Interregional discussions around a conceptualisation of an inclusive curriculum in light of the 48th International Conference on Education

Introduction

“Curriculum is without a doubt one major area that can foster development of inclusive education or, in the worst case, can be a barrier for inclusion.” (Halinen and Savolainen, 2009)

The causes for exclusion vary across the world and are both multi-dimensional and highly contextual, related to negative attitudes around diversity, a legacy of segregated educational facilities and settings, the inadequacy of general educational provision, amongst other factors. However, in all contexts, the lack of a robust, motivated, relevant and flexible curriculum is often a common concern, playing a significant role in systemic exclusion and making education systems unable to effectively address all learners’ needs.

This article aims to elaborate upon the interregional discussions which have emerged in light of the 48th UNESCO International Conference on Education (ICE) around the key role of inclusive curricula for democratising learning opportunities. At the same time, it seeks to identify certain emerging consensus and ongoing debates in terms of inclusive education and curricula at both a theoretical and practical level across the five UNESCO regions.

At the beginning of the 21st century, UNESCO has defined inclusive education as “a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education ....”. (UNESCO, 2003, p.7). The ICE outcomes also broaden this conceptualisation of inclusive education with a view to achieving the Education for All (EFA) goals as “a general guiding principle to strengthen education for sustainable development, lifelong learning for all and equal access of all levels of society to learning opportunities” (ICE outcomes, 2008). This definition moves away from traditional understandings of inclusive education as the sum of piece-meal initiatives and efforts in favour of specific groups or targeted categories (e.g. students with special needs, ethnic, gender, cultural, socio-economic and migrant groups) towards an understanding of inclusive education as the provision of quality lifelong learning opportunities for all learners, where equity and quality go hand in hand.

A broadened concept of inclusive education is grounded in the belief that education is a fundamental human right, the axis to enjoy other human rights, and the foundation for a more just society. It is a process of strengthening the capacity of an education system to reach out to all learners, by recognising and improving them as active participants in communities and society at large. It involves a never-ending search to find better ways of understanding how to effectively facilitate and support participation in communities, as well as the identification and removal of existing barriers to participation and learning. In particular, this process involves learning how to engage with and value diversity, and how diversity between

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individuals and groups can foster learning, as well as strengthen education systems, communities and societies towards the attainment of more inclusive and cohesive societies.

The ICE outcomes also underscore the need for a holistic approach to the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of educational policies for the attainment of the EFA agenda. (UNESCO, 2008a) This echoes UNESCO’s 2003 definition of inclusive education, which further states that “inclusive education involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children”. (UNESCO, 2003, p.7)

Inclusive education guides all educational policies and practices, intertwining different dimensions (access, processes, participation and learning outcomes), levels (formal, non-formal, adult education) and units (national frameworks, curricula, schools, classrooms, teachers and learners). Accordingly, key multi-pronged strategies have been prioritised in this respect, for example, assessment and monitoring of the needs of different groups; the planning and allocation of resources towards inclusive education policies and programmes; clear and solid legislative frameworks supporting inclusion; unified and participatory policy design and implementation based on shared social values and principles; advocacy and awareness-raising for tackling negative societal values, attitudes and practices towards diversity; as well as re-orientating the design and implementation of curriculum towards inclusive education so that it can effectively address all learners’ needs. (Opertti et al, 2009)

While this article intends to concentrate on the role and implications of inclusive curriculum in the development of inclusive education, the interdependence of these strategies must clearly be taken into account, and will be addressed briefly in the section on supporting the implementation of the curriculum.

Inclusive curricula can only be efficiently developed and implemented within systems that provide schools, teachers and other staff, with the orientation and necessary supporting conditions to progress from vision to practice. Because of how all curricular elements are connected and influence each other, systematic ways of understanding and developing inclusive values and principles, public policies, and systems to underpin inclusive practices are essential.

