



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



## *Curriculum development for quality teaching and learning: a global report on leading curriculum innovations*

<b>Geographical scope/benefitting country(ies):</b>	Global, with a focus on Africa in the first edition
<b>Duration (in months):</b>	24
<b>Name and Unit of project Officer</b>	Mark Mason, Senior Programme Specialist, International Bureau of Education
<b>Partner(s) institutions:</b>	Ministries of Education and National curriculum development institution in UNESCO Member States  UNESCO Headquarters: relevant units in the Education Sector
<b>Total estimated budget inclusive of Programme Support costs</b>	US\$ 1,000,000

### *Rationale, background and justification*

Around 250 million children around the world are not learning basic skills, even though half of them spend at least four years in schools. This failure in educational quality has an estimated cost of around US\$129 billion (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/14).

Educational quality comes down, ultimately, to the question of quality of student learning, which depends to a great extent on the quality of the teaching-learning process. Effective teaching and learning are in turn substantially dependant on how the curriculum is structured and how learning organized. Key questions to answer at the start of the post-2015 educational development agenda are how to design, develop and provide curricula that

underpin equity, relevance and quality teaching and learning, and how to enhance learning outcomes most efficiently.

The latest EFA Global Monitoring Report (2013/14), *Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All*, provides the most up to date and comprehensive evidence of the need to strengthen support for teachers. In her introduction to this GMR, the UNESCO Director-General asserts that:

An education system is only as good as its teachers. Unlocking their potential is essential to enhancing the quality of learning. Evidence shows that education quality improves when teachers are supported – it deteriorates if they are not.

Among the most effective ways of supporting teachers in their enhancement of student learning is the provision of well-structured curricula. Innovative and rigorously developed curricula that takes into account classroom practices, stake holders views and that are clearly focused on student learning provide structure and support for all teachers, from the most advanced experienced and creative to the junior and least qualified in implementing. In this regard, noting especially the latter category of teachers, lies the justification of this project. The centrality of teacher qualification is curriculum implementation and quality of learning outcomes. When in the global context, one third of countries fewer than 75% of teachers are trained according to national standards, curriculum, and the structure it provides for teachers, becomes of the utmost importance. The justification of this project lies in the need to provide responses to these problems and to provide expertise and technical support as major outputs of IBE to selected UNESCO Member.

The main output of this project is capacity development by knowledge production and sharing, through the publication "*Curriculum development for quality teaching and learning: A global report on leading curriculum innovations*" which will also serve as a handbook for ministries of education and curriculum development institutions in the Member States, on leading successful curriculum practices and innovations.

The publication is conceived to be a substantial compendium, *Curriculum Innovation 2016: A Global Report*, intended to be a state of the art in the field of curriculum, to support Member States in the development of curricula that enhances quality teaching and learning for all. It will be both a report on exemplary curricular practices and a handbook offering comparative perspectives, analysis and insights, methodological guides and policy briefs for the leaders of curriculum innovation and development in Member States

To date there is no such publication and certainly nothing as comprehensive as this, including both global and regional perspectives, grounded in the practical experience of curriculum professionals and practitioners across a wide range of educational jurisdictions. There may be many academic texts on curriculum available, but these are mainly articles published in books and journals aimed primarily at other academics in the field, or at pre-service teachers, and generally limit themselves to questions, albeit important ones, about curricular aims and purposes.

There is little practical guidance available in one comprehensive source, for curriculum policy makers, the leaders of curriculum development and other curriculum professionals, most of whom have little specific training in the field probably a short course on curriculum as part of their initial teacher training. *Curriculum Innovation 2016*, is conceived as a handbook for these professionals, and will include 'how to' questions among its principal features, and is intended to fill this gap. It will do this, in part, by translating the latest academic research into readily accessible policy briefs, extrapolating the policy implications for professionals focused on practical questions such as those about how to enhance student learning most effectively.

