



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



International Bureau
of Education

IBE

Strategy & Programme of Work 2012-2017



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Strategy and Programme of Work 2012-2017

The International Bureau of Education (IBE) is the oldest of the UNESCO Institutes. It was founded in 1925 and became the first inter-governmental organization in the field of education in 1929. Fully integrated into UNESCO since 1969, it is the UNESCO institute specializing in the field of 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.

This document outlines the IBE's strategic plan to transform itself into a Centre of Excellence in curriculum.



Context and Challenges

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.

Over the last two decades curriculum reforms have been driven by, among other factors: rapid technological and social changes; the need to address the new challenges of contemporary life; the emergence of a knowledge society that depends on lifelong learning; the renewed emphasis on Education for All; the prominence of issues related to equity, quality and inclusion, along with the growing emphasis on assessment of performance and accountability.

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. There is a clear move towards greater regional harmonization of curricula, which sometimes includes the definition of cross-national frameworks (such as the key competences for lifelong learning that were the subject of a European Parliament and Council recommendation). 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.

Cooperation and exchanges among countries and groups of countries on curriculum policies and practices are growing as demonstrated by, for example, curriculum coordination initiatives launched by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Central American Educational and Cultural Coordination (CECC), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the *Conférence des ministres de l'éducation des pays ayant le français en partage* (CONFEMEN) among others. At the same time, **the need to have access to and make use of a broader range of relevant curriculum-related information, knowledge, experience and expertise has also increased.**

As stated in the Strategy to make the IBE UNESCO's Centre of Excellence in Curriculum, approved by the UNESCO General Conference in November 2011, **the curriculum-related services being requested from the IBE are increasing in volume, scope and complexity**, and Member States look to UNESCO for leadership, advice and assistance on a number of persistent and challenging curriculum issues. Therefore, the IBE needs to anticipate, expand and enhance its work and reach in a number of areas if it is to meet these demands.

The IBE can rely on a highly valued set of resources and experience gained in many different contexts to meet the needs and demands of Member States, but it faces four main challenges in enhancing and expanding its work.

The first challenge relates to **relevance**, as it is crucial to design and offer products and services aligned to the needs and demands of Member States.

The second challenge relates to **effectiveness**, as it is essential to implement initiatives and activities in efficient and effective ways.

The third challenge refers to **quality**, given the importance of implementing a range of high quality, relevant results-oriented products and services, of improving existing ones, and of developing innovative approaches.

The fourth challenge refers to **sustainability**. In order to deliver effectively long-term quality services and products it is essential to forge sustainable partnerships as well as synergize efforts and initiatives within the IBE and UNESCO and among multiple institutions.

Vision, Mission and Overall Goal

The vision of the IBE as an international Centre of Excellence in curriculum is: *a leading UNESCO Institute, widely respected for its specialist expertise, knowledge and networks, and for providing evidence-based information and practical support to UNESCO Member States in valuable and responsive ways.* This also means that **IBE activities and initiatives are effectively monitored and results measured in valid and appropriate ways.**

As a Centre of Excellence **the IBE's mission** is to **support UNESCO Member States in their efforts to enhance the quality of student learning** mainly through initiatives and activities within the following three key action areas:

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

For the period 2012-2017 the **overall goal is to enhance the quality of student learning by promoting and supporting excellence in curriculum processes and products.**

Within the context of this overall goal, the main objectives of the IBE are to:

1. generate and share knowledge about curriculum products, processes, strategies, trends and emerging issues;
2. collect, analyse, synthesize and disseminate curriculum-related knowledge and information;
3. develop individual and institutional capacities and provide technical support and advice as well as other services to UNESCO's Member States and regions;
4. promote and advocate evidence-based policy dialogue;
5. facilitate South-South and North-South-South cooperation;
6. partner with academic and policy-oriented entities to support original, applied and action-oriented research initiatives and to analyse, synthesize and disseminate existing research findings; and
7. promote global policy dialogue among ministers of education and other relevant actors worldwide with regard to improving the quality of education for all.

Expected Outcomes

The main outcomes identified for the 2012-2017 period are the following:

- **Training materials and tools** developed, tested and implemented.
- Long-term accredited **training courses** developed and implemented.
- **Curriculum innovation, reform and revision initiatives** supported.
- **Information and knowledge on priority curriculum issues generated and documented** (including through global surveys and updated terminology).
- **Curriculum-related knowledge and information gaps identified and addressed** (including through enhanced assessment of regional, sub-regional and national needs and priorities).
- **Improved availability of and access to information on curriculum development processes and products** (through updated databases, enhanced information services, expanded collections and website development).
- **Policy dialogue** among a broader range of stakeholders from inside and outside educational systems facilitated.

As a Centre of Excellence in curriculum the IBE will also strengthen partnerships, improve collaboration schemes both within and outside of UNESCO, and improve networking opportunities with a strong focus on key actors and strategic partners, particularly curriculum specialists and curriculum development agencies,

centres and departments. Therefore, all IBE activities are expected to work towards:

- **Enhanced partnerships to maximize the use of relevant resources, expertise and experiences**, particularly developing innovative Southern solutions to Southern problems.
- **Increased networking opportunities** to facilitate and support knowledge sharing and transfer as well as to support local, sub-regional, regional and international initiatives.
- Strengthened international, regional and sub-regional **cooperation and exchanges**.

In the long term, the impact of the IBE's activities and initiatives is expected to be reflected in enhanced understanding and awareness of the importance of high quality curricula and curriculum development processes, increased commitment to adopting effective curriculum policies, and improved curriculum development processes and products contributing to enhanced student learning.

The strategic framework by main action area is summarized in Figures 1 to 3.