Defining inclusive curricula in light of the 48th ICE

UNESCO-IBE perceives the curriculum as a well-embedded instrument and mirror of the complex interfaces of society, politics and education, e.g. within political and policy discussions and agreements of a variety of stakeholders. (Braslavsky, 1999) It is broadly defined as: a reflection of the kind of society to which we aspire (i.e. core foundations, objectives, concepts); the pedagogical and administrative action plans of an education system (i.e. frameworks, syllabus, structures, supports); and an interactive, non-linear and dynamic tool and process of pedagogical development (i.e. disciplinary content, learning strategies, assessment, learning outcomes) as well as administrative development (i.e. design, management and follow-up of the curriculum).

Indeed, educational reform throughout the world increasingly focuses on curriculum-based approaches as well as the complex feedback relationships between curricula and the achievement of both equity and quality. (Moreno, 2008) The curriculum has also been put forward as a way of contributing to the development of more inclusive societies, e.g. by
providing a new emphasis on the role of school as educating and sharing values. (UNESCO-IBE, 2010a)

From this standpoint, the curriculum has been identified as a crucial tool to promote a broadened concept of inclusive education and to ensure the implementation of holistic educational policies from a long-term perspective. The UNESCO guidelines, for example, have identified the curriculum as the central means by which the principle of inclusion could be put into action within an education system, respectful of cultural, religious, gender and other differences in line with common shared values. (UNESCO, 2009a)

The ICE outcomes describe a curriculum which is flexible, relevant and adjustable to the diverse characteristics and needs of lifelong learners, reflecting an inclusive society which ensures more equitable distribution of opportunities and the elimination of poverty and marginality. In particular, they highlight the need for: inclusive learning environments which encourage the active role and the participation of learners, their families and their communities; effective and flexible curriculum frameworks that accommodate local contexts and diversify pedagogical practices; the participation and consultation of all stakeholders in decision-making processes; stronger links between schools and society; early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes; Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) usage; high-quality non-formal educational opportunities with the possibilities for formal recognition and adult literacy programmes. (UNESCO, 2008a)

This conceptualisation of an inclusive curriculum strongly supports an understanding of student diversities as enhancing and democratising learning opportunities. It combines the density and strength of core universal concepts (e.g. the value of diversity, the right to lifelong learning, comprehensive citizenship education) with options, flexibility and consideration of all learners within schools and classrooms, thereby addressing and guaranteeing their individual right to education. It is essential to ensure that curricular processes, provisions, settings and content share common frameworks which at the same time providing tailored approaches towards the personal needs of all learners. Indeed, an inclusive curriculum does not imply a breaking-up of the education system nor the curriculum into smaller independent sub-units without any linkages between them. “The key element of inclusion is not the individualisation but the diversification of the educational provision and the personalisation of common learning experiences ... This implies advancing towards universal design, where the teaching-learning process and the curriculum consider from the very beginning the diversity of needs of all students, instead of planning on the basis of an average student and then carry out individualised actions to respond to the needs of specific students or groups who were not taken into consideration by an education proposal based on a logic of homogeneity instead of diversity”. (Blanco, 2008)

Indeed, traditional “inclusive education” curricular policies have primarily implied special needs policies within existing school structures and syllabus, which are organised in ways that reinforce the idea of students as fitting into separate categories of difference. There has been a call to develop curriculum proposals which recognise that all learners are unique and diverse. Where specialist support is required, it should be provided in ways that reduce the stigma of marking some children as different and separate; it is essential that such additional support is given under a common vision of including all learners. This means respecting their individual characteristics, while extending what is ordinarily available to all learners within the general educational provision. (Florian, 2010)
Inclusive curricula from an interregional perspective

When conceptualising an inclusive curriculum in light of the 48th ICE, the interregional discourse has tended to focus on four main concerns, namely: the focus of the curriculum; the purpose of the curriculum; the relationship between national, local and school interests; and the question of how to effectively support the implementation of the curriculum. This article will address these concerns in turn, with reference to various interregional perspectives and examples, bearing in mind there is no one “successful” international model but many visions, experiences and strategies to share and build upon.

The focus of the curriculum

The focus of the curriculum can be broadly understood as relating to curricular objectives, goals and contents, defining competencies, understanding and supporting the learning process of every pupil and how this can be combined in a coherent way throughout the curricular framework.

