a second needs assessment, and the intention to launch an intensive training programme akin to the core IIEP programme, the content of the training plan for 2012 has not yet been determined. Assuming that this plan is designed and adopted by the GB, is the remaining time sufficient enough to develop the programme, to identify the trainers and to develop the appropriate training materials, let alone the other pressing issues mentioned before?
- 9.4 Keeping up with a minimum of stability highly needed by RCEP, one could say that the needs expressed recently by GCC countries are still valid. Together with other sources of consultations, they could be used as a sufficient basis for the design of the training programme. Combined with IIEP long experience in educational planning related matters, they may also constitute a good basis for the development and launching of this comprehensive and lengthy process. Although what has been done by RCEP does not cover but a part of its stated objectives, this part with all the successes and shortcomings shall constitute a valuable input to that process. It remains true, however, that this process needs to be launched urgently and to concentrate all efforts on that, as well as other issues mentioned before. The future starts now, as it is commonly repeated.

- 9.5 Should RCEP move, as planned, towards offering what is called “the Professional Training Program” akin to the IIEP “Advanced Training Programme” (ATP) or the “Specialized Courses Programme” (SCP), it should intimately associate IIEP to this endeavor, as set in paragraph 3 of Article V of the Agreement, in order to ensure the quality of “the course content, the profiles of the trainers, the methods of organizing courses, and the teaching materials”. In addition, and as set in paragraph 2 of the same Article, it is hopeful that the training take place in Arabic language, with adaptation to the local contexts, to avoid duplication with IIEP which usually provides the training in English or French, while the IIEP’s Office in Buenos Aires offers a Regional Training Course (RTC) for Latin American professionals in Spanish language.

Chapter Three

Relationships between RCEP and UNESCO

1. Significance of UNESCO to RCEP

- 1.1 It could be stated without doubt that support to RCEP in the UAE and from the stakeholders throughout the GCC countries could not be achieved if the Centre was not operating under the auspices of UNESCO.
- 1.2 In fact, since 2002, the legal and professional documentation related to the Centre makes constant reference to UNESCO in general, and to the kinship of the RCEP to the IIEP in particular.
- 1.3 The Director of RCEP, as well as its staff, show their pride to have a Centre operating under the auspices of UNESCO.
- 1.4 Also, the persons met during the mission to the Centre, starting with H.E. the Minister of Education, have all stressed the importance they attach to the status of the Centre and to its close association with UNESCO.
- 1.5 Moreover, they have all requested that UNESCO play a more active role in the functioning of the Centre, particularly through the means explained in the following paragraphs.
- 1.6 The need for UNESCO to play an active role in the identification of highly qualified persons to be hired as professional staff of the Centre. These persons should be able to develop and implement training programs of high quality and responding to the needs of the GCC countries. It is hoped that developing and implementing such programs would provide the Centre with a personal identity akin to the IIEP and that distinguishes the RCEP from the other training centers of the Region. They all expressed the hope that the RCEP would become a prominent center of radiance and influence in the area of educational planning in the GCC countries and the other Arab States.
- 1.7 The need for RCEP to base its action on the extensive work that has been performed by IIEP and that has proven its efficiency at the world level, particularly as regards IIEP educational programs, training materials, and expertise in training. All stakeholders met have considered the IIEP achievements as invaluable for RCEP.
- 1.8 The stakeholders have also evoked their hope of maintaining and enhancing the relationships between RCEP and the various UNESCO components, particularly the Doha Cluster Office for GCC countries, but also the Regional Bureau for Education in Beirut (UNEDBAS), the UIS, and possibly, IBE and UIL, each in its

area of concern and as much as the cooperation with these components serve the objectives for which RCEP was established.

2. Significance of RCEP to UNESCO

- 2.1 H. E. the UAE Minister of Education has stressed that the RCEP should be considered by UNESCO as a partner that could “enhance UNESCO’s vision and objectives in the Arab region, in general, and in the GCC countries, in particular”.
- 2.2 The UNESCO staff members interviewed within the framework of this evaluation have expressed their views on RCEP in various terms that do not match the high expectations of H.E. the Minister, although it appears clearly that they consider RCEP as a serious partner for the implementation of UNESCO’s programme in the GCC countries and beyond.
- 2.3 The most salient support to the association between RCEP and UNESCO comes from the main substantive partner of RCEP, namely the IIEP. In fact, it was communicated to the evaluation team that “IIEP’s position has constantly been that it should support RCEP”.
- 2.4 In fact, it is widely believed by the various UNESCO components that “given adequate human resources, RCEP can play a vital role in capacity development in educational planning and management in the Arab States”. However, the lack of program staff and the limited substantive capacity constitute a major handicap as concerns the strengthening of cooperation with it by the various UNESCO components.
- 2.5 In fact, for the time being, the most important assets of RCEP in the views of UNESCO components, in terms of added value, have been its facilities (including meeting rooms, and IT equipment and services), logistical and organizational capacity (including arrangements for visas and travel, accommodation, duplication of training materials, etc.), greeting and moral support, visibility and coverage by media, that make it attractive as venue for holding the activities planned by the UNESCO various components, although its location quite away from Dubai and Sharjah City Center necessitates special arrangements for transportation that have been handled with efficiency by RCEP to the clear satisfaction of the participants to the various events organized by it.
- 2.6 It should be mentioned that these assets are noted by the various stakeholders concerned with the Centre.

