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Foreword

The International Bureau of Education: a global centre and field-oriented institute promoting quality Education for All through curriculum development

The International Bureau of Education (IBE) is UNESCO's institute of education with the longest tradition. The IBE's accumulated wealth of comparative knowledge and experience on education systems positions it as a world-class centre in assisting and advancing the capacity of Member States in the field of curriculum development.

Its particular focus on the curriculum, and on the contents, methods and structures of education is especially relevant today when many countries – developed, developing and in transition – are undergoing curriculum reforms and adjustments to align the content and structures of their education systems with globalization, information and communication technologies, the fast-changing demands of knowledge, and to the requirements of sustainable development and of living peacefully together.

This is especially important for countries that are still far from achieving the goals of EFA due to the impact of conflict, pervasive inequality and poverty.



As education systems expand to satisfy demographic and democratic pressures, as well as in keeping with governments' commitments to exploit educational opportunities, the challenges of addressing the EFA goals – especially quality Education for All – also become greater. The inclusion of diverse student populations in the system creates further opportunities for learning and poses new challenges for teachers and learners alike. More specialized knowledge and teaching methods are needed to properly address various learning styles and the needs of children coming from different cultural backgrounds. Recent international, regional and national assessments have indicated weak and unequal learning outcomes in many countries where such expansion has taken place. New approaches to the curriculum, to subjects and cross-cutting themes, to pedagogical methods and learning materials should be aligned with these requirements. Inclusiveness and improvement in quality must go hand-in-hand.

Education for All should contribute to societal and personal well-being by developing human capacities for living together in peace, development and justice. The International Bureau of Education is being asked to play a key role in promoting the development of curricula and learning materials in different regions of the world. The present document has been approved as a 'rolling' strategy for 2008–2013 by the Council of the IBE at its fifty-sixth session (Geneva, 23–25 January 2008), chaired by the Minister of Education of Ecuador, President of the Council.

The following sections outline how, within its field of competence as UNESCO's centre of excellence for curriculum development, the IBE intends to fulfil its challenging task and contribute to UNESCO's action in favour of quality Education for All during the period 2008–2013.

Clementina Acedo

Director

International Bureau of Education





Global challenges and UNESCO priorities

The world that is taking shape at the beginning of the twenty-first century is full of opportunities and encouraging developments, but is also affected by growing social inequalities and exclusion. Global forces are bringing positive change, but are also generating uncertainty and anxiety. The scientific community is mapping the human genome and access to education has reached unprecedented levels, but treatable diseases and armed conflicts kill thousands of people every day. Facing the challenges and the complex problems of the contemporary world UNESCO, as a specialized agency of the United Nations, is determined to “contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education.”

Knowledge and education are increasingly considered as key factors in sustainable development and economic growth. The Ministers of Education of almost 100 countries attending the round-table on Education and Economic Development, held in

Paris on 19–20 October 2007 on the occasion of the thirty-fourth session of the General Conference of UNESCO, reaffirmed their commitment to quality education as a right for everyone, an education that is inclusive, fosters equity and gender equality, and is a force for social stability, peace and conflict resolution.

The Ministers of Education also reaffirmed their commitment: (i) to strengthening linkages between education and economic development, so that among others “curricula respond to the new demands of the global market and knowledge economy, providing skills such as communication, critical thinking, self-confidence, science and technology education, environmental knowledge, and learning how to go on learning”; and (ii) to sustaining development through education, so that “education transmits the knowledge, values and the skills needed to make development sustainable, in all parts of the world, especially among youth who will take charge of the future”.



The massive expansion of primary education worldwide raises new challenges and debates concerning the design and contents of basic education programmes and post-primary levels of schooling.

The Medium-Term Strategy of UNESCO for 2008–2013

The Medium-Term Strategy of UNESCO for 2008–2013 focuses on two sets of international development goals to be attained by 2015: the eight *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs), adopted in 2000 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, and the six *Education for All (EFA) goals*, adopted in the same year at the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal. Priority is given to Africa and gender equality; specific targeted interventions are envisaged for youth, the least-developed countries, and small island developing states.

UNESCO's Strategy is structured around five overarching objectives, and in the area of education *the objective is to attain quality education for all and lifelong education* through two strategic programme objectives: (i) strengthening UNESCO's global lead and co-ordination role for EFA and

providing support to national leadership in favour of EFA; and (ii) developing policies, capacities and tools for quality education for all and lifelong education, as well as promoting education for sustainable development.

Under the overarching objective for education, and as an integral part of UNESCO, the International Bureau of Education (IBE) is being asked to play a crucial role in promoting the development of curricula and learning materials in different regions. The following chapters outline how, within its field of specialization as UNESCO's centre of excellence for curriculum development, the IBE intends to fulfil this challenging task and contribute to UNESCO action in favour of quality education for all during the period 2008–2013, with a special emphasis on the Education for All goals 3 and 6.





Education for All Goals



- 1.** Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- 2.** Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to a complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- 3.** Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;
- 4.** Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
- 5.** Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;
- 6.** Improving all aspects of the quality of education, and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills.

Quality Curricula and the IBE

The curriculum is a crucial component of any educational process. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, education systems are facing the challenges of the global market and the knowledge economy. National education authorities around the world increasingly address the challenge of improving the quality of learning outcomes through curriculum reform, and curricula must respond to the new demands by providing skills and building competences that are relevant to local and global needs.

The curriculum sets forth a systematic selection and organization of teaching and learning content and methods by addressing questions such as what students should learn, why, how, and how well. In the past, the curriculum was designed merely from the perspective of its cultural transmission functions with its structure consequently reflecting discrete areas of knowledge and human action. Given the complexity of today's ever-changing world, contemporary approaches to curriculum development far exceed the traditional understanding

of curricula as merely plans of study or lists of prescribed content. The rate of social change makes necessary a process of continuous adjustment of the curriculum, which in turn requires new institutional approaches and capacities. Moreover, a curriculum aimed at building competences encompasses much more than only concepts and factual data to be mastered and reproduced accurately by learners in the context of examinations and testing processes.