FIGURE 1

Strategic Framework: Capacity Development

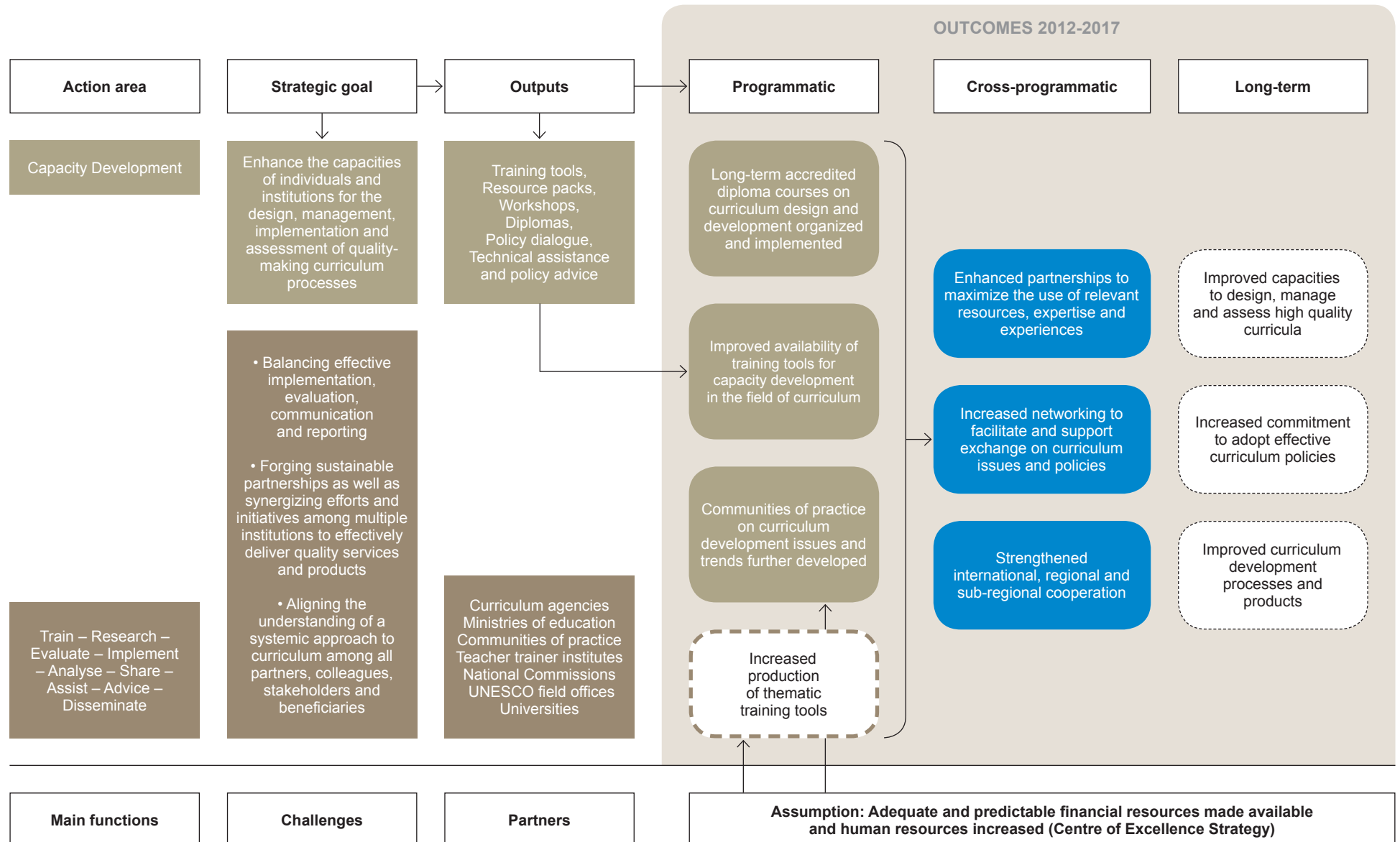


FIGURE 2

Strategic Framework: Technical Assistance and Policy Advice

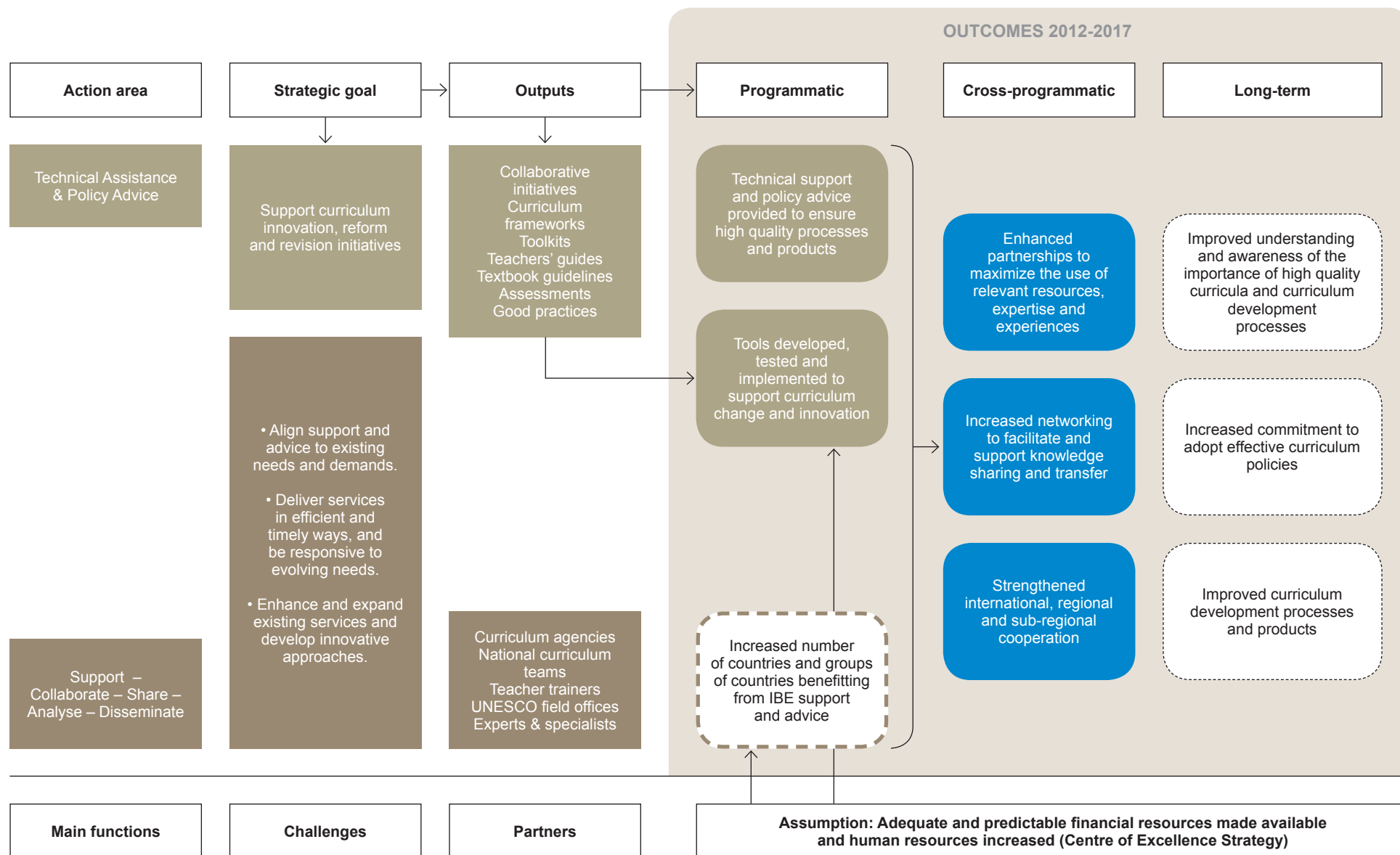
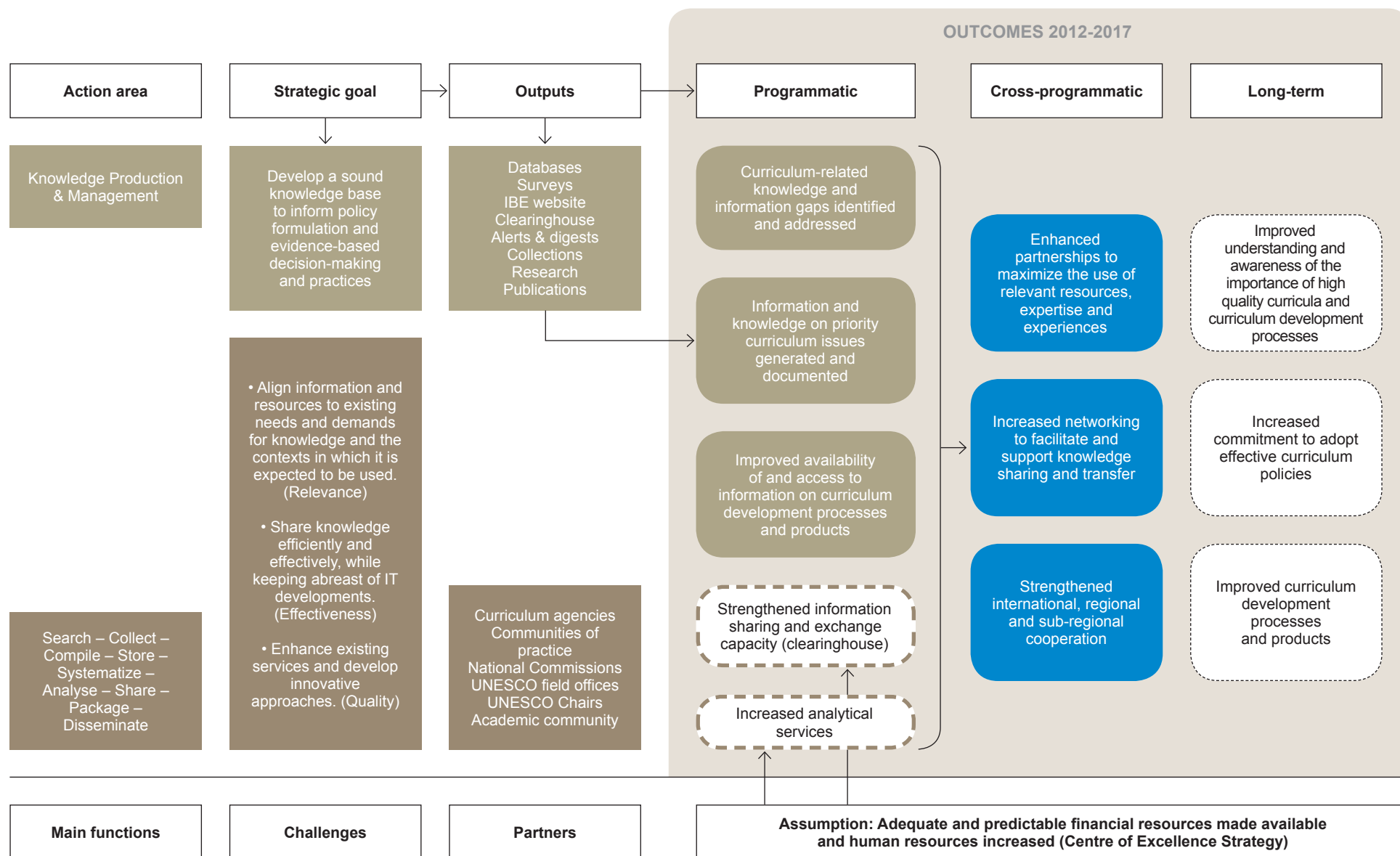


FIGURE 3

Strategic Framework: Knowledge Production and Management



Assumptions and Risks

The progressive enhancement and expansion of IBE services is based on a series of assumptions and should take into account a number of risk factors that may have an impact on programme delivery.

The main assumption is that, within the framework of the operational implementation of the Centre of Excellence Strategy, there will be an adequate and predictable provision of financial resources to support the reinforcement and expansion of services, along with an increase in human resources. Furthermore, such a transition phase requires a consistent and clear focus based on the IBE strategy and aligned to the priorities of the UNESCO Education Sector. It is assumed that the IBE will be internally supported by appropriate tools, improved processes and structures, and by strong leadership promoting effective change.

With regard to the diploma courses, the IBE needs to continue undertaking close follow-up, monitoring and evaluation, taking action in developing and updating materials, supporting participants, and assuming intellectual leadership and overall responsibility for the delivery of the training. An unpredictable level of funding could result in limited capacity to commit to long-term curriculum development processes and outcomes.