3. Contribution of RCEP to UNESCO Priorities and Programmes

- 3.1 UNESCO provides a variety of capacity-building services within the ministries in charge of education and training, and for the benefit of various national stakeholders. This is done through its networked central units, institutes and field offices.
- 3.2 Also, as mentioned above, according to the “Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Functioning of Institutes and Centres under the auspices of UNESCO, (General Conference, 2005, Ref, 33C/22), category II institutes and centers, among which RCEP, are expected to contribute to the achievement of the strategic goals of UNESCO’s programmes and priorities each in its field of competence.
- 3.3 In the field of educational policies and strategies that are the main thrust of RCEP, according to UNESCO documentation⁶, “the current focus is put on strengthening national capacities to design coherent education policies and credible sector-wide plans within the framework of EFA and with necessary inter-sectoral linkages. The areas of technical assistance and capacity-building include, among others:
- Education management information systems;
 - Education sector analyses and policy reviews;
 - Education policy formulation;
 - Policy simulation and resource projection techniques;
 - Educational expenditure and finance frameworks;
 - Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;
 - SWAps and donor coordination. »
- 3.4 Examination of the activities undertaken by RCEP during the duration of the present Agreement has shown (as explained above) that the Centre has been slow to start its contribution to UNESCO priorities and programmes concerning capacity building in educational planning and management. The most salient contribution has been in 2010 and is to be matched in 2011.
- 3.5 The most salient programme fitting within UNESCO priorities concerns the capacity building programme implemented by RCEP on behalf of the Doha Cluster Office. In fact, according to the documentation provided by the two

⁶ See, in particular, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/planning-and-managing-education/policy-and-planning/strategy/>

parties to the evaluation team, “the objective of the training has been increasing knowledge on collection, analysis and management of data, education sector analysis, preparation of ED national plans, and monitoring and evaluating existing ED national plans”.

- 3.6 Also, as mentioned earlier, other activities performed by RCEP contribute to the achievement of UNESCO priorities in this field, although seemingly not in an integrated manner and akin to the high expectations of UNESCO and stakeholders concerning the Centre.

4. UNESCO Support to RCEP

- 4.1 According to Article XI of the Agreement, the Organization is supposed to “lend mutually-agreed support to the operation of the Centre”. This support takes mainly the form of technical assistance likely to help ensuring a smooth and efficient functioning of the Centre throughout its life as described in the following paragraphs.
- 4.2 During the preparatory phase, UNESCO support entails the following:
- (i) “identification of suitable professional staff”;
 - (ii) “preparation and testing of course materials”;
 - (iii) “training of core professional staff”; and
 - (iv) “selection of material to be translated into Arabic for purposes of dissemination of educational planning information in the region”.
- 4.3 During the launching phase, this support consists of the following:
- (i) “technical assistance for the running-in of the training courses”;
 - (ii) “expertise to assess the quality and relevance of the training activities”; and
 - (iii) advice on “suitable ways to strengthen (the Centre’s) performance”.
- 4.4 During the normal operations phase, the Organization’s support would take the following forms:
- (i) “provide the Centre with relevant materials published by the Organization in their existing forms”;
 - (ii) “provide or assist in obtaining technical assistance, for the development of training materials and for participation as resource persons or guest lecturers in training activities”;
 - (iii) “provide advice on research and training activities of the Center at the request of its Director”;

