



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

International Bureau
of Education

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Education



THE IBE

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Curriculum matters

Knowledge and education are considered among the major factors contributing to the reduction of poverty, sustainable development and economic growth – and it is the curriculum that is increasingly viewed as the foundation of educational reforms that are aimed at achieving high quality learning outcomes. With this in mind, national education authorities around the world, their different approaches notwithstanding, are looking for innovative curriculum solutions to improve the quality and relevance of student learning and to enable their students to apply their learning to the challenges and opportunities they encounter throughout their lives.

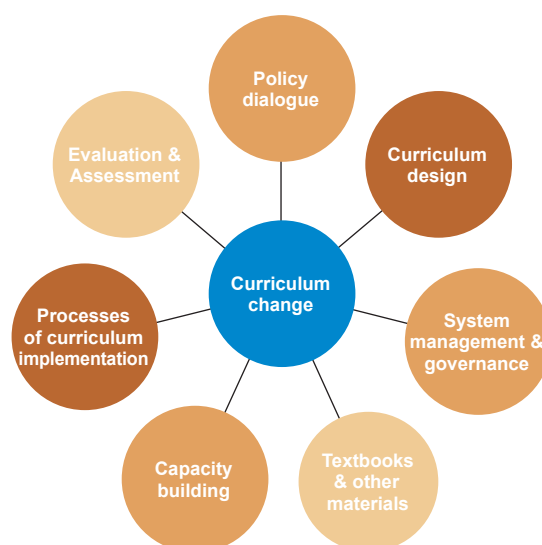
Curriculum development today

The curriculum represents a conscious and systematic selection of knowledge, skills and values: a selection that shapes the way teaching and learning processes are organized by addressing questions such as what students should learn, why, when and how. The curriculum is also understood, however, as a political and social agreement that reflects a society's common vision while taking into account local, national and global needs and expectations. Thus we see contemporary curriculum reform and development processes increasingly involving public discussion and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. Curriculum design has evolved into a topic of considerable debate – with frequently conflicting perspectives – engaging policy-makers, experts, practitioners and society at large.

The importance of a global perspective on curriculum

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

The IBE: Supporting curriculum development processes



An international centre of excellence in curriculum

The IBE is a leading UNESCO institute in the field of curriculum, valued both for its specialist knowledge, expertise and networks, and for providing curriculum support services that include up-to-date, evidence-based information and practical support to UNESCO Member States.

The IBE's mission is to support UNESCO Member States as they seek to enhance most effectively the quality of student learning. Such support is offered mainly through initiatives and activities within the following three key action areas:

- **capacity development** of both institutions and individuals, as well as **technical support and advice**;
- **access to curriculum-related knowledge, experience and expertise**; and
- the engagement of stakeholders in an evidence-based **policy dialogue** around good curriculum practice.

The IBE works with a wide range of partners, both within and beyond UNESCO and the United Nations. It also collaborates with academic institutions and research centres in several regions of the world and implements projects in cooperation with regional, international, bilateral and nongovernmental organi-

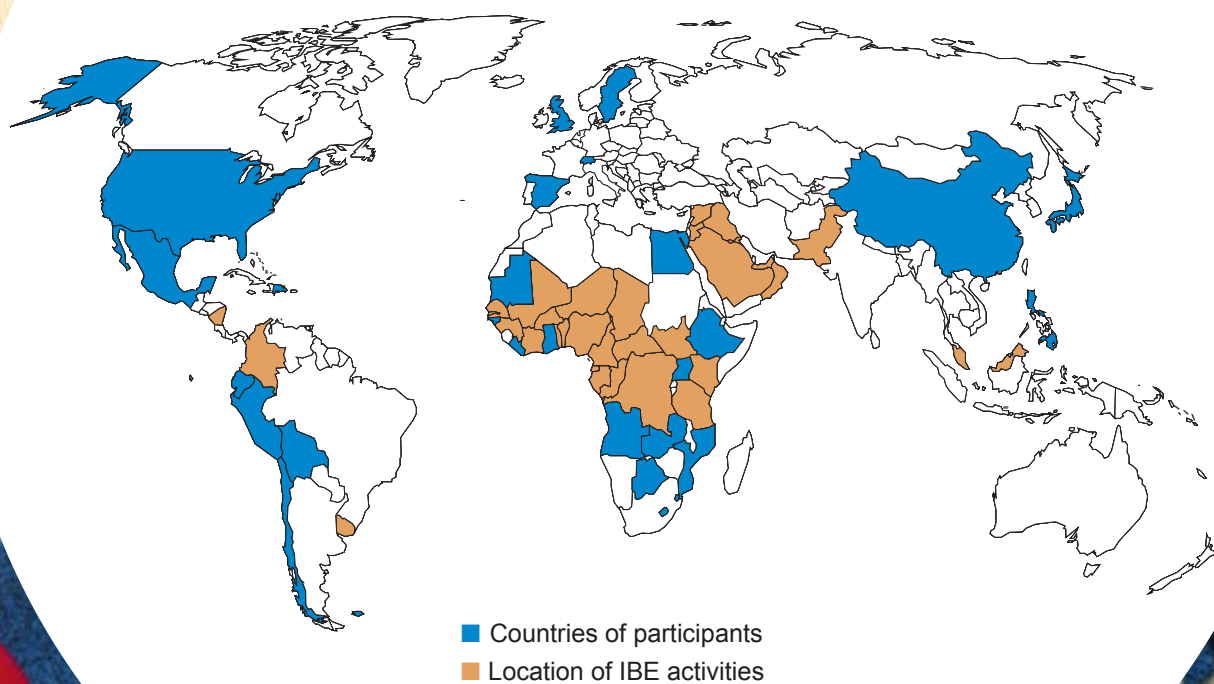
zations according to local contexts and demands. Monitoring and evaluation are critical components of the Institute's initiatives and activities.