Curricular objectives, goals and contents

In terms of curricular objectives, goals and contents, it is important to note that, traditionally, subjects have played a key role in education systems. In fact, the mindsets and practices of education systems have typically been constructed around the study of knowledge and subject areas, within relatively stable epistemological definitions and boundaries of knowledge areas. Often, the content has taken on a leading role than other areas of the curriculum, such as the curricular objectives (which may refer to good citizenship; healthy and balanced development of a person, etc). It is interesting to understand and compare how innovative school models have attempted to move away from this content-based approach in order to improve educational achievement in difficult social surroundings, as in the case of France. “Opening up the school to this culture radically transforms the elitist conception of knowledge as the instrument whereby power is exercised by the privileged social classes”.

(Pagoni, 2006) This has meant that distressed children are not isolated or given special ‘treatment’, instead, the aim is to cater for them without singling them out in the collective learning process. (Govinda, 2009)

Too much emphasis on academic content has also been identified as a key challenge across all regions in terms of other implications such as the narrow definition of learning and learning outcomes, as well as restricting teaching practices, amongst other things. (Halinen and Savolainen, 2009) For example, at the secondary education level in the Arab region, it was noted that teachers tend to hold a strong disciplinary ethos, which may hinder coordination with colleagues from other disciplines. (Opertti and Brady, 2010) Research also suggests that an over-emphasis on academic content or an over-burdening of academic content within a curriculum also tends to create time pressures for teaching staff. (Halinen and Savolainen, 2009)

The World Bank also suggests that excessively academic and subject-oriented curricular structure, objectives and content, which are disconnected from economic and social realities, are highly to blame for the major issues which remain to be addressed in order to twin high-quality and relevant education in all regions. (World Bank, 2005) In many regions, skills and
knowledge learned in school may have very little relevance for the out-of-school lives of many students, especially those that come from socio-cultural backgrounds that differ from the predominant societal view embedded in the school’s culture. Moreover, this also risks alienating parents from their children’s learning, as they cannot offer as much support. Similarly, in all regions, many areas of curricula “bear little relation to the skills sought by employers and lack uniform standards”. (EFA GMR, 2010)

One key challenge is to expand access and democratise education while ensuring quality learning opportunities through relevant curricula. In Sub-Saharan Africa, access to secondary education is lower than in any other region of the world and highly biased against the poor, with girls at a particular disadvantage. (UNESCO EFA GMR, 2010) Experts agree that there is a serious mismatch between social expectations and needs and what education systems actually offer. (Aglo, 2006) A growing number of countries – including South Africa, Rwanda and Tunisia – are moving away from over-loaded and out-dated content and are forging stronger links between technical and academic streams under common curricular frameworks. Others – including Gambia, Ethiopia and Tanzania – have started the process of developing their curricula to focus on selected competencies in key knowledge areas and skills. Ethiopia, for example, has introduced an ‘alternative basic education’ programme using low-cost community centres in remote areas aimed at helping 7-14-year-old children of pastoralists who may have missed out on primary school. (UNESCO-IBE, 2009b)

In Europe, Sweden has also recently embarked on a series of curriculum reforms, motivated by concerns that pupils are not prepared enough for higher education and working life. It seems too many pupils leave school with low-level qualifications, while more and more qualifications are required by the skilled labour market due to rapid technical development, international competition, as well as demographic changes. The concept of knowledge underpinning these reforms has been broadened to reflect a combination of facts, understanding, skills and accumulated experiences. The reforms have aimed to clarify and simplify the structure in terms of curricular and syllabi objectives, so that the content of a programme and where the programme is leading is clearly conveyed to students.