Today, the curriculum has to facilitate the acquisition of attitudes, values, skills, knowledge and competences that allow learners to face old and new challenges and opportunities successfully. Taking into consideration the importance of the curriculum for individual and societal development, it is commonly accepted that, in order to effectively foster learning, educational contents, methods and structures need to be permanently adjusted to changes occurring in science, technology, culture, economy and social life.





Quality Curricula

There are many on-going discussions internationally with regard to what makes a good curriculum and how to balance tradition and innovation. Despite differences of approach, national education authorities are generally looking into new solutions to improve the quality of learning outcomes based on curriculum provisions that take into account different criteria. For example, curricula:

- need to take into account the learners' different needs and interests, as well as the local and global contexts; they should foster the whole development of individuals in compliance with their potential, should consider different learning styles and promote learner-friendly approaches.
- should be up-to-date, which means that they should avoid obsolete and irrelevant aspects and integrate in ways appropriate to the context of learners new developments in knowledge, culture, science, technology, economy and other areas of social life.
- should be based on inclusive approaches fostering increased access to quality education and equal opportunities for learning; they should integrate and promote universal values, and promote lifelong learning and competences for learning to live together in a globalized world.

Curriculum development needs addressed by the IBE

In providing assistance and support to countries in the process of curriculum reform and change, the IBE has been able to identify some relevant needs in current curriculum development processes.

Post-conflict and transition countries are usually in need of reshaping their education systems and curricula in compliance with new goals, such as to foster social cohesion, promote peaceful and constructive management of diversity and a culture of human rights and peace, as well as emphasizing scientific and technological progress in order to support economic growth and equitable welfare.

Many countries are looking for solutions to fight poverty and social exclusion by equipping learners with the competences, knowledge and skills to integrate into the world of work and adult life successfully, such as entrepreneurial, communication and social skills. Given the importance of environmental issues, most countries are looking into strategies to foster education for sustainable development including environmental awareness and risk preparedness, consumer education and ethics of local and international production and trade.



Most countries, regardless of their development profile, are also looking into new ways of fostering learning to live together, including human rights and citizenship education, education for peace, and fighting against marginalization and all kinds of discrimination.

Due to increased access to international comparisons in education, countries are also keen to improve their education systems and curricula adopting as a reference ‘good’ policies and practices and international ‘standards’ in order to meet the challenges and opportunities of the knowledge society and of an increasingly interdependent world. In general, there is a need for increased exchanges and sharing of experiences, learning from both failures and successes, and capitalizing on local experiences, traditions

The IBE’s mission

The IBE is the UNESCO institute specializing in educational contents, methods and structures. Its overall mission is to contribute to the attainment of quality education for all. To this end, the IBE builds networks to share knowledge on and foster national capacities for curriculum change and development in all regions of the world. It aims to introduce innovative approaches in curriculum design and implementation, to improve practical skills, and facilitate international dialogue on educational policies and practices. The IBE works in partnership with national education authorities, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions, and

offers technical assistance, training, policy support and a wide range of resources, tools and materials.

The IBE promotes a comprehensive approach to curriculum development addressing all relevant aspects, from curriculum policies, as part of the overall education decision-making process, to advocacy, development of curricula and learning materials, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of curriculum processes, as well as curriculum assessment. It also takes into account the relationships between the curriculum and evaluation, teacher education and training, teaching and learning strategies, and learning environments.

The IBE was founded as a private, non-governmental organization in 1925. In 1929, under new statutes, the IBE extended membership to governments. Thus, it became the first intergovernmental organization in the field of education. Among its founding fathers were Édouard Claparède and Adolphe Ferrière. The name of Jean Piaget, professor of psychology at the University of Geneva, became closely associated with the IBE, which he led for almost forty years. During the same period, Pedro Rosselló was the assistant director. Since 1969, the IBE has been an integral part of UNESCO, while retaining intellectual and functional autonomy. The IBE is governed by an intergovernmental Council consisting of twenty-eight Member States elected by the General Conference of UNESCO.

Instead of imposing predefined models or prescribing solutions applicable everywhere, the IBE facilitates access to different experiences and assists curriculum specialists and relevant stakeholders in gaining new perspectives on complex issues and making their own informed decisions by exploring the advantages and disadvantages of different options in compliance with their own contexts and needs. The IBE’s approach is based on principles, such as building on existing strengths and achievements;





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

The IBE is able to conduct and commission studies and research mobilizing high-level specialists and expertise in close collaboration with internationally renowned academic institutions. Decisions regarding the curriculum and the actual learning process are taken at different levels by multiple actors, from teachers in isolated rural schools who have to prepare lessons adapted to the local context for multigrade classrooms, to experts selecting and organizing specific learning contents, to national teams in charge of the definition of curricular frameworks, and ministers of education who need to discuss new curricula with a range of national and international stakeholders. Most of these actors are not accus-

tomed to value and exploit, or even conduct, research for informing and orientating their decisions. Many researchers and scholars are not accustomed to communicating and disseminating their findings to this particular kind of audience or to the general public. Given its specialized function within UNESCO and as a field-oriented institute, an important role of the IBE is to operate as the interface between educational research and practice, collaborating with a diversity of partners in the task of promoting informed innovative curriculum policies and practices for improving the quality of education and learning.

The real question is how to ensure that Education for All contributes to living together in peace, to development and to justice. One way of achieving this goal is to focus on action, capacity-building, policy dialogue and research aimed at educational change with a view to improving contents, methods and structures, mainly through curriculum development.