- (iv) “associate staff of the Centre with relevant UNESCO activities in the region and elsewhere”; and
 - (v) “provide evaluative advice on the performance of the Centre with a view to assisting it in reaching and/or maintaining high levels of professional performance”.
- 4.5 In addition, according to the same Article of the Agreement, “the Organization shall facilitate the access of the Centre to the relevant know-how and services of its own institutes and Regional Offices, in particular those of IIEP, UIS, UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education, UIL, UNEDBAS and UNESCO Office in Doha”.
- 4.6 To whatever phase RCEP may now belong, and in light of what really happened during the last 3-4 years, the sequence of technical assistance to be provided by UNESCO-IIEP to RCEP did not go the way indicated in the Agreement. If we consider the present phase as a launching phase, which coincides with RCEP strategic plan 2010-2012, the previous phase (2007-2009) could be considered as the preparatory phase. During that phase, two major activities were supposed to be implemented: identification and hiring of core professional staff (3-4) and their training at IIEP’s Advanced Training Program, and preparation and testing of course materials and selection of some material to be translated into Arabic.
- Mutually agreed/at RCEP initiative/Refrained because of cost (voir commentaire 2.21)
- 4.7 Unfortunately, these activities have not yet been implemented as foreseen in the Agreement. The only positive aspect in this respect is the possible recruitment of one expert in educational planning within the next 3-4 months, to which UNESCO has not yet been associated in any form. The visit paid by two RCEP experts to IIEP on November 20-25, 2008, could not be considered as a training per se.
- 4.8 As for the provision of materials published by the Organization, UNEDBAS will go farther than what is foreseen in the Agreement, through its intention to provide RCEP, in the next few months, with five modules of IIEP training materials translated into Arabic and ready to be used.
- 4.9 With special reference to the present phase which started with the strategic plan and the launching by RCEP of its own training activities, UNESCO-IIEP was supposed to assist RCEP in the running-in of training courses and to provide expertise to assess the quality and relevance of training activities. This also did not materialize. The external expertise hired to run the training courses of RCEP in educational planning and management may not offer all the guarantee required to ensure quality and relevance. RCEP did select three booklets from the

- “Fundamentals in educational planning” IIEP series to be translated into Arabic. IIEP is now in the process of assessing the quality of translation of two booklets and decide whether they can be published or not.
- 4.10 So far, the IIEP organized in 2009, at RCEP, a two-week training workshop for UNESCO Education Sector staff working in the Arab region and a number of African countries, in order to develop their capacity in education policy formulation and planning. The same could be said about IIEP-UNEDBAS regional seminar, organized at RCEP in 2010, on strategic planning in education, and UIS workshop on tertiary education statistical indicators in 2010 too. UNEDBAS is planning to organize, at RCEP also, a consultation meeting on EFA and adult literacy, on July 2011. This panoply of training workshops and meetings being organized at RCEP is a recognition of RCEP’s role in the Gulf region in educational planning and a certain kind of support to it, in exchange of logistical, organizational and moral support provided by RCEP to the organizers. However, we are far from the kind of technical assistance foreseen in the Agreement.
- 4.11 The picture is somehow different with regard to the cooperation between RCEP and UNESCO Office in Doha. RCEP is intellectually leading the Gulf States joint programme on strategic planning, to be repeated seven times, through external expertise. UNESCO Office in Doha is providing organizational and financial support. Belonging to the same sub-region and, sharing to a large extent the same preoccupations, makes, may be, the cooperation and partnership easier.

PART TWO - RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recommendation concerning the Status and Structure of RCEP

- 1.1 RCEP has originally been established to satisfy the pressing needs of the GCC Member States and possibly other States, in capacity development in educational planning and management.
- 1.2 During the last 2-3 years, RCEP was able to train around 343 educational planners and managers from the GCC countries, through its own training programme or through training activities implemented by UNESCO Offices and Institutes, in cooperation with it.
- 1.3 According to the needs assessments carried out recently by RCEP, and to other sources of information, the needs are still high and becoming more and more diversified.
- 1.4 The anticipated future developments of education in the Region are urging both Member States and RCEP to expand the pool of educational planners and managers, for design, implementation and monitoring of educational policies and plans.
- 1.5 All the persons met or interviewed would like the Centre to continue operating under the auspices of UNESCO, but to perform better, by adopting the necessary measures likely to help it overcome the difficulties it faced and to get a new push.
- 1.6 In view of the evaluation made, of the significance of UNESCO to RCEP and the significance of RCEP to UNESCO, and to the future prospects of RCEP if the other recommendations made in this report are adopted and put into action,

RECOMMENDATION 1A

The evaluation team recommends that the Agreement between the Government of the UAE and UNESCO on the operation of RCEP as a UNESCO Category II Centre be renewed according to the Resolution 35C/103, 2009 ⁽⁷⁾.

- 1.7 The Parties should however pay a particular attention to the future organizational structure of the Centre.

⁷ Resolution adopted by the General Conference concerning the new Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for UNESCO's Engagement with Institutes and Centres under its auspices (Category II) and its annexes.