In line with the UNESCO's global priority Gender Equality, as expressed in the resource mobilization strategy, *Curriculum Innovation 2016 : A Global Report* will include a major focus on the issue of gender in inclusive curriculum development that addresses gender equality as important equity issue. The degree of inclusiveness is an essential criteria for a good curriculum. It is no longer acceptable to speak of quality, content and relevance in the curriculum without priority given to equity and gender equality genuinely reflected curricula of education systems. . Gender is a fundamental axis of exclusion in many countries, as are the socio-economic status backgrounds of students' families, their ethnicity, whether they live in urban or rural environments, and whether they face additional challenges of mental or physical disability. Giving attention to these five, and other axes on the basis of which children are excluded, is essential in curriculum planning and development, and will constitute primary foci of the report.

Furthermore, in order to support UNESCO's flagship programmes in strengthening the quality of education systems in Africa and its concerns to address the teacher quality and quantity gap, the first issue of *Curriculum Innovation 2016A Global Report* will include a dedicated focus on Africa. In addition to the global review, it will highlight in particular exemplary curricular innovations in Africa, and provide tailored analyses and policy recommendations for the African region.

## **Why UNESCO?**

The International Bureau of Education, with its expertise in the areas of knowledge and organization of content, effective and inclusive curricula that are foundational to quality learning for all, is uniquely as centre of excellence for curriculum positioned to support Member States in the domain of curriculum innovation and development. It is the only specialized UNESCO Institute in the field which enjoys the support of almost all countries world-wide, and has privileged access to the curricular resources and exemplary curricular practices of virtually every national educational jurisdiction.

The IBE is the only institute with the repositories and databases that would make such a comparative analysis of curricular practices globally available and accessible to all. The IBE will be 90 years old in 2015, and can draw on a wealth of experience and expertise in curricular innovation. Leading the project is a former editor of the *International Journal of Educational Development*, among the leading journals in the field globally, who is accordingly well familiar with the latest research results in the field, and who also has years of experience in curriculum innovation in a developing country context.

It is, moreover, expected that UNESCO and its institutes will provide leadership, intellectual and otherwise, of the educational development agenda beyond 2015, the IBE particularly in curriculum, and more specifically, in the curriculum-teaching-learning nexus.

The project will not only complement the existing programmatic work of the IBE and its partner UNESCO entities, it will utilize and build on the outcomes of these programmes, the best of which will constitute the case studies, good practices, analytical perspectives and policy briefs that will contribute in large part to the final published report, or handbook. The handbook will further complement the IBE's programmatic work by providing an essential resource for the in-service development of curriculum professionals enrolled in the IBE's post-graduate Diploma in curriculum design and development.

The project will contribute explicitly to:

Main Line of Action 3 (Shaping the future education agenda), Expected Result 11: The future education agenda and global education policies are shaped drawing on UNESCO's research and foresight studies;

UNESCO's Priority Africa Flagship Programme 2 (Strengthening education systems for sustainable development in Africa: improving equity, quality and relevance); and

Priority Gender Equality Action Plan for 2014-2021;

and will provide indirect but essential support for the realization of:

Main Line of Action 1 (Developing education systems to foster quality lifelong learning opportunities for all), Expected Result 6: Capacities in Member States strengthened to promote, monitor and assess the processes and outcomes of competency-based learning.

**Overall Goal/Objective** The overall goal and impact of the project is to enhance capacity for curriculum development for quality content, teaching and learning in the UNESCO Member States, which will in turn translate into better quality curricula and stronger curricular structures within which to support and improve teacher quality.

The long-term legacy of the project will be students who demonstrate higher capacity and competency, because their learning will have been that much more effectively enhanced.

The immediate and specific objective of the project is the publication of *Curriculum Innovation 2016: A Global Report*. The preparation and publication of the report will strengthen the capacity of the leaders of curriculum innovation and development to respond to two of the most intractable challenges in education facing Member States: learning quality and educational equity. Essential in the solution of these challenges is the enhancement of the quality of teaching, which depends in turn on the development of a clear, rigorous and goal-oriented structure to support all teachers and teacher development, no matter what educational level they teach: a quality curriculum.

### **Main expected results**

The main expected result of the project is the publication of *Curriculum Innovation 2016: A Global Report*, intended as the first in a series of triennial reports. Its major purpose would be to serve as a resource and an inspiration for informed, evidence-based curriculum development at the national or sub-national levels. It will address itself to the current needs and prospective concerns of national curriculum units, especially in the areas of curricular innovation, reform, implementation and evaluation.