Partners and resources

The IBE is a small institute in terms of staff and funding but, considering the limited resources available, it can be estimated that its products and services are very impressive. In order to successfully respond to the challenge of a significant mandate associated with modest resources to carry out its mission, the IBE systematically joins its efforts with a wide range of partners, both within and beyond UNESCO. As a result, its field-based assistance and support are normally delivered in collaboration with UNESCO regional and field offices, and in some cases also involve the participation of other educational institutes in order to maximize impact and take full advantage of the rich and diversified expertise and accumulated experience, not only of UNESCO, but also of all its partners.

The IBE also collaborates with many academic institutions and research centres in several regions of the world, and im-

plements activities in co-operation with regional, international, bilateral and non-governmental organizations, including, among others, the Central American Co-ordination for Education and Culture, the Organization of Iberoamerican States for Education, the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), UNICEF, UNAIDS, the World Bank, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and the Open Society Institute.

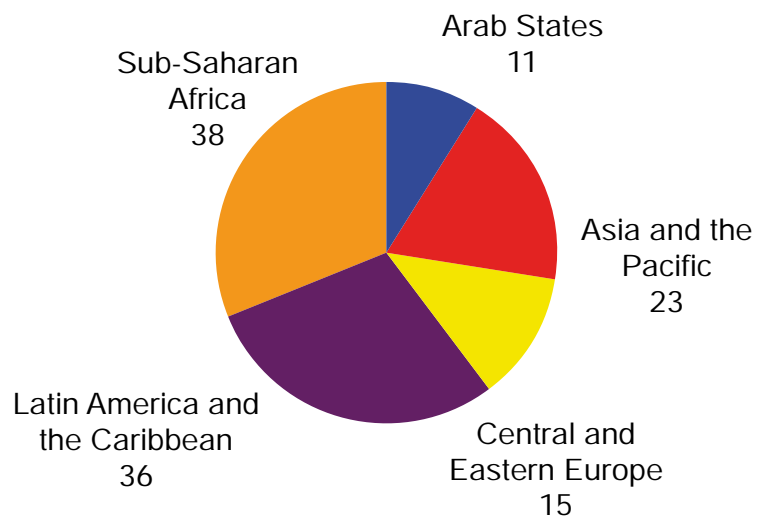
Between 2002 and 2007, IBE activities were financed by the UNESCO regular budget and the funds-in-trust mechanism, as well as by many governments, including Argentina, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Japan, Kuwait, Mauritius, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States of America. For the ambitious strategy of 2008–2013 presented in the following pages, additional efforts will be required in order to mobilize the necessary financial resources.



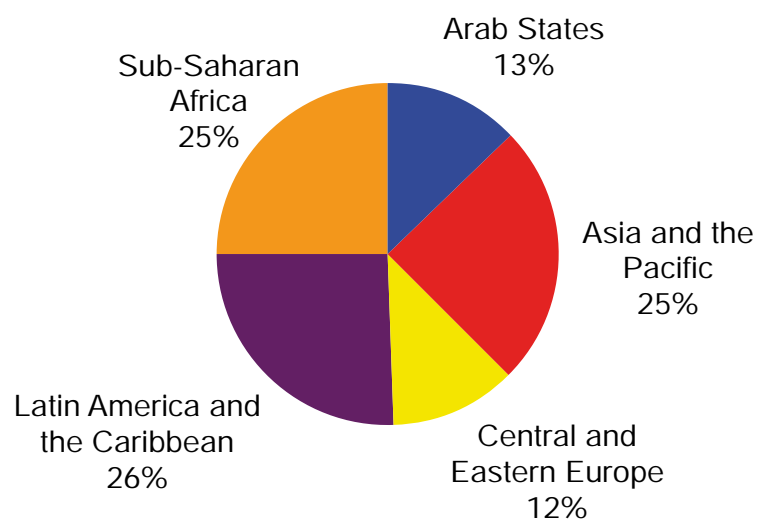


Countries and participants involved in the IBE activities over 2002–2007

Number of countries involved in the IBE activities 2002–2007, by region (Total = 123 countries)



Participants in the IBE activities 2002–2007, percentage by region (Total = 2,438 participants)





Over the period 2008–2013 the IBE will support UNESCO action aimed at attaining quality education for all and promoting the development of quality curricula.