The IBE facilitates access to a range of possible options and learning experiences in the field, provides policy advice and technical support, offers professional and capacity development opportunities, and supports curriculum developers and other stakeholders in gaining new perspectives on complex curriculum issues. In this way, education authorities and curriculum specialists can make their own decisions about curriculum change, according to the demands of their own context, through a better informed consideration of the comparative advantages of different possible options and strategies.

In 2012

- 685 curriculum specialists participated in the IBE's professional activities;
- 194 curriculum specialists from 44 countries around the world participated in the IBE's Diploma programmes;
- 24 countries (18 in Africa) received specific technical assistance in curriculum development; and
- downloads through UNESDOC of IBE curriculum documents and publications exceeded 300,000.

Locations of IBE activities in 2012,
indicating participants' countries



A framework for training and professional development

Diploma courses in curriculum design and development

An important component of the IBE's professional development and training service is the implementation of long-term accredited training courses in curriculum design and development, such as the Diploma courses organized in collaboration with local academic institutions in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. These courses are intended to strengthen local capacity, and target the specific skills and competencies that policy decision-makers, curriculum developers, teacher trainers and practitioners require to lead and manage processes of curriculum development and reform.

Feedback from participants in the Diploma courses offered in Africa and Latin America over the past three years has been overwhelmingly positive, with overall strengthening of competencies reported at 90%, and overall appreciation of the value of the courses averaging 95%.

The IBE aims to expand this framework of long-term capacity development opportunities to cover all UNESCO regions by 2017.

The Curriculum Resource Pack

The IBE has developed a set of training and professional development tools, principal among which is the Curriculum Resource Pack. This resource pack is organized around core modules that address different aspects of the curriculum development process, such as policy dialogue and formulation; curriculum design, management, implementation and evaluation; textbook development; and assessment of and for learning. The modules, which are continuously improved in the light of developing global trends, can be used flexibly in comprehensive capacity development training or selectively in the service of specific needs.

Training tools in curriculum

In order to respond to specific needs and demands, the IBE produces additional training tools, manuals and materials, such as:

- a manual for integrating HIV and AIDS education in school curricula;
- a capacity development toolkit for curricular innovation in Sub-Saharan African countries; and
- training modules on inclusive education and the curriculum.

These tools are used in tailored capacity development workshops.



Long-term and tailored support to meet countries' specific priorities and needs

The IBE provides demand-driven, tailored policy advice and technical support to countries involved in processes of curriculum innovation, reform and development – normally covering primary and general secondary education – to enable curriculum decision-makers and developers to make better-informed decisions in developing curricula that respond to national objectives and expectations. These activities usually involve different combinations of policy advice, technical support, capacity development and knowledge production and sharing.

The IBE's focus is on supporting the development of a progressive curriculum vision and on subsequent efforts to translate this vision into relevant and inclusive curriculum documents – such as curriculum guidelines and frameworks – of high quality.

The IBE provides long-term support of systematic, comprehensive and sustainable processes of curriculum development and change, with special emphasis on post-conflict contexts and transition countries (such as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Iraq, Liberia, Sudan and, more recently, South Sudan).