- 1.8 In fact, the organization foreseen in the Agreement has not yet been enacted. Furthermore, the Governing Board has adopted, in the absence of the representatives of UNESCO, a resolution calling for a new organizational structure, putting particularly in place a Scientific Council essentially composed of external members coming from the academic field, and two administrative units in support to the Director of the Centre.
- 1.9 Although the proposed new structure may be considered as entailing modifications to the Agreement that shall “be discussed between UNESCO and the RCEP and agreed upon in writing” as set in paragraph 3 of Article XI of the Agreement, the evaluation team considers that the bodies introduced by the proposed new structure are not incompatible with the structure foreseen in the Agreement, and could be considered as internal arrangements for the functioning of the Centre, provided that the roles, duties and responsibilities of each component of the structure are clearly set to avoid conflict of prerogatives. In this regard, the most important status to be clarified concerns the relationships between the collective leadership to be exercised by the senior staff of the Centre according to Article VII of the Agreement and the newly proposed Scientific Council.
- 1.10 In view of the above,

RECOMMENDATION 1B

The evaluation team recommends the following:

- Article V of the Agreement, concerning the organization of the Centre, be respected as is, even though the foreseen sections are put in place progressively;
- The senior professional staff members (chiefs of sections) be hired as soon as possible, in order to enable them exercise, with the Director of the Centre, the collective leadership as foreseen in Article VII of the Agreement;
- The Scientific Council and the two administrative units proposed by the resolution of the Governing Board be considered as internal arrangements for the functioning of the Centre to which UNESCO is invited to adhere with no objections;
- The power structure of the Centre be defined according to the following lines:
 - The Director and the senior professional staff constitute, at the upstream level, the think tank of the Centre, in charge of preparing and proposing the Centre’s programmes of action, and, at the downstream level, the chief executives responsible for the implementation of the Centre’s programmes adopted by the Governing Board;

- The Scientific Council, composed of external experts, to be endorsed by UNESCO as part of agreed upon modus operandi of the Centre, should act, as foreseen in the Governing Board resolution, as a consultative body that provide advice on the programmes of the Centre proposed by the collective leadership as defined in the Agreement;
- The Governing Board continues to hold the decision powers.

2. Recommendation concerning the Functional Autonomy of RCEP

- 2.1 As originally foreseen in the Agreement, the Centre shall be an autonomous institution within the legal context of the host country, the UAE.
- 2.2 This autonomy manifests itself through the legal capacity of the Centre to contract, and to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property.
- 2.3 In the present situation, practically speaking, the staff members of RCEP are considered as officials and employees of the MOE in the UAE, being posted at RCEP on detachment or secondment. They enjoy the same scales of salary and compensations applied to nationals and expatriates.
- 2.4 With regard to financial management, the Centre does not have its own budget, despite the fact that its financial resources are being secured by the MOE to cover the costs of personnel, maintenance, programmes, etc. according to the strategic objectives of its strategic plan 2010-2012.
- 2.5 This insufficient functional autonomy, together with other causes, translated itself in a rather long delay in recruiting its core professional staff. One good sign however has happened when the Director of RCEP has been authorized to open a special account where funds allotted by UNESCO Office in Doha to implement the Gulf States joint training programme have been channeled.
- 2.6 Moreover, His Excellency Mr Humaid Mohammad AL-QUTAMI, Minister of Education and Chairman of RCEP GB, is in favor of granting the Centre the financial autonomy it needs, in terms of opening a special account where all funds could be channeled.
- 2.7 These positive signs corroborate the shared feeling of persons met or interviewed that the centers that have worked most successfully have generally had a significant level of autonomy in staff recruitment and financial management.

- 2.8 While the direct link of the Centre to the UAE MOE has its advantages in terms of the support provided to the Centre by the Ministry, this link appears to be hindering the development of the Centre as regional entity.
- 2.9 In view of the evaluation made, the opinions gathered and the willingness of UAE authority to grant full autonomy to the Centre,

RECOMMENDATION 2

The evaluation team recommends that the functional autonomy of RCEP be strengthened in terms of staff recruitment and financial management, in order for RCEP to plan and implement more effectively its programmes and activities; the GB of RCEP should examine the appropriate modalities for granting the Centre with the necessary functional autonomy, particularly in terms of staff recruitment and financial management.

3. Recommendation concerning the Regional Character of RCEP

- 3.1 The regional character of RCEP is emphasized in the Agreement. RCEP shall be at the service of the GCC Member States in developing national and regional capacity for modern educational planning.
- 3.2 A sizeable number of the training activities implemented by RCEP for its own, or in cooperation with UNESCO Offices and Institutes are attended, although unevenly, by GCC Member States participants.
- 3.3 However, the list of RCEP staff, as of June 2011, does not show any staff member coming from GCC countries. The GB may examine, in cooperation with Ministries of Education, UNESCO National Commissions and Higher Education Institutions in the GCC countries, the possibility of opening employment at RCEP, especially in the leading positions, to GCC citizens.
- 3.4 A variety of employment modalities could be envisaged: short-term contracts, secondment of trainers or researchers, associate experts, visiting fellows, etc. This would strengthen the relationship and partnership with relevant ministries, organizations and institutions in the Region, and ensure more synergy and relevance in the design and implementation of programmes and activities.
- 3.5 Another aspect of the regional character to be reinforced is related to financial resources. As seen earlier, the bulk of the RCEP financial resources is being

covered by the financial contribution of the UAE Government. With the anticipated expansion of its training programme activities in the future, RCEP might well need additional funds. The GB may examine the possibility of ensuring these additional funds through contributions to be made by the MOEs of the GCC countries, according to their needs and to the training programmes offered by RCEP, or through raising funds to be earmarked for specific issues. This would give RCEP the latitude to develop its programmes and to launch innovative projects.