In addition, there is now increased collaboration in Sweden between school governing bodies, higher education partners and the world of work at national and local levels, as well as with local programme councils for TVET programmes. Key changes are also taking place in Swedish upper secondary education, including higher eligibility requirements, more time for subjects in vocational studies and less for core subjects, and an introduction to apprenticeship training. (UNESCO-IBE, 2010b) Similarly, in the Middle East, a region marked by high youth unemployment and high drop-out rates in secondary education (UNESCO EFA GMR, 2009), governments are trying to prioritise the development of technical and vocational education within the framework of restructuring secondary education. (UNESCO-IBE, 2009b)

More generally, relevant curricular content should also help to develop knowledge, attitudes, and values as well as teaching-learning methods that support a genuinely inclusive society, with a focus on non-discrimination, human rights, removal of stereotypes, and respect for diversity. For this purpose, a comprehensive review of existing curricula and materials through the perspective of an inclusive education lens has been recommended. In particular, this should consider to what extent inclusive education ideals are currently being promoted.
and whether, in fact, stereotypes exist in regard to, for example, sex, ethnicity, rural origin, and disability. (Asian Development Bank, 2010)

Finally, it may also be worth considering whether curricular objectives are set too high; universal requirements which are rigidly defined and not contextualised cannot match the learning needs of all. Having high level objectives can of course help teachers and learners reach good results, but only when teaching and learning processes can be organised flexibly according to the needs of individual learners and when learners are strongly supported in their learning. Finland is an example of a country where practically 100% of pupils in basic education (grades 1-9, years 7 to 16) complete their studies and reach the same (relatively high) goals. (Halinen and Savolainen, 2009)

Defining competencies

With respect to defining competencies, it is important to consider that “There is a growing sense in which ‘what you know’ is less important than ‘what you are able to learn’”, yet many education systems continue to follow rigid curricula based on traditional disciplines. (UNESCO EFA GMR, 2009, p. 92) Two of the Education for All Goals, as set by the international community in 2000 to be achieved by 2015, also lay clear emphasis on the significance of developing learners’ competencies in education: Goal 3 refers to “Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes”, whereas Goal 6 refers to “Improving every aspect of the quality of education, and ensuring their excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills”. (UNESCO, 2000, p.17)

As a response to these challenges, competency-based approaches have been put forth as particularly useful for developing and implementing an inclusive curriculum, to address diversity of all learners and increase curricular relevance. (UNESCO-IBE, 2009a) Indeed, educational and curriculum reforms around the world are increasingly guided by competency-based approaches (Jonnaert et al, 2006). Interest in such approaches, especially at the secondary level, can also be explained by the approach’s key objectives of quality, efficiency and usefulness of educational provision in terms of economic and social development. (World Bank, 2008)

A “competence” can be defined as “knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, accompanied by the ability to use them in a certain context”. (Halinen, 2010, p.5) Others have described competencies as “complex processes of achievement with qualification in certain contexts, integrating different kinds of knowledge (knowing to be, knowing to do, knowing to know and knowing to co-live), in order to carry out activities and/or solve problems with the aim of contributing to personal development, construction and strengthening of the social network, the permanent search of a sustained economic-entrepreneurial development, and the concern and protection of the environment and the living species”. (Tobon, 2007)

In overall terms, four core elements should be taken into account in light of adopting competency-based approaches as the principal axis of curriculum design and development:
• Developing competency-based approaches should imply the generation, mobilization and integration of resources, such as knowledge, know-how, attitudes and values, in order to face diverse type of learning situations and their links to real-life situations. It is not solely a matter of applying knowledge and capacities, or developing skills;

• The different types of situations are the criteria to conceptualize and define the exit (graduation) profile as well as to orientate the selection and prioritization of disciplinary contents (the syllabi) and to set up the assessment criteria and tools. The situations should reflect what is expected from the curriculum with regards to societal demands and needs;

• Competencies are socio-historical constructions developed through diverse situations. General life and/or citizenship competencies should be conceived and developed in different types of situations;

• There are different ways of developing competency-based approaches at the school and classroom levels; but for any of them to be truly effective, competencies should be selected and prioritized based on gathering, interpreting and prioritising the demands and needs of societies. (UNESCO-IBE et al., 2010).