The Institute also provides tailored support of processes of curriculum innovation, such as:

- the integration of cross-curricular issues (Angola and Sub-Saharan African countries);
- the integration of HIV and AIDS education into the curriculum (mainly in Sub-Saharan African countries);
- curriculum evaluation (Gulf Arab States and Pakistan);
- textbook revision and teacher training to promote gender equality (Lebanon and Viet Nam); and

- inclusive education (Gulf Arab States and Latin America and the Caribbean).

With the goal of better addressing country needs and expectations in a medium- to long-term perspective, the Institute's focus has since 2013 been increasingly on supporting and contributing to long-term processes of curriculum reform that are better aligned with student learning. In this context, IBE activities are focused on customized support in curriculum design, implementation and evaluation, and on selected thematic areas, with special attention given to developing and post-conflict countries.

Thematic areas that have been and continue to be taken into consideration in the Institute's work programme include literacy and numeracy in early grades, competencies in the curriculum, gender issues, curriculum and assessment, inclusive education, instructional time, HIV and AIDS, education for local and global citizenship, and education for sustainable development.

Workshops covering some of these thematic areas in countries across the globe have received feedback from participants relating to the strengthening of their competencies that frequently exceeds 90%.

The Institute is also exploring the possibility, depending on need and demand, of supporting and collaborating with other international organizations and groups of countries involved in initiatives aimed at harmonizing curricula across borders. Such support may be constituted by a combination of policy and technical advice, the mobilization of high-level expertise, and knowledge sharing.



A robust, wide-ranging and up-to-date knowledge base informing policy decision-making and good practice

The IBE makes available to the field a wide-ranging and regularly updated set of resources in curriculum, including databases such as *World Data on Education*, a digital library of National Reports, documentation and Alert services, and curriculum-related research and policy publications. Continuous development and updating of the IBE website is an integral part of this aspect of the IBE strategy.

The IBE develops and strengthens its knowledge base through partnerships for research and innovation that include the promotion of applied research in the field. The Institute also manages leading-edge research published in the journal, *Prospects: quarterly review of comparative education*, founded in 1971 and produced in the IBE since 1994, and published in English, Arabic and Chinese (with selected issues published in French, Russian and Spanish). The development of new resources, such as a comparative analysis of curriculum development around the world, is also envisaged.

To maximize the value of this knowledge base, the Institute seeks to enhance its information sharing and exchange capacity, in part through improved clearinghouse services, by:

- disseminating relevant research findings to inform innovative and effective curriculum policy and practice, not least through *Prospects*, which reaches more than 7,300 institutions worldwide;
- offering efficient access to information and resources on curriculum development processes, experience and products;

- facilitating the sharing of knowledge, experience and expertise in the field of curriculum development, particularly but not exclusively among Southern countries;
- fostering South-South cooperation, broadening access to Southern experience and expertise, and identifying innovative Southern solutions to Southern problems; and
- sharing expertise and resources, and providing targeted information – drawn from international surveys, comparative studies and other major research initiatives – both within UNESCO and the UN system and beyond.

Strengthening information sharing and exchange capacity will enable the IBE to provide more effective support to UNESCO Member States. The Institute will achieve this by enhancing its analytical and advisory services through trend analysis, research and policy briefs, literature reviews, working papers and case studies offering comparative insights into good practice.

The facilitation of more effective networking, both physically and online, will help to maximize the value of the expertise and experience available to contribute to the design, review and assessment of curriculum development policies and processes. Through these and related strategies the Institute seeks to enhance levels of capacity development and of cooperation and technical assistance in the field.

Developing synergies, enhancing networking opportunities and facilitating policy dialogue

As a Centre of Excellence in curriculum, the IBE continuously strengthens its partnerships, enhances collaboration possibilities and facilitates networking opportunities for key actors and strategic partners across the world, including curriculum developers and curriculum development agencies. The IBE seeks to exploit further the potential of communities of professionals and institutions in the field of curriculum, both to mobilize high-level expertise and to share ideas, experience and good practice.

Mapping regional practices and needs

To these ends, the IBE is planning to re-launch its programme of regional and sub-regional meetings, in order to ascertain more clearly the curriculum practices, developments and needs in specific contexts, to map regional, sub-regional and national trends, and to forge new partnerships in these different regions.