- 3.6 In view of the evaluation made, and akin to the initial purpose for which RCEP was established,

RECOMMENDATION 3

The evaluation team recommends that the regional character of RCEP be enhanced, especially by opening the leading positions in the Centre to regional candidates and by seeking financial contributions from GCC Governments, according to their needs and to the Centre's programme of activities.

4. Recommendations concerning RCEP Functions, Programmes and Activities

- 4.1 Since its official inauguration, RCEP was keen to strengthen its relationships with the Ministry of Education and the local community organizations by hosting several activities organized by them.
- 4.2 RCEP did the same as well by hosting some regional workshops and seminars organized by UNESCO entities in the Arab region and elsewhere (UNESCO Offices in Beirut and Doha, IIEP and UIS).
- 4.3 The attempts made by RCEP in 2010 and 2011 to develop its own training programme in educational planning and management are still in need of more integration.
- 4.4 Pressing dates for RCEP appear as follows:
- (i) For the year 2012, the training programme is still a skeleton, and at best, in draft form. Time is running short for the final design of this programme, the identification of trainers, and the preparation of training materials.
 - (ii) The year 2012 is the last and final year of RCEP strategic plan (2010 – 2012). This means that the lengthy process of preparing a new (medium-term)

strategic plan, which could cover two financial cycles of three years, should start immediately.

- (iii) In the year 2012, RCEP is at the crossroads to reorient its training activities towards a more coherent and integrated training programme, in harmony with the strategic framework and directions of its new medium-term plan.
- 4.5 In order to deal with the above mentioned urgent activities concomitantly, RCEP needs to prepare a well-conceived project document for its medium-term plan, particularly with detailed and clear objectives, activities, target beneficiaries, training materials needed, human resources needed, time frame, and budget.
- 4.6 The plan should foresee training activities that would respect the following main lines:
- (i) The development of a core training programme that reflects the identity of RCEP and its aspiration to become a centre of expertise in educational planning in the region, and address the needs of the GCC Member States;
 - (ii) The strengthened cooperation with the relevant components of UNESCO, globally and regionally, and with other relevant organizations in the Region;
 - (iii) The cooperation with local community organizations in the UAE, in particular the MOE.
- 4.7 This plan should respond to the priority needs of the GCC Member States in terms of capacity building for educational planning and applied educational research in a definite and systematic manner, although it should provide for satisfying emergent and ad hoc needs through consultative services and the organization of training activities to respond to specific needs.
- 4.8 This project document should also encompass clear terms of reference for the people who will be involved in its implementation, including job descriptions for the identification of suitable programme specialists likely to implement the training programme.
- 4.9 UNESCO – IIEP should be closely associated with this planning process, in line with the respective clauses of the Agreement, especially with regard to the identification of the specific expertise needed to develop the project document, and afterwards the identification of the suitable staff and training materials to implement it.
- 4.10 Once elaborated, the project needs to be validated with the educational authorities of the GCC Member States before final adoption by the GB.
- 4.11 Furthermore, the GB could launch a wide consultation process with all relevant partners in the region, particularly the relevant UNESCO constituencies at the

global and regional levels, and with sister organizations such as ABEGS and ALECSO, in order to discuss the medium-term strategy and its related training programmes, and to establish cooperation agreements for its implementation, including participation in the financing of its activities. This consultation process is likely to strengthen the cooperation and partnership between RCEP and relevant partners and stakeholders in the region.

- 4.12 In view of the evaluation made, and akin to the objectives for which RCEP was established,

RECOMMENDATION 4

The evaluation team recommends that RCEP launches, as soon as possible, with UNESCO – IIEP and UNEDBAS assistance, the preparation of a full-fledged project document that will define a new medium-term strategic plan for the Centre, including the design of a well-integrated training programme in educational planning and management and in applied educational research, that would be the base for strengthened presence in the GCC Member States and cooperation with their MOEs, and for enhanced cooperation with the various concerned UNESCO entities, specifically the UNESCO offices in Doha and Beirut, IIEP, and UIS, and other organizations and institutions at the regional and local levels. This project document should be developed according to the usual lines adopted in the UN system, particularly with detailed and clear objectives, activities, target beneficiaries, training material needed (and strategy to develop it), human resources needed (i.e. a comprehensive staffing table with detailed post descriptions), time frame, performance indicators, and budget.