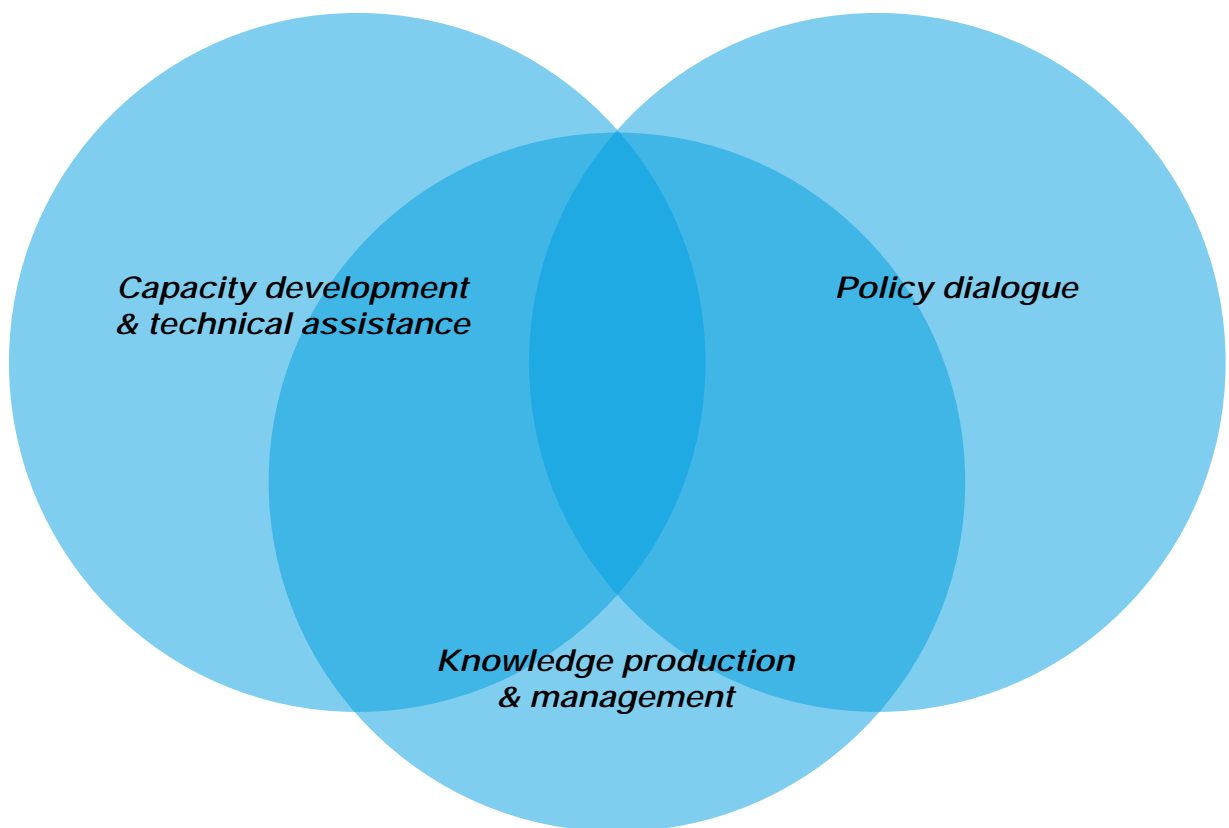
The IBE intends to work towards:

Enhancing the capacities for the design, management and implementation of curriculum development processes among specialists, practitioners and decision-makers.

Improving the quality of curriculum-making processes and products.

Informing innovative policies and practices in the field of curriculum reform and change.

With its specialized expertise, knowledge and networks in the field of educational contents, methods and structures, the IBE contributes to the attainment of quality Education for All through:



Contributing to quality Education for All

Strategic orientations

During the new strategic cycle, the IBE will respond to the emerging needs of countries and support them to cope with contemporary and future challenges and opportunities impacting on the quality of education, in particular the contents, structures and methods of learning.

The IBE's intervention will especially target poor, transition, conflict- and disaster-affected countries with a view to fostering sustainable development, inclusive societies and intercultural understanding.

In contributing to the design and effective implementation of quality and inclusive education curricula, ranging from general frameworks and syllabi to textbooks and other learning resources and strategies, the IBE will pay special attention to particular learning areas such as language, science and mathematics education, and social studies, as well as to cross-curricular issues and dimensions encompassing: learning to live together and peace education; poverty alleviation; gender equality; HIV and AIDS education; sustainable development; information and communication technology (ICT) in education and e-learning.

For 2008–2013, the IBE intends to improve its services and support mainly through:

- (i) a stronger link between curriculum development and assessment;
- (ii) the development and effective usage of training materials and tools for innovative curriculum change and implementation;

- (iii) the expansion and diversification of forms of training in the field of curriculum development, also leading to formal certification through partnerships with relevant academic institutions in different regions;
- (iv) the strengthening of links between pre- and in-service teacher education and training and curriculum development to facilitate effective curriculum change;
- (v) the involvement of schools and school networks in processes of curriculum change by linking top-down and bottom-up approaches;
- (vi) the enhancement of textbook quality in line with innovative curriculum changes and teaching and learning approaches;
- (vii) the improvement of the knowledge base through analytical added value and the development of an on-line platform for knowledge sharing and collaborative action in the field of curriculum development; and
- (viii) the reinforcement of policy dialogue as a mechanism of consensus building in curriculum reform processes.





Capacity Development

Assets

Over the period 2002–2007 the IBE worked towards strengthened co-operation between and within regions and countries, creating new opportunities for sharing common concerns, ideas and practices with regard to quality curriculum development and change processes. A considerable amount of experience, expertise, training resources and knowledge has been and continues to be accumulated through the implementation of action-research programmes, field-based action, as well as through seminars and training workshops carried out in different regions; a wide range of curriculum institutions and specialists worldwide are involved in this collective effort.

Capacity-building activities concentrate on the strategic dimension of assistance and advice to, and training of, national teams responsible for curriculum change and development processes. In particular, the IBE has contributed to many *comprehensive curriculum development processes in post-conflict and conflict-affected societies*, such as Afghanistan, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Caucasus Region, Guatemala, Iraq and Kosovo.

Since 2005, IBE networking activities have been focusing on the creation of and support to a *Community of Practice* (COP) in curriculum development. This unique global network of curriculum specialists, practitioners, national officers and researchers represents: a vehicle for sustained and diversified international co-operation within and across coun-

tries and regions, including South-South and interregional modalities of co-operation; a platform for increased exchange, collective production and dissemination of knowledge, as well as collaborative action in the field of curriculum; and a tool for forging partnerships and sharing expertise and experience towards quality curriculum-making processes and products. At the end of 2007 – a key year in the development of the Community – the COP comprised over 700 members in ninety countries.

The IBE has increasingly become a facilitator and provider of field-based *technical assistance and advisory services*, including capacity development, in the context of national curriculum making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes.