Another risk is also related to the provision of financial resources, as the required investment in IT (especially for the setting up of a clearinghouse mechanism) may be ineffective if adequate funds

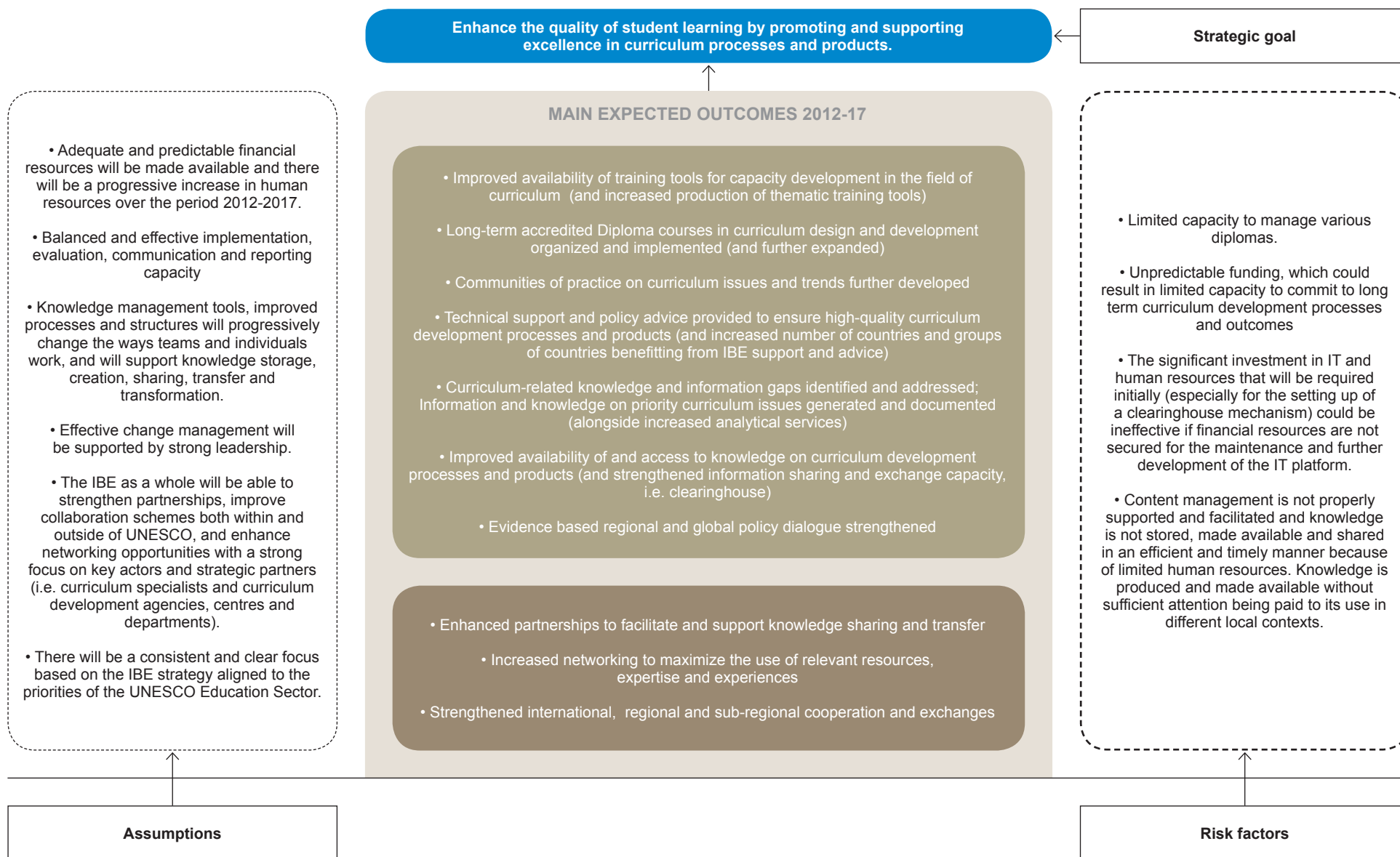
are not secured for human resources and the maintenance and further development of the IT platform.

As a knowledge management system needs to bring together people, processes and infrastructures, improved tools for managing information and an enhanced IT platform may not produce the expected results if they are not supported by other equally important internal organizational and structural changes intended to ensure that knowledge and information are stored, shared and disseminated in an efficient and timely manner. It is also important to bear in mind that the improved availability, sharing and dissemination of curriculum-related information and knowledge may not produce the intended impact if insufficient attention is paid to existing needs and demands for knowledge and the contexts in which they are expected to be used.

The main assumptions and risk factors are summarized in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4

Assumptions and Risks



Programme of Work 2012-2017

Overview

Becoming a Centre of Excellence in the field of curriculum is a long term goal, preferably to be considered over a six-year period within the framework of the implementation of the Centre of Excellence strategy and the provision of adequate funding. For the period 2012-2017 the main objectives will be to: pilot, develop, design and use training materials and tools; develop and implement long term accredited training courses as well as tailored workshops; support curriculum reform and innovation initiatives at country level; improve access to and use of information and knowledge on curricula and curriculum development processes; generate and share curriculum-related information and knowledge; streamline services and access to resources in order to reach a wider audience; and enhance partnerships, increase networking and strengthen collaboration.

A framework for training and professional development

The training tools developed by the IBE have been used and assessed in various forms of training. They are reviewed and improved on an annual basis based on feedback and with the support of high-level consultants. Currently, the IBE is working on the revision and improvement of the *Curriculum Resource Pack* (English and Spanish versions 2013). In addition, it is envisaged to produce and make available online, from 2014 onwards, a set of learning tools to support teacher practice related mainly to cross-cutting issues in the curriculum. These tools will combine an updated conceptual understanding of main issues and trends, and a set of training

activities, case studies and multimedia resources to help teachers implement more effective classroom practices. Furthermore, the IBE aims to facilitate the setting up of communities of teachers as producers and users of learning tools benefitting from the exchange of practices among peers as a strategy of school-based teacher professional development.

The IBE has recently started the implementation of **long-term accredited capacity development programmes** in curriculum design and development, fully exploiting the Curriculum Resource Pack and additional training materials. These programmes aim to enhance existing institutional and individual capacities at the regional, national and local levels. Training programmes are mainly the postgraduate Diploma in Curriculum Design and Development, and tailored workshops on curriculum themes and approaches (such as inclusive education and inclusive curricula, and competency-based curriculum development).

In the short to medium term (2012-2015), the IBE will focus on **improving the Diploma programme** in these five areas: (1) creating a critical mass of facilitators and tutors to consolidate its implementation in different regions; (2) further strengthening the online platform to facilitate more interaction among participants, facilitators and tutors; (3) involving high-level educators and curriculum experts from different regions as lecturers and facilitators of the face-to-face sessions; (4) creating a community of Diploma alumni as supporters of the IBE, and facilitating exchanges among them

to improve professional practice (for example, the 2010 and 2011 Diploma graduates with outstanding performance were recruited as tutors for the 2012 Diploma cohorts in Africa and Latin America); and (5) further developing partnerships to ensure the sustainability of the programme in a long-term perspective (i.e. issues relating to the human resources required for coordination, content and management functions, and scholarship funds). The improvement of the quality of curriculum design and development processes is also expected to be supported through post-Diploma initiatives undertaken at country level.