5. Recommendation concerning the Development by RCEP of an Effective Communication Strategy

- 5.1 Being a two-way process, communication is intended to ensure visibility of RCEP mandate, programme and activities, as well as to ensure feedback from stakeholders.
- 5.2 The assessment of RCEP programme and activities by the stakeholders has shown, as mentioned earlier, a lack of transparency and a problem of communication between RCEP and its immediate stakeholders, e.g. the members of the GB and the NatComs. The problem could be more acute with a wider sphere of stakeholders.
- 5.3 Besides the CD-Roms that contain relevant information on RCEP, its mandate and activities, RCEP is in the process of setting up a portal likely to facilitate the access to

- information available on RCEP and its programme, and to launch, as planned, distance training in educational planning.
- 5.4 RCEP should however think of a varied set of communication formats, including the website and CD-Roms, that would ensure more effectiveness in reaching wide audiences, such as a regular electronic periodical, quarterly newsletter, temporary web pages that complement training activities, fact sheets, etc.
 - 5.5 The communication strategy should also entail clear identification of the audiences targeted by it, beginning with the members of the GB, and encompassing the major stakeholders concerned by the Centre in the GCC countries, such as the NatComs, the policy and decision makers, the high and medium level planning professionals, etc.
 - 5.6 In view of the evaluation made, and in order to ensure a rightful visibility of RCEP, and the quality and timeliness of information,

RECOMMENDATION 5

The evaluation team recommends that RCEP develop an appropriate communication strategy likely to ensure better visibility of RCEP mandate and activities, and valuable feedback from stakeholders.

6. Recommendation to UNESCO

- 6.1 According to the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for UNESCO's Engagement with Institutes and Centers under its auspices (category II), RCEP should contribute to the achievement of the strategic objectives related to UNESCO's programmes and priorities in education. The resolution 35 C/22, 2009 stresses the need to identify the nature and scope of the contribution to be made. The renewal of the agreement would be the occasion to clarify the nature and scope of the contribution of RCEP.
- 6.2 On the other hand, the Agreement mentions in detail the kind of technical assistance to be provided by UNESCO – IIEP to RCEP in order to ensure quality and relevance of training activities and a high level of professional performance. This framework of technical support should be reactivated in the new agreement, with special reference to the following aspects:
 - (i) More active participation of UNESCO – IIEP in the recruitment process of senior staff through detailed post descriptions and requirements, using for instance UNESCO standard form, and in the identification of suitable candidates;

- (ii) More active participation in the training of professional staff at IIEP;
 - (iii) More active participation of IIEP in the preparation and testing of training materials.
- 6.3 Furthermore, since RCEP is supposed to contribute to the achievement of the strategic objectives related to UNESCO's programmes and priorities in education as mentioned above, and in view of the fact that the success stories of the Centre at the regional level are directly linked to its association with UNESCO institutes and offices in the Region, namely the Doha Cluster Office for GCC countries and the Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States in Beirut (UNEDBAS), it seems logical that the RCEP be associated with the actions of these institutes and offices at all stages of the planning cycle, particularly in the programming phase (preparation of the medium-term strategy and the C5), and the implementation phase (as full partner in its areas of concern).
- 6.4 In view of the evaluation made, and akin to the UNESCO Strategy concerning the role of Category II centers and institutes,

RECOMMENDATION 6

The evaluation team recommends that UNESCO reinforces its support to RCEP, to enhance the contribution of the Centre to UNESCO's programmes and priorities, to ensure the quality and relevance of its training activities, and to assist it towards the attainment of the objectives for which it was established.

Notwithstanding the support to be provided by IIEP as concerns substantive matters, the Director General may wish to consider ways and means to involve more actively RCEP in the programming cycle of UNESCO activities in the GCC countries, as well as to consider involving UNESCO more actively in the programming cycle of RCEP through the designation of the Director of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States in Beirut as her representative to the GB of RCEP.

Annex 1

RCEP institutional evaluation Terms of Reference

Duties and responsibilities or assignments:

In line with the 35 C/Resolution concerning the Integrated Comprehensive Strategy for UNESCO's Engagement with Institutes and Centres under its Auspices, RCEP (Regional Centre for Educational Planning) is expected to renew the agreement between UNESCO and the United Arab Emirates in December 2011. According to the Strategy, a review shall be carried out at least six months prior to the expiration of the agreement. In this connection, a lead consultant shall conduct the whole evaluation process and submit an analytical report on the review with conclusions and recommendations by **30 June 2011**. The lead consultant shall:

1. Undertake a pre-evaluation visit to RCEP on 22nd of May 2011 and collect relevant documents and partners to be contacted
2. organize a visit to RCEP together with a second evaluator before on 14-16 June 2011, interview relevant RCEP staff and partners on programme of work, activities and publications, the significance of (and the relationships between) RCEP to UNESCO, and RCEP's future plans in light of their contribution to the achievements of UNESCO and Education Sector priorities;
3. assess RCEP's institutional legal status (reference to Article II of its Agreement with UNESCO), objectives (Article IV), organization (Articles V, VI and VIII) sustainability (both human and financial: Articles VII, IX and X).
4. analyze the quality of relevant documents / publications produced by RCEP;
5. develop and send questionnaire to National Commissions in the Gulf States, the RCEP governing board members, ABEGS and other relevant RCEP partners;
6. conduct a desk review on the regional needs of education and education planning and management, and analyze the RCEP's related contribution in the past five years;
7. interview relevant UNESCO staff (particularly IIEP, Beirut Office and Doha Office) about any collaboration with RCEP during the last five years, opinion about quality, relevance and usefulness of the work being done by RCEP in light of their contribution to UNESCO's priorities and programmes, and suggestions for further improvement.
8. Assess UNESCO's support to RCEP (Article XI)
9. Submit a final evaluation report to UNESCO Office Beirut and RCEP before 30 June 2011.

The lead consultant will be assisted by a second evaluator who will contribute to points 2, 3, and 8 above.

Annex 2

List of Persons met or interviewed

RCEP – Sharjah:

1. His Excellency Humaid Mohamed AL-QUTAMI
Minister of Education- Chairman of RCEP GB
2. Dr. Obeid Bin Batti AL-MUHAIRI
Member of the Federal Council- Representative of the UAE in RCEP GB
3. Dr. Amr ABDEL-HAMID
Special Advisor to His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah for Higher Education
4. Mrs. Mahra Hilal AL-MUTAIWEI
RCEP Director
5. Dr. Mukthar Nour El-Dine OSMAN
Education expert
6. Mr. Khalfan Mohamed Hasan AL-NOUAIMI
Administrative Director
7. Mr. Ahmad Mohamed Amide NADA
Administrator
8. Mr. Mustafa Al-Saadi IBRAHIM
Technical Assistant
9. Mr. Taha Mustafa MUSTAFA
Computer programmer

UNESCO Staff Members:

1. Mr. Abdel-Moneim OSMAN
Director, UNEDBAS
2. Mr. Khalil MAHSHI
Director, IIEP
3. Mr. Hamad AL-HAMMAMI
Director, UNESCO Office in Doha
4. Mr. Said BELKASHLA
Programme Specialist, UNEDBAS
5. Mr. Higazi IDRIS
Programme Specialist, UNEDBAS
6. Mr. Talal EL HOURANI
Programme Specialist, UIS

Annex 3
Composition of the RCEP Governing Board as of June 2011

1. His Excellency Humaid Mohamed AL-QUTAMI
Minister of Education in the UAE and Chairman of RCEP Governing Board
2. Director-General of UNESCO or his/her representative
3. Director of IIEP or his/her representative
4. Mr. Khaled Mohamed AL-JAWDAR
Head of Educational Planning and Evaluation Department
Kingdom of Bahrain
5. Mrs. Aicha Abd El-Mohsen AL-RAWDAN
Assistant Under-Secretary for Administrative Affairs
Ministry of Education – Kuwait
6. Sheikh Dr. Khaled Bin Mohamed Bin Zaher AL HANNAI
Chief of Cabinet of the Minister of Education
Sultanate of Oman
7. Mrs. Dr. Aziza Ahmad AL-SAAD I
Director a.i. of the Policy Analysis and Research Office
Higher Council for Education
Qatar
8. Dr. Saad Bin Seoud AL FUHAID
Under-Secretary for school affairs
Ministry of Education- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
9. Dr. Obeid Bin Batti AL-MUHAI RI
Member of the Federal Council, Representative of the UAE
10. Mrs. Mahra Hilal AL-MUTAIWEI
Director of RCEP - Rapporteur

Annex 4

Evaluation questionnaire of RCEP activities (2008 – 2010) addressed to GB members

1- Organizational Aspects:

To what extent are you satisfied with RCEP performance with regard to the following organizational matters?