The International Conference on Education

Since the 1930s the IBE has been organizing the International Conference on Education, a major policy dialogue forum for ministers of education from around the world. The Conference is expected to develop more strongly in the direction of a creative forum on the priorities of UNESCO's education sector in the light of questions related to educational quality, equity, access and inclusion.

Partnerships to enhance the IBE's services to the field

The IBE has led the implementation of a Diploma in curriculum design and development in Africa and in Latin America since 2010 under a long-term

partnership with UNESCO's Section for Teacher Development and Education Policies (ED/THE/TEP), with UNESCO Field Offices in Africa and Latin America, and with universities and institutes in those regions (the Open University of Tanzania, the Tanzanian Institute of Education, and the Catholic University of Uruguay).

The IBE has contributed to the creation of the Regional Observatory of Inclusive Education, in partnership with the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Buenos Aires Office of the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, the Organization of Ibero-American States, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education.

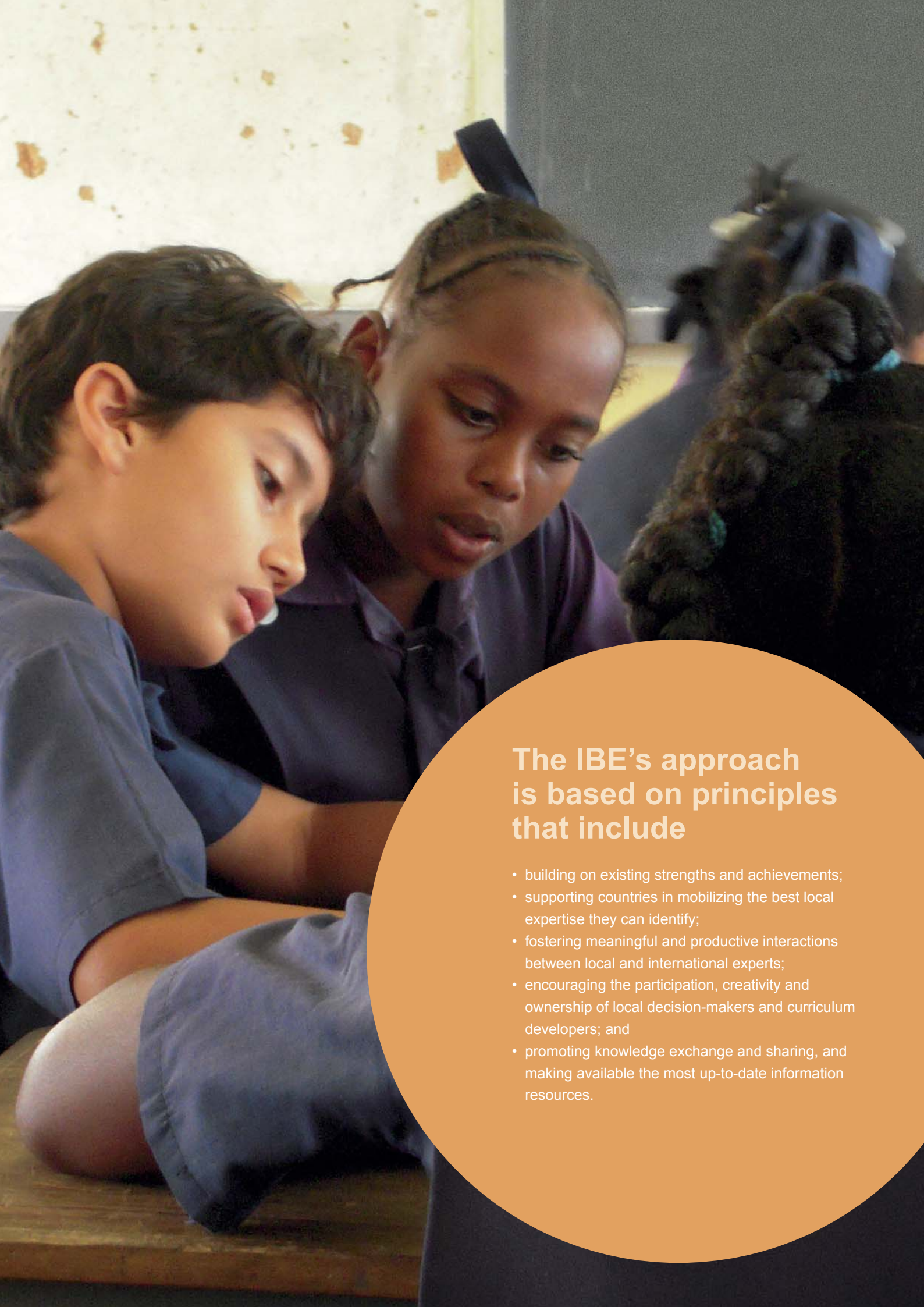
Partners within UNESCO

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris | National Commissions | UNESCO Institute for Statistics | International Institute for Educational Planning | UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning | Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development | UNESCO International Institute for Capacity-Building in Africa | Field Offices and Regional Bureaus for Education: Dakar, Bangkok, Beirut and Santiago