From 2013 onwards, the IBE will **further strengthen capacity development services**, building upon the outcomes and lessons learned from the first stage of the Diploma implementation (2010-2012). Some of the initiatives that are envisaged include: a Diploma course for Arab States and an inter-regional Diploma for Asia-Europe; the possible continuation of the Diploma studies through Master's programmes or equivalent; and full online programmes targeting specific needs such as strengthening the curriculum vision among staff from teacher training institutions. Depending on the results of the needs assessment and feasibility, it is expected that the Diploma programme in different formats will be available in all UNESCO regions by 2017.

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

The IBE will deliver **tailored technical support** and policy advice to Member States involved in curriculum reform and development processes, based on their requests. Advice and support have been provided with regard to evaluating, planning, developing and implementing quality basic/primary and secondary education curricula in line with new challenges, needs and developmental prospects.

In particular, the focus has been on supporting the development of progressive curriculum visions (what, why, how and when students should learn) and on efforts aimed at translating the vision into relevant curriculum documents and materials (such as curriculum guidelines and frameworks, syllabuses and textbooks).

The main initiatives implemented during the last ten years have covered several curriculum issues and different regions, with a special emphasis on post-conflict, transition and developing countries. Among others, technical advice has been provided to support: comprehensive curriculum reforms (in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guatemala, Iraq, Liberia, Sudan, and more recently South Sudan); the integration of cross-cutting issues such as peace and citizenship education in Sub-Saharan African countries and in Bahrain; textbook evaluation from a gender perspective (in Lebanon and Viet Nam); curriculum assessment (Pakistan); and inclusive education (in the Gulf Arab States and Latin America and the Caribbean). These activities have involved different combinations of policy advice, knowledge generation and sharing, training and technical support.

Based upon accumulated experience and lessons learned during more than a decade of targeted initiatives, a new phase is being envisaged with a view to better address expectations and country needs in a medium to long-term perspective. The focus will be on supporting long-term processes and effectively contributing to comprehensive, systematic and sustainable curriculum reforms that seek alignment with student learning. In this context, IBE action will **focus on effective curriculum design, implementation and evaluation, and on selected thematic areas**, with special attention to developing and post-conflict countries.

In order to support processes of curriculum change and innovation on the basis of existing needs, the IBE will update and systematize existing knowledge and produce new tools, guidelines and methodologies for curriculum review, assessment and alignment. From 2013 onwards, and depending on existing demands, the IBE will also explore the possibility of supporting and collaborating with other international organizations and groups of countries involved in **initiatives aimed at harmonizing curricula**.

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

The **enhancement and expansion of the curriculum-related knowledge base**, which also supports all IBE activities, mainly involves: improving access to and the use of information and resources in curriculum and curriculum development processes; increasing the amount and quality of curriculum-related information and knowledge as well as analyses of curriculum trends and issues; streamlining services and access to resources in order to reach a wider audience; strengthening clearinghouse and information services and developing an online platform for increased knowledge sharing and collaborative action

Additional funds will allow the IBE to develop a robust knowledge base through the strengthening of internal capacity and partnerships for research and innovation, to attract and manage leading-edge research as in the journal, *Prospects*, and to develop new knowledge products such as, for example, a comparative analysis of curriculum development. Additional funds would also allow the IBE to offer easier and enhanced access to information and resources on curriculum development processes and products, in terms of both policy developments and accumulated knowledge and

experiences; and to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, experience and expertise in the field of curriculum development, particularly but not exclusively among Southern countries. It will also be possible to **increase analytical and advisory services** (including, for example, policy briefs, research briefs, literature reviews, working papers, concept papers). Furthermore, strengthened information sharing and exchange capacities (i.e. clearinghouse mechanism) will provide more effective support to IBE activities aimed at: enhancing networking to maximize the use of available expertise and existing experience; fostering awareness, capacity development, cooperation, and technical assistance in the field of curriculum; and contributing to the design, review and assessment of curriculum development policies and processes.

The progressive development of a **clearinghouse mechanism** will facilitate access to and easy retrieval of a wide range of information and resources on the curriculum and curriculum development processes. During the initial phase of its establishment, activities will focus on the development of a more dynamic website and database which will bring together several IBE resources, including the *Country Dossiers*, profiles of education systems from the database, *World Data on Education*, the digital library of National Reports, the curriculum collection (including curriculum frameworks), training tools for curriculum development (for example, the Resource Pack), working papers, alerts, news, and links to curriculum agencies. It will be necessary to categorize and classify content elements, and therefore tools such as a curriculum glossary, specialized terminology and an updated thesaurus will be developed.

In the successive phases of development (tentatively 2014/15 and 2016/17), the clearinghouse mechanism will allow for a more active sharing of curriculum-related information and knowledge involving

a variety of partners, including curriculum specialists and agencies, UNESCO field offices, ministries of education, National Commissions, and UNESCO Chairs. By 2016-2017, the curriculum clearinghouse will also start offering some value-added services, which can include for example a platform for building and managing rosters of experts and specialists as well as institutions, also intended to foster South-South cooperation and to broaden access to Southern experiences and expertise. Online networking opportunities including e-forums and online discussions on specific themes and topics, intended to facilitate cooperation between users (groups of experts, interest groups, communities of practice, etc.) can also be offered.

The development of additional services, which can be conceived as modules progressively enriching the curriculum clearinghouse, will depend on the needs and interests of partners and stakeholders as well as on the amount of funds made available. Priority services will be identified in collaboration with partners (both within and outside of UNESCO) and based on inputs from users. Starting from 2013, tools for assessing needs and priorities in terms of curriculum-related knowledge – and also for identifying and addressing emerging needs in the areas of capacity development and technical assistance – will be designed and periodically implemented.

Over the period 2012-2017 the IBE will continue compiling, systematizing and making available curriculum-related knowledge and information, also addressing identified needs, priorities and demands from users and partners, as well as adding value with analyses of curriculum trends. Databases such as *World Data on Education* and the *Country Dossiers* will be kept updated and curriculum-related collections expanded. Alert services will be produced on a regular basis and the IBE website will be continuously developed, keeping in line with technology developments.

While the progressive expansion of analytical services depends to a large extent on the availability of additional funds, in 2012-2013 it will be possible to exploit the existing IBE knowledge base and accumulated experience by organizing, for example, a global survey on instructional time in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). Worldwide surveys are expected to make available reliable data to inform policies, curriculum reforms and research. Future initiatives will be further defined in light of the progress made over 2012-2015 and on the basis of the outcomes of periodic assessments of the work carried out, including the situational analysis of curriculum development processes.