IBE support, normally provided in strong partnerships with UNESCO field and regional education offices, is being designed in response to the concrete demands and needs of countries. This ranges from organ-



izing intensive training activities for the enhancement of local capacities and strengths to assisting national education authorities, curriculum agencies and their partners in the context of comprehensive processes of curriculum reform and change. Within the

framework of its field-based activities and projects, and on the basis of accumulated experience, international and local expertise, the IBE also started producing customized materials, *handbooks and tools for capacity development*, targeting the specific competences that curriculum developers and decision-makers need in order to successfully cope with emerging needs and challenges.

Technical assistance and advisory services have also been provided to countries that are currently undergoing comprehensive processes of curriculum change and improvement in the light of the EFA goals, especially with regard to equitable access to quality education or in areas such as learning to live together, human rights education and citizenship education. The IBE also pays attention to some critical elements that have an impact on learning (for example, instructional time, curriculum integration, competency-based approaches), not only at the level of research and information, but also in conjunction with operational activities, as in the case of the countries served by the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS), and also for Central America.

The high level of integration of its programmes makes it possible for the IBE to offer a comprehensive service which usually combines research, action, capacity development and support to policy dialogue. An example is the IBE's programme for *HIV and AIDS education*, which is part of the UNESCO and UNAIDS co-ordinated

response to the pandemic. In contributing to the design and implementation of relevant and sustainable curriculum-based responses for HIV and AIDS education, during the period 2002–2007 the IBE has developed: a clearinghouse providing access to selected materials and good practices; a set of tools, included in a manual for integrating HIV and AIDS education into the curriculum, for analysing existing educational resources, identifying promising approaches already tested elsewhere, and highlighting good practices; as well as a capacity-building component mainly targeting countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to

Examples of training materials and tools for innovative curriculum development

- *Asia-Pacific tool for curriculum development: leading and facilitating curriculum change.*
- *Handbook for primary and secondary education curriculum developers: how to design curriculum frameworks and syllabi.*
- *Manual to integrate HIV and AIDS Education in the curriculum.*
- *Guidelines to integrate human rights education into teacher education and training.*
- *Guidelines to integrate competency-based approaches in primary and secondary education (for curriculum developers and teacher education and training).*

promote the exchange of good practices, the design of training modules, the definition of guidelines for country-level implementation, and the enhancement of policy dialogue and partnerships.

Another example is the project *Curriculum innovation, poverty alleviation and peace education*, covering nine countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Congo, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger and Rwanda). Started in 2004 at the request of the participating countries, it involves national teams of high-level curriculum specialists from the Ministries of Education. Adopting a participatory





approach combining research, action and training, the work with the national teams focuses on the development of capacities for: analysing the complex interrelations between the basic education curriculum and poverty; identifying the responses that the curriculum could bring in terms of values, attitudes, skills and knowledge

that learners need to overcome poverty and live meaningful and productive lives; and defining the most appropriate strategies for curriculum change. Moreover, through the project an on-going dialogue and exchange of expertise has been established among countries, the IBE, as well as with other UNESCO and international experts.



The project *Curriculum change and social cohesion in conflict-affected societies* (2002–2004) was also an example of collaborative action-research. The aim of the project was to develop a better understanding of the issues that determine legitimate and sustainable processes of change in the school curriculum with a view to enhancing social cohesion.

Curriculum development in Afghanistan

Since 2002, the IBE has supported the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan in the process of developing a new curriculum for primary and secondary education. Based on the outcomes of a two-week intensive capacity-building workshop attended by the national team (October 2002), a new Curriculum Framework was finalized and endorsed by the Government in July 2003. Another two-week workshop was organized in July 2003 to explore implications of the new Framework for primary education syllabi and textbook development. The IBE also helped the Ministry of Education to develop a user-friendly version of the Framework for dissemination among teachers and parents.

In 2006 the IBE resumed work in Afghanistan in the context of the UNESCO-led initiative 'Reconstruction of the Afghanistan Education System'. A two-week workshop held in Kabul, and attended by more than 90 education specialists and stakeholders, was devoted to the drafting of a revised Curriculum Framework for secondary education. As a follow-up, a one-month working session attended by more than 40 decision-makers and curriculum specialists was organized in Amman, Jordan, in order to draft syllabi for seven learning areas in line with the orientations of the new Curriculum Framework for secondary education.

Examples of capacity development activities and technical and advisory services, 2001–2007

- *Development of a new curriculum framework for primary and secondary education in Kosovo in collaboration with UNICEF and the United Nations Mission in Kosovo;*
- *Capacity-building for curriculum and textbook developers, as well as development of new curriculum frameworks, syllabi and textbooks in Afghanistan;*
- *Training of curriculum developers for primary and secondary education in Bosnia-Herzegovina;*
- *Instructional time allocation and curriculum integration in the ABEGS countries;*
- *Integrating competency-based approaches in primary education and human rights education across the education system in Mauritius;*
- *Secondary education reform in Kuwait;*
- *Developing and pilot-testing secondary education syllabi using a competency-based approach in Guatemala;*
- *Integrating the HIV and AIDS education curriculum in the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa;*
- *Curriculum innovation and poverty alleviation in the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa;*
- *Capacity development for policy dialogue in the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa.*





Prospects

For 2008–2013, the strategic objective is to contribute to the development of the capacities of specialists, practitioners and decision-makers in the design, management and implementation of the quality of curriculum-making processes and inclusive curricula. The IBE will work towards:

Consolidating the global network in curriculum development in order to facilitate the development of conceptual orientations and frameworks for quality basic education and sustained collective action in the field of curriculum reform and change at the local, regional and interregional levels.

Supporting countries in processes of innovative curriculum change and effective assessment.

Developing, pilot-testing and promoting the effective usage of a set of training materials and tools for innovative curriculum change and implementation.