The Report will comprise primarily a systematic analysis and appraisal of major features and trends in curriculum development regionally and globally; case studies on innovative, successful curricular practices globally; the latest research results in the field of curriculum; conceptual foundations and principles for appropriate and high quality curricula, and practical advice on the development of quality curriculum frameworks.

The *Curriculum Innovation 2016: Global Report* will be, structured to include curriculum policy brief, featuring topics such as "What makes a quality curriculum", giving attention to appropriate balance between global, regional and national contexts, issues and innovations in comparative perspectives; . It will serve as a Resource Pack, a policy Guide and a Handbook for education practitioners.

IBE intends to publish the Report in cycles of every three years. Coinciding with organization of the International Conference on Education, by the IBE in Geneva. Whenever possible, the Report is envisaged to also contribute to and support the theme and agenda of International Conference on Education. In this sense the Report would also provide a robust basis for

policy dialogue among Member States on curriculum issues in international comparative perspective.

### **Activities and outputs/deliverables relating to the achievement of expected results**

Included in the project research will be the write up of case studies of exemplary curricular practices in different Member States, the comparison and analysis of curriculum development in and across countries and regions, and the preparation of key position papers, methodological guides and policy briefs in the field.

The publication itself will contribute substantially to the realization of Expected Result 11, the shaping of education policies by UNESCO's research and foresight studies; and the use of the publication to guide curriculum innovation will contribute substantially to the realization of Expected Result 6, the strengthening of capacity in Member States.

### **Beneficiaries and stakeholders**

*Curriculum Innovation 2016* would be oriented towards those leading curriculum innovation, reform and implementation in UNESCO Member States globally – that is, those who serve as principal change agents in the reform of education at a national, and, where appropriate, sub-national, level: to make accessible to key actors in curriculum development and education reform globally the latest research conclusions, good practices, policy proposals and trends in the field.

The Report would provide a 'curricular mirror' that would enable Member States: to position their own curricular development in relation to that of other relevantly similar states, by identifying more clearly their national needs in relation to regional trends; to identify similarities with other curricular systems in the region or within the same language group; and to identify, by comparison with other states and in the light of good practices and policy outcomes described in the report, areas in their own curricular development that could be improved.

Ministries of education and curriculum development institutes in Member States are the principal primary stakeholders in the success of this project. They will accordingly contribute substantially to the development of *Curriculum Innovation 2016*, not least by providing case studies of exemplary curricular practices and innovations for inclusion in the report. It is expected that Member States will be willing to showcase what they have done well, and ready to work with the project team to understand why a particular curricular innovation has succeeded, and whether and how it might be generalizable and transferable to other educational jurisdictions.

### **Implementation strategy**

IBE will implement the project in cooperation with UNESCO entities, national Ministries of Education and curriculum development and research centres and institutions and in partnership with academics, researchers, curriculum experts, and writers.

And will draw on the expertise available to UNESCO, internally and externally. Working with relevant professionals, practitioners in the field, leaders of curriculum innovation in the Member States globally to develop the *Curriculum Innovation 2016*.

The project's goal, objectives and activities will be fully aligned to the priority of the Member States to deliver quality education through quality curriculum implemented by quality

teachers. Synergies will be build between this project and UNESCO regular program activities implemented with the support and expertise of IBE staff.

A team of researchers, curriculum experts, and writers under the leadership and coordination of IBE will work with each other and in the field with the leaders of curriculum innovation in Member States to produce *Curriculum Innovation 2016*. The overall strategic approach will involve close cooperation with Member States in the preparation of the report's content.

### ***Sustainability and exit strategy***

This is not a once-off development project focused on a particular site. There is accordingly no 'exit strategy'. The project aims to provide long-term, sustainable support for innovation and development at national and sub-national levels in the domain of curriculum, teaching and learning.

IBE will expect to supported financially by its education partners to publish subsequent triennially editions of the Report, in order to make it available to the Member States at regular intervals the latest innovations in curriculum development for quality teaching and learning.

Ongoing capacity-building and replication of excellent curricular practices that are transferable are central aspects of the sustainability of this initiative and embedded in the activity.