Developing synergies, enhancing networking opportunities and facilitating policy dialogue

For the IBE to be a Centre of Excellence in curriculum it is essential to strengthen partnerships, enhance collaboration schemes and improve networking opportunities with a strong focus on key actors and strategic partners, particularly curriculum specialists and curriculum development agencies, centres and departments. Since its inception (2005), the Community of Practice (COP) has played three main roles. First, it fosters inter-regional discussions on relevant issues (for example, the development of an inclusive curriculum; addressing socio-cultural diversity through the curriculum; competency-based approaches and the curriculum) through worldwide e-forums which involve educators and curriculum specialists from different regions. Second, it promotes the production and sharing of knowledge, mainly through case studies that are incorporated into the *Curriculum Resource Pack*, and published in the journal *Prospects* or in the *IBE Working Papers on Curriculum Issues*. Third, it facilitates inter-regional and regional exchanges on key issues informing educational and curricular agendas.

From 2013 onwards, the IBE envisages a new phase based on regional and national priorities and focused on developing the COP's potential as a community of curriculum developers and specialists producing and exchanging knowledge around processes of curriculum reform and change. In particular, capitalizing on its wide outreach, the COP will be progressively transformed into a hub of curriculum agencies and institutes from all UNESCO regions with the goal to foster South-South and North-South-South cooperation, sharing visions, experience and practices in key curriculum themes, and mobilizing high-level expertise. In addition, **a cycle of regional and sub-regional meetings** on curriculum issues and trends will be launched in order to allow the IBE to enrich its understanding of curriculum needs and practices in various contexts, to map regional, sub-regional and national trends, and to forge new partnerships in the different regions.

Furthermore, building upon the initial outcomes of the Diploma programme, the IBE will create communities of Diploma alumni, of facilitators/tutors, and of high-level curriculum specialists and experts involved in the implementation of the Diploma courses. These communities are conceived as small think tanks informing curriculum vision and discussion in an international comparative perspective and sharing professional practice in developing a quality inclusive curriculum.

Finally, since the 1930s the IBE has been organizing the International Conference on Education, **a major policy dialogue forum for ministers of education** 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. At the same time, the IBE will continue to **explore and**

take advantage of other policy dialogue options – particularly at regional, sub-regional and national levels – in harmony with its core functions and activities. Fostering evidence-based policy dialogue among institutions and stakeholders can take into account important issues such as: the role of curriculum as a tool to develop and sustain long-term educational visions and policies; the alignment between curricular and teacher education reforms, in particular with regard to rationale, objectives, and teaching and learning strategies; and the sharing of a common vision of curriculum development and assessment among curriculum departments and examinations boards/councils.

The suggested programme of work for 2012-2017 in the action areas of capacity development, technical support and policy advice, and knowledge production and management is presented in Figures 5 to 7. The overall IBE strategic framework for 2012-2017 is summarized in Figure 8.

All activities will have a **strong focus on results**, and support services to Member States will be the IBE's main priority. Planned initiatives and activities will be **closely monitored and regularly assessed**, and adjustments will be made where required to ensure optimal results and continuous alignment with the overall priorities of UNESCO in the field of education. Furthermore, strengthened networking with academic institutions and increased collaboration with ministries of education and curriculum agencies will allow the IBE to better define **a curriculum research agenda in line with current and future needs and demands**.