Partners outside of UNESCO

Ministries of education, teacher training institutes and universities | United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East | Organization of Ibero-American States | Inter-American Development Bank | Gulf Arab States Educational Research Centre | Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States | The Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development | International Academy of Education | Foundation EDUCA | Foundation EXE | Saldarriaga Concha Foundation | The OPEC Fund for International Development | University of Pittsburgh | Education Research Unit, Department of Public Education, Canton of Geneva | Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Geneva | The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva



The IBE's approach is based on principles that include

- building on existing strengths and achievements;
- supporting countries in mobilizing the best local expertise they can identify;
- fostering meaningful and productive interactions between local and international experts;
- encouraging the participation, creativity and ownership of local decision-makers and curriculum developers; and
- promoting knowledge exchange and sharing, and making available the most up-to-date information resources.

Key services in curriculum development

Diploma courses in curriculum design and development

Postgraduate diploma courses in curriculum design and development have been implemented in Latin America (since 2010) and in Sub-Saharan Africa (since 2011) in collaboration with local academic institutions, UNESCO Regional Bureaus for Education and other partners. By November 2012, 194 professionals and practitioners from 44 countries had benefited from the diploma courses. The IBE intends to expand these diploma courses to cover all UNESCO regions by 2017.

Customized technical support and policy advice

The IBE combines knowledge production and sharing, policy dialogue, tailored capacity development and specific field assistance to support the processes of curriculum change and development with a long-term perspective and focus on improving learning outcomes.

Training and professional development toolkits

Resource packs, or 'toolkits', produced by the IBE include, among others, the *Curriculum Resource Pack*, the *Inclusive Education Resource Pack*, the *Manual for Integrating HIV and AIDS Education in School Curricula*, the *Competencies for Living and Working in the 21st Century: Capacity Development Toolkit for Curriculum Innovations in Sub-Saharan African Countries*, and training modules on curriculum themes and approaches. They are usually made available in more than one language.

Databases and resources

Databases such as *World Data on Education* (containing profiles of education systems with a focus on curriculum) and the *Country Dossiers*, the online IBE catalogue (IBEDOCs), the digital library of National Reports, the Curriculum Collection Database, and the IBE's textbook collection, historical collection and archives, are supported and made widely available by the IBE.

Research and publications

The IBE produces, among other publications in the field:

- the journal, *Prospects: quarterly review of comparative education*;
- the book series, *Studies in Curriculum and Comparative Education*, which has succeeded the book series, *Studies in Comparative Education*, published by the IBE since the early 1970s;
- the series, *Educational Practices*, in collaboration with the International Academy of Education;
- the *Working Papers on Curriculum Issues*; and
- the series, *Thinkers on Education*.

Website

The IBE website provides user-friendly access to a range of resources and information, and serves both as an essential communication tool for the IBE and as a key means of knowledge sharing and dissemination. Recent annual visitors exceeded 3.9 million who made 7.1 million visits.

Alerts

Regular thematic Alerts are provided to stakeholders through notifications of curriculum-related materials and other key publications and reports from across the world. The service channels relevant information and knowledge to previously identified individuals and institutions.

Milestones in the history of the International Bureau of Education

1925

The IBE is founded in Geneva as a private, non-governmental organization to promote comparative educational research and international understanding through education.

1929

The IBE adopts new statutes making it the first intergovernmental organization in the field of education.

1934

The IBE begins organizing the International Conference on Education (ICE).

1969

The IBE becomes an integral part of UNESCO as an “international centre of comparative education”.

1999

The IBE’s new mandate focuses on educational content and methods, and on curriculum development.

2008

The 48th session of the ICE – *Inclusive Education: the way of the future* – is organized by the IBE.

2011

UNESCO adopts a strategy aimed at making the IBE a Centre of Excellence in Curriculum.

The IBE’s global and comparative insights into curriculum, combined with its technical expertise and experience, its reach and its networks, make it unique among institutions in the field.



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