Expanding and diversifying forms of training in the domain of curriculum development through partnerships with relevant academic institutions in different regions.

Providing professional support and advice to contribute to improved curriculum development processes and products through action-oriented, participatory approaches and effective partnerships among relevant stakeholders.



Knowledge Production and Management

Assets

The IBE has a long tradition of producing and disseminating comparable information on education systems. This tradition has been reshaped according to the new mission defined at the end of the 1990s, and during 2002–2007 the IBE progressively focused on support for training, applied research and decision-making in the field of curriculum development.

As was confirmed by the external evaluation of the Institute carried out at the end of 2005, the IBE's comprehensive set of resources on curriculum development is unique and highly valued within UNESCO and by external stakeholders; the provision of practical information and knowledge on curriculum development processes is also particularly appreciated. Furthermore, the IBE's clearinghouse function in this area is one of its most valuable assets and a source of added value.

The comprehensive set of resources on curriculum development is comprised of

*Over the period 2002–2007 the **Observatory of Educational Trends** has produced: thirty-seven studies, many of them as contributions to the *Global Monitoring Report on EFA*; three editions of the database *World Data on Education*; several specialized thematic compilations with a global focus; and profiles of early childhood education and care provision in some 100 countries prepared in collaboration with UNICEF offices and ministries of education worldwide.*

databases, reports, studies, working papers, publications, specialized collections and tools. Through its *Observatory of Educational Trends* and the *Resource Bank* the IBE compiles, produces, and disseminates quality and up-to-date information and analyses on education systems, existing curricula, curriculum development processes and learning materials from around the world, together with examples of good practices and innovations. This knowledge base – consisting of a wide range of specialized resources – can be exploited for a variety of purposes, including training and decision-making, and facilitate informed dialogue on specific educational and curriculum issues.

Both the Observatory and the Resource Bank support action in favour of EFA by contributing to the identification of trends in curriculum development and good practices and to their broad dissemination, thus informing curriculum development policies and practices. During the period 2002–2007 the IBE commissioned and conducted specialized studies on diverse curricular topics, such as textbooks, instructional time, educational aims, competences and competency-based approaches in curriculum development processes. The IBE also encouraged international researchers and practitioners in national contexts to draw upon its cross-national compilations of curriculum information and resources, not only to facilitate broader dissemination but also to generate intellectual debate.

It is important to consider broader school curriculum research which incorporates regional and/or global perspectives into the changing nature of curricular policies and practices in particular contexts.





Since 2002, the IBE has also contributed to the Global Monitoring Report on EFA through commissioned thematic studies and compilations using the data made available by the Resource Bank and the Observatory. These studies and trends analyses, based on official information on education systems worldwide, have been carried out in collaboration with international researchers and specialists and in close co-operation with the Monitoring Report team.

Key components of the IBE's clearing-house function are online databases, such as World Data on Education, the Country Dossiers and Curriculum Materials and Good Practices concerning HIV and AIDS education. The sixth edition of *World Data on Education* (2006/07), also available on CD-ROM, contains the profiles of 161 education systems and a considerable wealth of information on curricula and the organization of curricular content, including data on instructional time. The *Country Dossiers* offer access to a variety of information

resources on education in each country, including links to on-line curricula and curricular resources; since 2007, the database has been fully integrated into the UNESCO portal, thus contributing to the enhancement of specialized services offered by the Organization. The fourth edition of the *Curriculum Databank for HIV and AIDS Education* (2007), also available on CD-ROM, provides access to over 550 documents including curriculum-related resources, teaching and learning materials, teaching aids and case studies of good practices.

The *IBE website*, created in 1996, has become an essential tool for expanding access to specialized resources, products

Educational ideas, principles and reforms need to be systematically analysed and carefully understood, especially if real improvements to the quality of education are to be realized.



and services. The website is continuously developed in order to offer enhanced and easier access to information, which is also made available in different languages so as to reach a wider audience (an average of 1.3 million unique visitors in 2007). The website is also the backbone for IBE communication and is a method to collect, preserve, create and share multilingual knowledge. It is user- and service-oriented, providing relevant content to constituents, as well as the general public. Given the rapid progress in computer technologies, the website is now ready to be transformed into a dynamic online collaborative platform for curriculum development, at the service of the worldwide network of researchers and practitioners and, more generally, the UNESCO knowledge portal.

Most of the publications and thematic series produced by the IBE are made available through the website. These include the *Educational Practices* series, *proceedings* and *reports* of meetings focusing on curriculum development, *monographs* describing relevant innovations, and *working papers* intended to share interim results of ongoing applied research on curriculum issues. The IBE also produces *Prospects*, UNESCO's quarterly review of comparative education, and *Studies in Comparative Education*, a long-standing series which focuses on educational issues and trends within a comparative perspective. Through its website, the IBE also gives access to the digitized series of the *National Reports on the Development of Education*, submitted by countries from the earliest sessions (1930s) of the International Conference on Education. This is a unique collection which has been exploited over decades in a wide range of studies and trend analyses by researchers and scholars worldwide.

The IBE *Documentation Centre* collects and makes available materials and information resources pertaining to the content

of education, curriculum development and education systems. Originating in the International Library on Education which was started with the creation of the IBE in 1925, the collection includes historical materials on school systems as well as educational movements of the first part of the twentieth century. There are over 100,000 books and documents in the collection, and over 100 current journal titles. Over the period 2002–2007 systematic efforts have been made to build up a comprehensive collection of curricula and curriculum-related materials. The collection's historical depth and wide geographic span make it an important resource for researchers and practitioners interested in curricula and education systems.