FIGURE 5

Programme of Work 2012-2017: Capacity Development

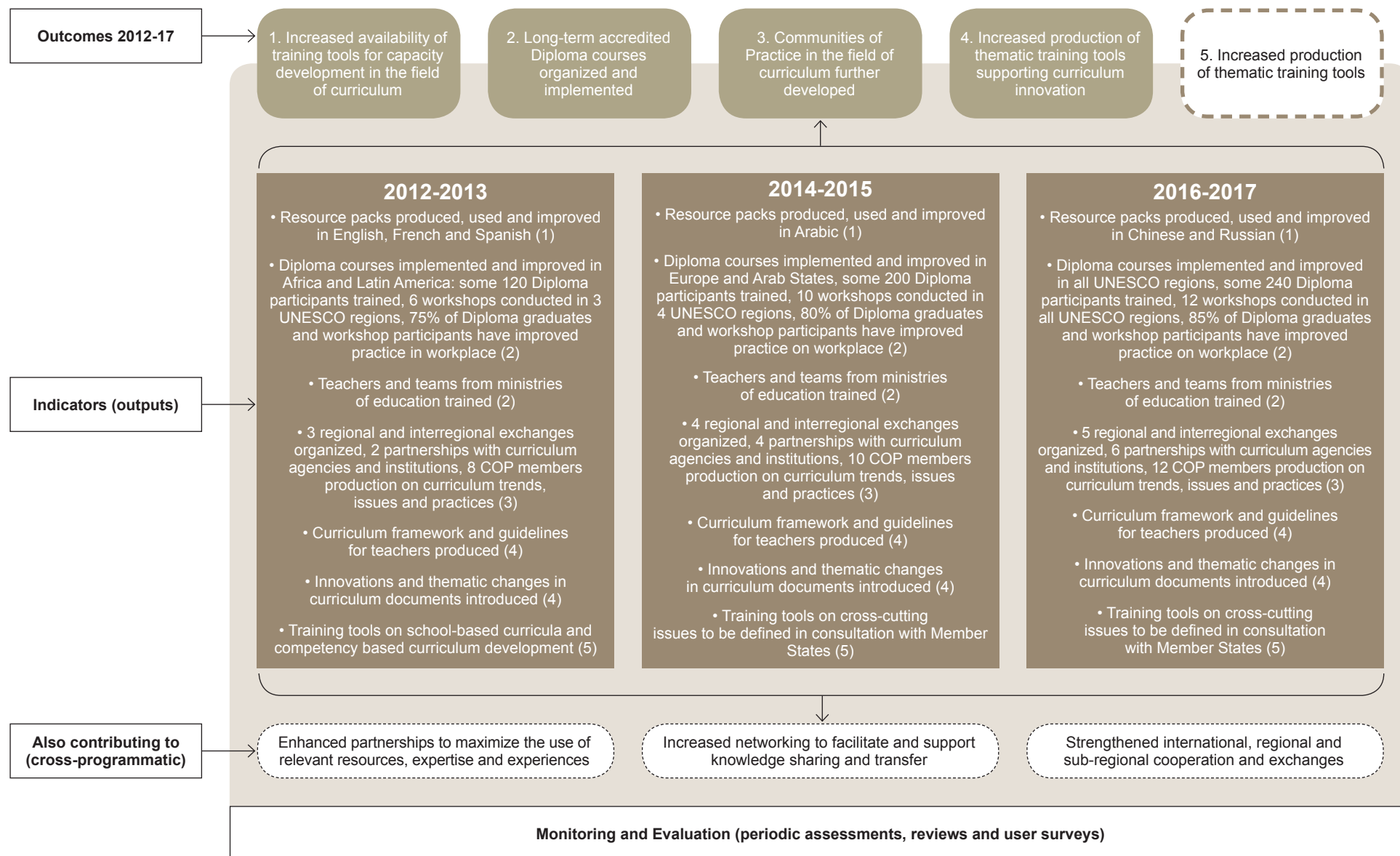


FIGURE 6

Programme of Work 2012-2017: Technical Support and Policy Advice

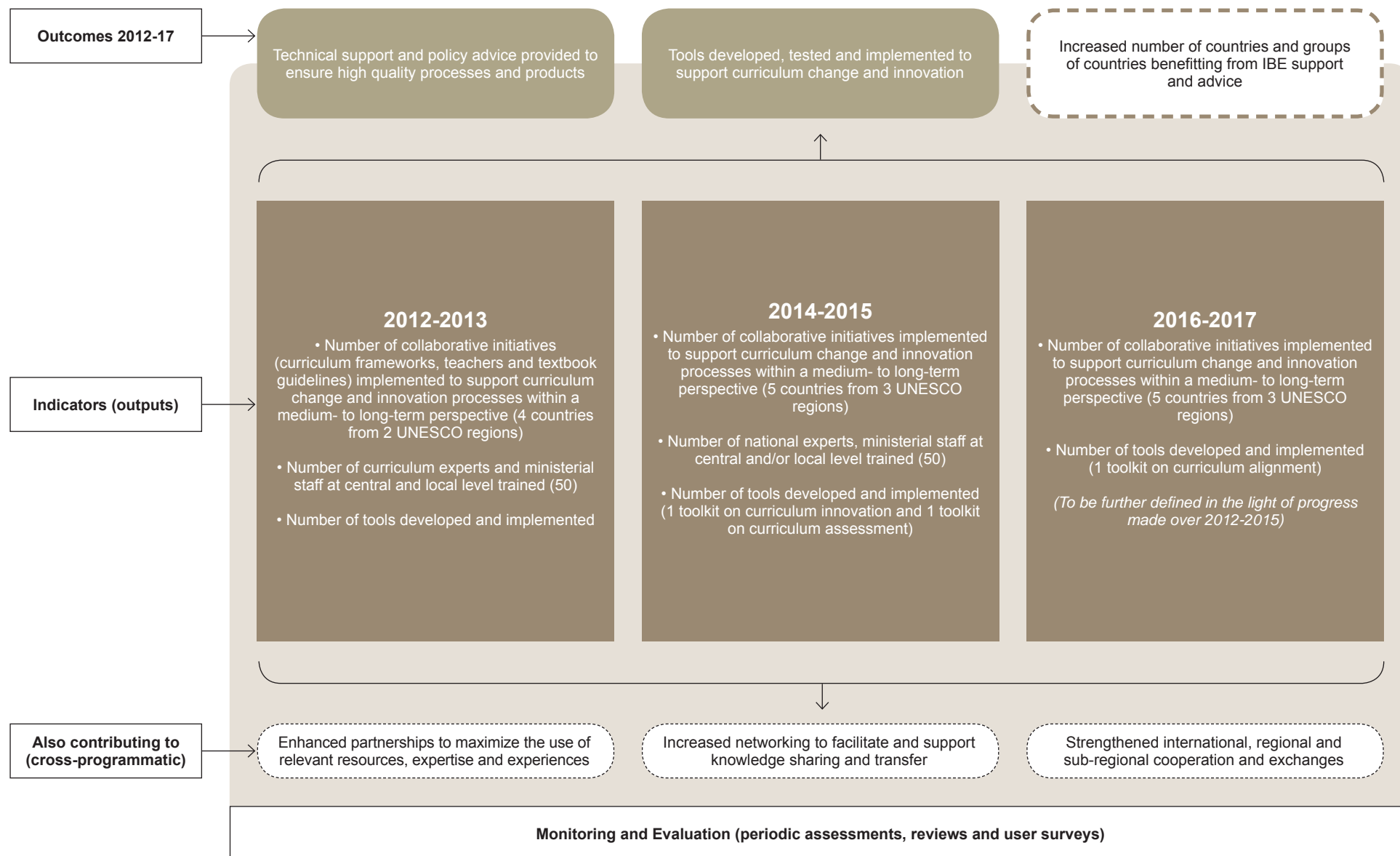


FIGURE 7