Competency-based conceptualisations echo the four pillars of education, identified by the report of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first century: learning to know, i.e. knowledge of subjects and learning to learn; learning to do, i.e. ability to face a variety of situations including work experience; learning to be, i.e. exercising independence, judgment, combined with a sense of personal responsibility for attaining common goals and understanding and realising one's talents; and learning to live together: among individuals, groups, nations, i.e. developing an understanding of others and their history, traditions and spirituality. (UNESCO, 1996)

Competency-based approaches imply combining knowing and doing. A competency “takes the context into account, is the result of a process of integration, is associated with criteria of execution or performance, and implies responsibility”. (Aguerrondo, 2009) This basic combination is key to defining, developing and assessing competencies needed in later studies, work and society. As a transversal axis for revising content, processes, provisions and settings, one of the advantages of competency-based approaches and contents is their inherent adaptability to a multitude of real-life settings for a range of learners and schools, providing an optimal combination of content and contexts. (Cox, 2008) For example, in several countries, a competency-based approach has helped diversify learning objectives and strategies, based on a more flexible and relevant exit profile. (UNESCO et al, 2009b)

In light of a broadened vision of inclusive education, such an approach can be seen as an opportunity to develop an inclusive curriculum and effectively respond to students’ diversity. Indeed, incorporating competencies into disciplines and classroom practices may mobilise and integrate a wide range of values, attitudes and learning resources (i.e. knowledge as well as know-how, and activities to face different situations using a competency), so as to respond to diversity more effectively. Competency-based approaches may help teachers better understand their own role as facilitators who are empowered to adapt their learning strategies to the diversity of learners. It may also help teachers to better demonstrate to learners the
rationale behind competencies, the competencies themselves, and the resources and methodologies required to achieve curricular goals. (Jonnaert, 2007) As a result, a competency-based approach offers an innovative and alternative way to conceive and organise curricular structure, objectives and content in order to contribute to forge independent, critical, confident and assertive citizens.

Several elements of competency-based reforms remain controversial. Certain key questions remain about how to select, define and select core competencies, taking differing contexts and their respective needs into account. One example is the diagram below, which reflects the point of reference for the Finnish National Curriculum. (Halinen, 2010)

Other concerns relate to how to integrate and connect competency-based approaches to curricula and syllabus which are mainly grounded on knowledge. Several proposals have been put forth to try and address these concerns. For example, Rogiers (2005) distinguishes between two approaches to implementing a competency-based curriculum. The first one is based on the development of transversal competencies at school. It promotes interdisciplinarity and intends to introduce life competencies by inviting students to resolve problems and situations through active learning. They recommend the importance of teaching the student through on-going “active” methods, focusing on the process of learning and applying the know-how and other elements to meaningful situations. Along these lines, the curriculum does not prescribe competencies, but rather provides the ingredients to allow for their development (Jonnaert et al, 2009). This approach implies serious changes to study programmes in terms of their content, design and presentation, as well as well-trained and effectively supported teachers, for its adequate and sustainable implementation.
The second approach, known as the ‘pedagogy of integration’, distinguishes between two levels of curricular design – a first level to develop basic competencies geared towards a general exit profile and a second level to develop more complex competencies, which provide for a specific exit profile. (De Ketele, 1996; Rogiers 2000, 2003, 2004) This approach is based on a definition of competency which entails “the spontaneous mobilization of a set of resources in order to apprehend a situation and respond to it in a more or less relevant way” (Rogiers, 2010). As such, a competence can only exist in the presence of a specific situation, through the integration of different skills, themselves made up of knowledge and know-how. The pedagogy of integration therefore aims to make sense of the learning process, by placing the learning process within a meaningful context, and acts as a evidence-based method for organizing learning and evaluation. Addressing complex problem situations may encompass, for example: (1) school experiences: knowledge, know-how and how-to-be; (2) situations of everyday life; and (3) the relevant mobilisation of competencies. This approach has been developed in several European and African countries with positive results; it has allowed all students to progress, regardless of their different start points in terms of performance, and teachers can adapt themselves at their pace.