*The IBE and the International Academy of Education have collaborated since 1999 on the preparation of the series **Educational Practices**. The documents in the series provide a synthesis of evidence-based research on the most effective methods for the improvement of learning. High-level scholars and researchers write concise and easily understood summaries of their research on a particular topic in the form of ten to twelve illustrated teaching principles. Issues addressed in the **Educational Practices** in 1999–2007 range from teaching in general, creating safe schools, using new media, to preventing HIV and AIDS in schools, improving student achievement in mathematics, academic and socio-emotional learning, teaching additional languages and tutoring. The series is usually produced in English but several issues have been translated in many other languages, including Albanian, Catalan, Chinese, Czech, Dutch, German, Greek, Korean, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish, Swahili, and Swedish.*





Taking full advantage of new technologies, the Centre has developed *alerting services and digests* of online resources including reports, publications, websites, and news – pertaining to curriculum development, education systems and educational trends – which are regularly made available to the IBE network of curriculum specialists in almost ninety countries, as well as other education specialists. The Documentation Centre also maintains and develops the *UNESCO-IBE Education Thesaurus*, a tool for indexing and retrieving educational data recorded in electronic databases, which is used by many educational documentation centres around the world. The IBE's documents and publications are systematically integrated into the database UNESCO Documents and Publications (UNESDOC/UNESBIB) thus enriching UNESCO's platform for access to and the use, dissemination and sharing of knowledge in the field of education. For example, during 2006–2007, IBE documents and publications have been downloaded more than 300,000 times from UNESDOC.



Prospects

For the period 2008–2013, the IBE's strategic objective is to consolidate, enrich and further expand a knowledge base and a variety of specialized information resources on curricula and curriculum development processes to be exploited for a wide range of purposes, including training and informed innovative policies and practices, and to be broadly disseminated and shared for improved action in favour of quality education for all.

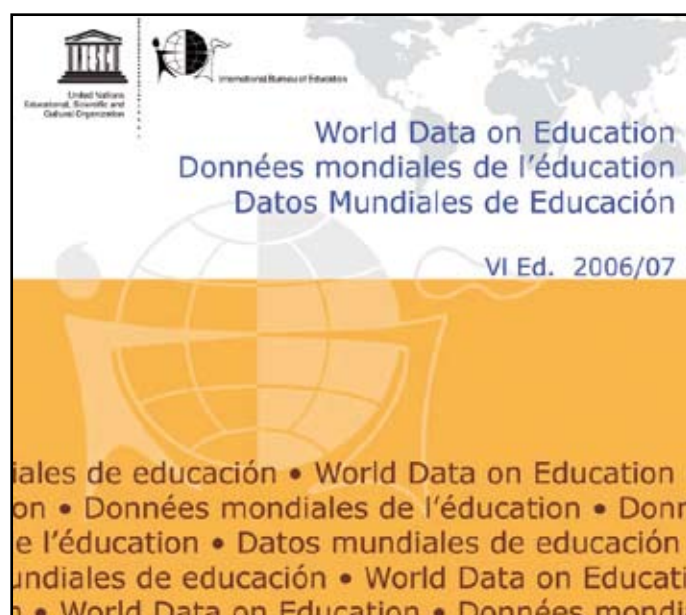
Capitalizing on its strengths and achievements, the IBE intends to work towards:

Building a robust knowledge base, including specialized information resources and a set of studies and trend analyses, on curricula and curriculum development processes in the service of researchers, trainers, practitioners and decision-makers.

Strengthening clearinghouse and information services through updated, expanded and enriched databases; seamless access to wide-ranging collections, in particular those related to the curriculum; expanded alerting services; and digitized materials.

Developing an online platform for increased knowledge sharing and collaborative action in the field of curriculum development, intended to support a worldwide network of researchers and practitioners, and more generally the enhancement of the UNESCO knowledge portal.

Streamlining services and access to materials and resources through collaboration with all the UNESCO constituencies, as well as external partners, in order to maximize efficiency and minimize duplication of effort.





Policy Dialogue

Assets

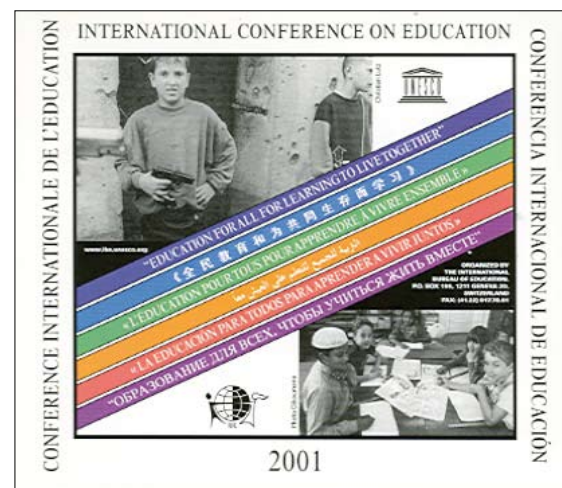
Curriculum development and the definition, selection and organization of educational contents encompass both a technical and a political dimension. The school curriculum reflects changing philosophical and ideological principles and integrates a variety of social, political and pedagogical assumptions. As a process, curriculum development, reform and change require the construction of a shared vision; appropriate communication strategies; wide-ranging partnerships; and dialogue, consultation and negotiation among different stakeholders at different levels.

The policy dialogue dimension is therefore embodied in all of the IBE's field-based activities intended to support curriculum development processes and to assist fragile, transition and post-conflict countries in the development and implementation of new curriculum frameworks. Moreover, the worldwide network of curriculum specialists (Community of Practice), established in 2005, has an important role in orientating and facilitating constructive intellectual debates, policy dialogue and the development of conceptual orientations and frameworks for quality basic education.