Programme of Work 2012-2017: Knowledge Production and Management

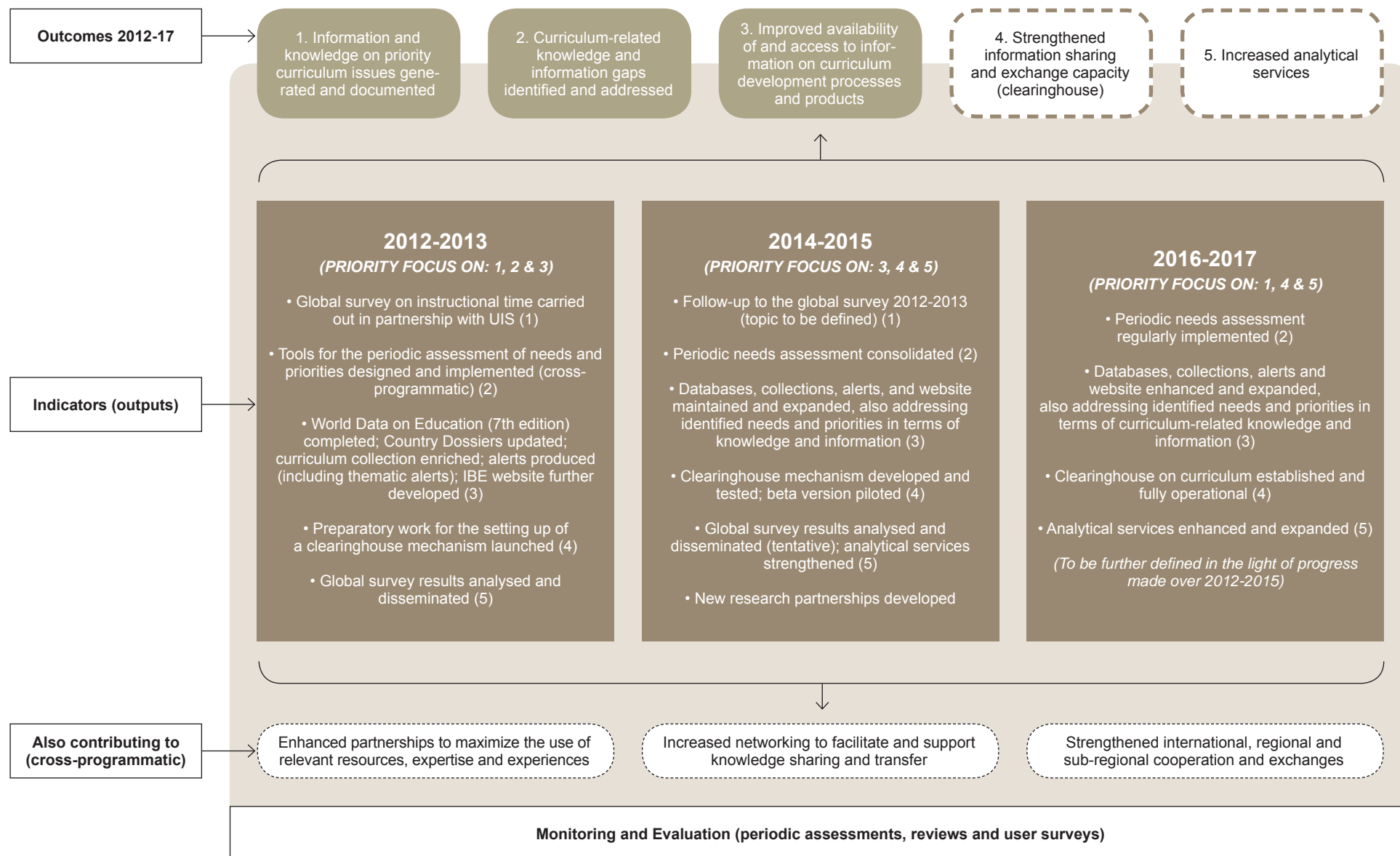
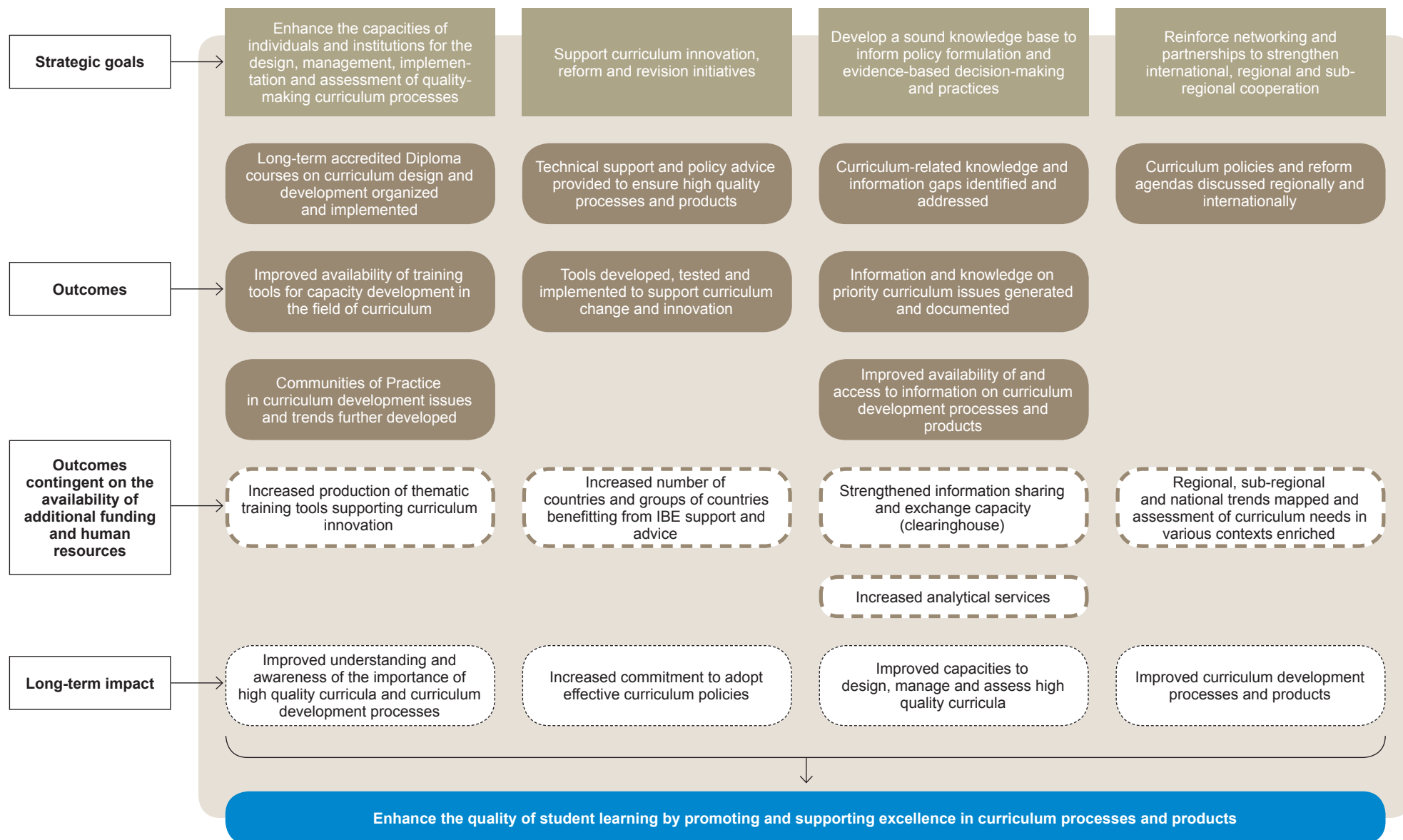


FIGURE 8

IBE Overall Strategic Framework 2012-2017





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