Another useful perspective is to view competencies as the bridges to pre-existing subjects within a new competency-based curriculum, i.e. a “curriculum organiser. Viewed as such, competencies can (1) enhance the relevance of content by encouraging the application of knowledge to simulated life situations; (2) facilitate the formulation of expected student outcomes in concrete and practical statements; (3) integrate subject content that is traditionally separate in the curriculum; and (4) provide a mechanism for gathering accurate and meaningful data on student performance and achievement for assessment”. (Stabback, 2007) For example, Belgium has established curricular cycles based on a set of standards in order to address both general and specific competencies relevant to everyday life, work and learning situations: the “foundation competencies”, which concern the first eight years of mandatory school and the “diploma-level competencies”, which are related to the end of secondary level. (Rey, Carette, 2006; Stabback, 2007)

Other concerns, which have been raised with regard to competency-based approaches, relate to the implications of competency-based approaches on assessment. Indeed, competencies are not taught “for the sole purpose of testing them; following the progress of each student is just as important and depends on the teacher’s ability to use diverse observation and diagnostic techniques”. (Scallon, 2004) Some maintain that it is only by dealing effectively with a situation that a person can be declared competent; the competent handling of a situation thus constitutes the principal criterion for assessing competencies. (Jonnaert, 2007) Yet, one of the main difficulties that teachers seem to encounter with competency-based approaches is evaluating students’ learning outcomes, e.g. assessing the acquisition of competencies such as “respecting his/her environment”, “information research” or “processing information”. Across many regions, there is also often a clear tension between innovative competency-based curricula and pre-existing techniques of assessment, e.g. traditional written tests which determine students’ transition to higher grades. As Labate suggests, “there are frequent gaps between the agencies respectively in charge of curriculum design and national examinations, each of them pursuing different objectives and responding to different logic frameworks (curriculum relevance vs. assessment validity). Curriculum experts usually take a one-sided view of assessment as a part of the curriculum process, as seen in the many recommendations
present in curriculum materials directed towards assessment practices. These recommendations are usually in line with a constructivist theory of learning, advocating for “authentic” assessments that should be performance-based, and used for formative purposes. However, it is harder to find instances of a reversed, “upstream” flow of information, where curriculum designers make good use of exam outcomes to review and renovate the curriculum.” (Labate, 2010)

Understanding and supporting the learning process of every pupil

In light of the 48th ICE 2008, curricular processes that effectively support the learning process of every learner imply developing and implementing curriculum frameworks that understand how learners learn in different ways and have different needs with regard to curricular goals, contents, time, methods, materials, learning environments, as well as supports, and assessment, amongst other things.

In particular, it is crucial to reflect on increasing participation in learning processes - not just who gets to be included, but how - and what is recognised as achievement in a learning community. Participation should relate to the quality and meaningfulness of learners’ experiences, incorporating the views of the learners themselves. ‘Achievement’ should relate to outcomes of learning across the curriculum, not merely test or examination results, and should not be restricted to academic attainment.

Meaningful participation and achievement implies students learning alongside others and collaborating with them in shared lessons as part of a learning community. In particular, there is strong evidence of the potential of approaches that encourage cooperation. e.g. where pupils can discuss, work, solve problems together, help each other, give feedback to each other etc. Meaningful participation also involves active engagement with what is learnt and taught, and having a say in how education is experienced to actively create personal knowledge and meaning. Inclusive curricula must encourage students and teachers to construct interactive and collaborative relationships built on trust. Curricula must guide teachers through complex planning processes for learning, to take into account the learners’ own thinking about what to do next, as well as teachers’ own professional ideas and judgements based upon the learner, not just pre-conceived (lowered) expectations. Curricula must also provide a range of opportunities for learning to help learners participate freely and actively in classes.