At the global level, the major contribution of the IBE in this area is the *International Conference on Education* (ICE), whose sessions have been organized by the Institute on behalf of UNESCO for many decades. Convened on a regular basis, the sessions of the Conference have been the first and, for a long time, the main forum for world-level policy-dialogue between ministers of education, particularly during the period 1934–1970. The ICE is an important occasion for ministers of education to discuss issues of quality, equity and inclusion. Other partners and stakeholders, such as researchers, practitioners, and representatives of intergovern-

mental and non-governmental organizations, usually participate actively in the dialogue.

The two most recent sessions of the ICE, i.e. the forty-sixth and the forty-seventh sessions, have been organized respectively: in 2001, on the theme “Education for All for learning to live together: contents and learning strategies – problems and solutions”, and in 2004, on the theme “Quality education for all young people: challenges, trends and priorities”. The forty-eighth session of



the International Conference on Education (November 2008), on the theme “Inclusive education: the way of the future”, coincides with the beginning of the new strategic cycle 2008–2013.

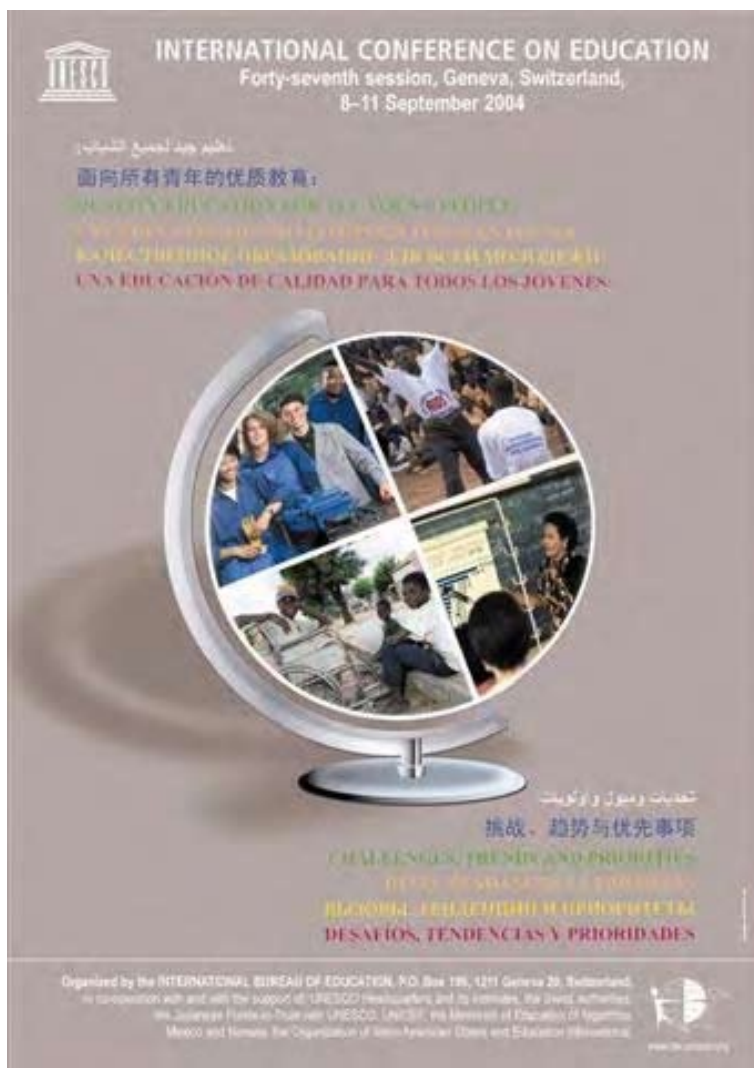
The 2001 and 2004 sessions of the Conference were also a significant means for strengthening collaboration, expanding partnerships and renewing international commitments in favour of quality education for all. For example, the preparation of the 2001 session benefited from contributions by ministries of education, national commissions for UNESCO, research and training centres of several countries, academic institutions, partner agencies and organizations, as well

as the active collaboration and support of various UNESCO units, including central divisions, education institutes, regional education offices and other services.

The IBE has also organized follow-up activities to the most recent ICE sessions in order to further disseminate the outcomes of the Conference. For example, the Second Tele-Congress of the Education of Young People and Adults, which took place after the forty-sixth ICE session, was held simultaneously in more than 200 focal points in Brazil and one focal point in Geneva using new communication technologies. It in-

involved more than 15,000 participants and can be considered as a model for scaling up the promotion of educational innovations, best practices and policy dialogue. The results of the forty-seventh ICE session were discussed at the occasion of the National Education Forum held in the state of Coahuila, Mexico (November 2004), attended by more than 1,000 participants.

In accordance with the recommendations of the forty-sixth ICE session, starting from 2003 the IBE has also provided training in policy dialogue, mainly aimed at encouraging: the elaboration of a common vision for education; and the usage of tools supporting the decision-making process, such as sectoral analyses, negotiation, communication, dialogue with all the stakeholders, as well as the mobilization of partnerships. A total of eight training modules have been prepared, in addition to the publication of ten case studies on different experiences in Africa. These activities have been carried out in collaboration with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), and they offered an opportunity for sharing experiences and acquiring new competences to about 70 ministerial high-level officers from several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal and Togo).





Prospects

For 2008–2013, the strategic objective is to facilitate policy dialogue at the local, regional and global levels for improved curriculum development processes and products. The IBE will work towards:

Providing support for strengthened dialogue as a means of addressing relevant curriculum development policy issues and promoting constructive change with regard to identified curriculum policy concerns.

Ensuring that the sessions of International Conference on Education represent a relevant worldwide forum intended to foster genuine policy dialogue, share information, expand partnerships and renew international commitment towards quality education for all.

Contributing to build appropriate mechanisms for the dissemination of the conclusions of the 2008 Conference and sustained follow-up actions targeting inclusive education policies and issues.







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