Please put a tick in the square that best reflects your personal opinion:

#	Subject	Completely satisfied	Highly satisfied	Partially satisfied	Not satisfied	Not aware of this matter
1	Preparation of medium-term strategic plan					
2	Preparation of the training plan and annual programme					
3	Preparation of the annual budget					
4	RCEP annual report					
5	Preparation of RCEP internal rules and regulations and other organizational matters					
6	Preparation of RCEP financial rules and regulation					
7	Cooperation programme with MOE in UAE					
8	Cooperation mechanisms with ministries of education in the Gulf States					
9	Cooperation mechanisms with UNESCO institutes and offices					
10	Cooperation mechanisms with regional partners					
11	Preparation of GB meetings					
12	Documents submitted to the GB					

2- RCEP programmes and activities:

To what extent are you satisfied with RCEP performance with regard to the following activities?
Please put a tick in the square that best reflects your personal opinion:

#	Activity	Completely satisfied	Highly satisfied	Partially satisfied	Not satisfied	Not aware of this matter
1	Training programme implemented by RCEP within its annual plans					
2	Training programme implemented within the framework of cooperation with UNESCO Regional Offices and Bureaus					
3	Gulf States Training programme in cooperation with UNESCO Office in Doha					
4	Dissemination of knowledge and educational culture project					
5	Scientific and educational forums in the UAE					
6	Translation of IIEP publications					
7	Establishing a learning resource centre					
8	Hosting MOE meetings					
9	Hosting local community meetings					

3- Achievement of RCEP objectives:

In your opinion, until now, to what extent the activities implemented by RCEP helped in the achievement of its objectives?

Please put a tick in the square that best reflects your personal opinion:

#	Objective	Great help	Significant help	Acceptable help	Weak help	Don't know
1	Capacity building of Gulf States in educational planning					
2	Capacity building of Gulf States in applied educational research					
3	Awareness-raising with regard to specific sector development issues which are of priority for the countries of the region					
4	Facilitate access of Gulf States educational planners to information on educational planning and management					

4- Priorities of Action:

What are the priorities of action you suggest for RCEP?

1- Concerning the organizational aspects:

2- Concerning programmes and activities:

Suggestions for RCEP performance improvement:

What are your suggestions to improve RCEP performance?

Annex 5

Evaluation questionnaire of RCEP activities (2008 – 2010) addressed to UNESCO National Commissions

1- Organizational matters:

To what extent are you satisfied with RCEP performance with regard to the following organizational matters?

Please put a tick in the square that best reflects your personal opinion:

#	Subject	Completely satisfied	Highly satisfied	Partially satisfied	Not satisfied	Not aware of this matter
1	Announcement of the training plan and the annual work plan					
2	Cooperation mechanisms with UNESCO National Commissions					
3	Selection of experts who implement the training activities					
4	Correspondence about the proposed activities					
5	Organization of activities					
6	Taking care of participants					
7	RCEP annual report					

2- RCEP programmes and activities:

A. To what extent your country benefited from each of the following activities?

Please put a tick in the square that best reflects your personal opinion:

#	Activity	Degree of benefit				
		Great Benefit	To some extent	Partially	Little or none	Don't know
1	Training programmes implemented by RCEP within its annual plan					
2	Training programmes implemented within the framework of cooperation with UNESCO Regional Offices and Bureaus					
3	Gulf States Joint Training programme in cooperation with UNESCO Office in Doha					
4	Dissemination of knowledge and educational culture project					
5	Scientific and educational forums in the UAE					
6	Translation of IIEP publications project					
7	Establishing a learning resource centre					
8	Hosting MOE meetings					
9	Hosting local community meetings					

B. What kind of benefit your country has drawn from RCEP programmes and activities?

Please put a tick in the square that best reflects your personal opinion:

#	Kind of benefit	Degree of benefit				
		Great Benefit	To some extent	Partially	Little or none	Don't know
1	Acquiring knowledge					
2	Developing skills					
3	Acquaintance with experiences					
4	Others (specify)					

3- Achievement of RCEP objectives:

In your opinion, until now, to what extent the activities implemented by RCEP helped in the achievement of its objectives?

Please put a tick in the square which reflects to the best your personal opinion:

#	Objective	Great help	To some extent	Partially	Little or none	Don't know
1	Capacity building of Gulf States in educational planning					
2	Capacity building of Gulf States in applied educational research					
3	Awareness-raising with regard to specific sector development issues which are of priority for the countries of the region					
4	Facilitate access of Gulf States educational planners to information on educational planning and management					

4- Priorities of action:

What are the priorities of action you suggest for RCEP?

a- Concerning the organizational aspects?

b- Concerning programmes and activities?

5- Suggestions for RCEP performance improvement:

What are your suggestions to improve RCEP performance?

Annex 6
List of RCEP Staff

1. Ms. Muhra Hilal AL-MUTAIWEI, *Director*
2. Dr. Mukhtar Nour El-Dine OSMAN, *Education Expert*
3. Mr. Khalfan Mohamed Hasan AL-NOUAIMI, *Administrative Director*
4. Mr. Ahmad Mohamed Amine NADA , *Administrator*
5. Mr. Mustafa Al-Saadi IBRAHIM, *Technical Assistant*
6. Mr. Taha Mustafa MUSTAFA, *Computer Programmer*
7. Mr. Shah Jihan HANIF, *Clerk*

Appendix

Text of the Agreement between the Government of the UAE and UNESCO on the operation of RCEP