In China, for example, the new school-based curriculum reform is attempting to better stimulate the active engagement of learners through collaboration and peer coaching, while encouraging students to address and resolve problems through open discussion. It also aims to develop more democratic relationships between teachers and students, with teachers playing a more facilitative role. The reform also provides for alternative assessment criteria and techniques to the traditional exam-oriented system. (UNESCO, 2010b)

Most importantly, learners should be at the centre of all considerations. For many learners, the frustrations they experience once they have entered school will negatively impact on their will and ability to learn, hampering lifelong learning opportunities and their fundamental human right to education. Attention must be paid to the individuality of learners and their participation and progress as learners. This contrasts with teaching and learning processes defined by expectations for development according to standardised outcomes across a
particular cohort of learners (usually by age, or disability). Because inclusive education focuses on the individuality of all learners within relevant cultural and social contexts (rather than their conformity or deviance from an abstract model of ‘normal’), differences between learners are recognised and responded to without being used to sort or classify learners in ways that may be divisive or stigmatising within communities.

A key challenge for inclusive curricula is to focus on enriching and extending what is ordinarily available to everyone through specialised teaching and learning supports. There is good evidence that the effective deployment of additional resources that traditionally accompany learners identified as having ‘special educational needs’ support the learning of everyone, and specialists and mainstream teachers are encouraged to develop creative, new, collaborative and flexible ways of working that support all learners. (Florian, 2010) For example, using visual stimulus as an aid to support a deaf child makes curricular content more accessible for all, and, in this way, extends what is ‘ordinarily available’, enhancing the quality of teaching and raising achievement for all.

It is also important to understand, identify and remove barriers to participation and learning within school communities. As part of this process, consideration should be given to those groups of learners that are most vulnerable to marginalisation, exclusion and underachievement. This means recognising the fact that, because of the systematic use of categorisation, some learners may currently be excluded from participating in education (e.g. in the classroom, school activities, etc). This means that prioritisation of policies and programmes towards certain learners may still be necessary, but should be done in a way which is conscientious of not perpetuating isolation and segregation once participants are involved within mainstream educational provision.

For example, across many regions, the way the formal education systems are structured has been shown to be a huge barrier to participation and learning within school communities. Indeed, a strong hierarchical separation between primary and secondary education, between lower and upper secondary education, and between general and TVET disciplines create interruptions and discontinuities in learning. (UNESCO, 2009a) Separated and segregated institutional, curricular and pedagogical provisions have also been linked to inequalities in terms of access and achievement, as well as student drop-out, while many learners are also excluded from the education system due to early tracking and academic selection. (OECD, 2001, 2003, 2006) Equally, the links between formal and informal learning environments have not been sufficiently taken into account; “for children, school only represents an expanded space for learning beyond home and the neighbourhood”. (Govinda, 2009)

Similarly, assessment standards and techniques may provide a key challenge in terms of inclusive curricular processes to avoid stigmatisation and exclusion. As inclusive curricula aim to be responsive to learners’ needs, assessment should be performed and measured along these same inclusive values. National testing should encourage “measuring what we value” instead of ‘valuing what we can measure’. Although many countries use national summative assessment methods, evidence suggests that this approach may not explain learning processes to learners, nor encourage them to improve and progress within the educational system.

Furthermore, most of the standardised or other traditional tests can measure only certain types of academic learning outcomes, leaving little value to other types of knowledge (e.g. forms of informal knowledge) and skills in school. Many tests are also time-bound, which
creates more time pressures for both teachers and students. Time limited tests further fail to measure the true knowledge of students for whom, for some reason (for instance dyslexia, intellectual disability, teaching language proficiency), reading and writing and completion of exams take more time than for average students. Assessment must be utilised for supporting learning and not for penalising learners, especially those learners who are most disadvantaged. Black and Wiliam (2005); Wiliam (2000).

This implies, amongst other things, avoiding the temptation to over-emphasise the importance of standardised outcomes in relation to pre-established targets of content knowledge relying on narrow assessment methods, often used for comparing students. This kind of information does not necessarily correlate with adult success in social, vocational or other indicators of quality of life. (Peters, 2005) This is especially the case when summative assessment is the only means of assessment applied. In contrast, formative assessment techniques for learning (personalised, multi-faceted feedback), as opposed to assessment of learning, has been shown in Europe to work as a much more effective tool to give feedback on the participation and achievement of learners, to allow teachers to identify areas for development and to plan their lessons, to motivate learners, and to develop pupils’ skills of reflection. (Watkins, 2007)

Taking some examples, the basic education system in Finland does not include national testing at all. In China, there are reforms aimed at taking students’ well-being and healthy development into account in assessments, instead of just academic credits alone. However, the examination system is seen by different internal and external stakeholders as a way to ensure equity by enabling successful students to get better job opportunities. In the CIS countries, it has been noted that information about students’ marks was not confidential, creating competition between students. Regarding Latin America, Magendzo has also recommended a formative and diagnostic approach, noting that, “from failure there is no learning.” (UNESCO-IBE, 2009)

Focusing on putting all this coherently together

It is clear that the components of curricula and education systems are highly interrelated and dynamic. For this reason, it is essential that an inclusive curriculum reform be developed from a holistic perspective and in a sound and coherent way. For example, rigid assessment systems, often relying on standardised tests, do not allow or support individually or locally adjusted curriculum goals, which often means that assessment ‘steals’ the place of curriculum in teaching. This is especially so when the standardised assessment given at the end of the year or a phase of schooling determines not only the students’ chances for further education but is also used as a way to evaluate the efficiency of the teaching in a school. When this is the case, teaching may be geared into preparing students for the examinations rather than guiding and supporting students to learn what is described in the curriculum. Especially when the learning outcomes are evaluated by standardised exams - and these evaluations may also have financial implications and stigmatisation afflicts - very little room is left for adjusting curriculum goals locally. Furthermore, students who face individual barriers to learning may become a liability for the school, a risk factor for decreasing school performance, which may lead to the exclusion of such learners.

Several countries, especially in Northern Europe, are now aiming to provide more holistic, diverse, coherent and flexible curriculum frameworks as tools for inclusion. They are attempting to provide a more diverse, common and combined range of formal, non-formal
and informal learning opportunities through multiple and connected pathways, settings, provisions and processes while attempting to move away from segmented institutions, pedagogical specialisations and strict time constraints. This is based on the fundamental principle of lifelong learning across all educational pathways and provisions, in terms of access, processes, and outcomes, and starting (crucially) from early childhood care and education. Moreover, these frameworks are strengthened by combining both centralised and decentralised components in this process. (Halinen and Jaervinen, 2008)

The Netherlands, for example, has identified some key guiding criteria for developing coherent, high-quality curricula, namely relevance (based on a shared and convincing need), consistency (designed in a logical and integral way), practicality (usable in practical settings), effectiveness (achieving desired outcomes) and scalability. In China, various challenges have been identified with respect to curricular reform: a) the new curriculum encourages innovation and diversity, but the majority of innovations are still in a formative stage and are yet to achieve maturity at the systematic and professional level; b) teachers’ training and professional development in line with the curricula still lacks policy support; c) intense competition in entrance examinations remains a major obstacle in promoting the new curriculum policy. (UNESCO-IBE, 2010b)

Overall, it is clear that the focus of a curriculum must carefully combine and balance these three diverse elements (curricular objectives, goals and contents; competencies; and student learning processes), while adapting them to differing realities, expectations and needs. The common threads in this delicate balancing act are the fundamental objectives of an inclusive curriculum, education system and society.

The purposes of an inclusive curriculum

When conceptualising an inclusive curriculum in light of the 48th ICE, the second main concern which the interregional discourse has tended to focus on are the fundamental purposes underlying an inclusive curriculum as a tool for inclusion. The national vision of the curriculum and its expression in an appropriate framework informs critical decisions with respect to other levels and dimensions of the system. Therefore, there is a permanent need for a close and careful look at how curricula are conceptualised and organised. This allows for a sound way of designing and developing reforms linked to core definitions of the kind of society which is sought and the expected role of education in society. At the macro level, curriculum change has been seen across many regions as a key foundation of educational concerns and reforms, in terms of policies, curriculum philosophy and content, classroom methodology and teacher education and professional development (UNESCO-IBE, 2009c).

For example, high-quality curricula are seen as reinforcing education as an instrument for social mobility and change, combating poverty and inequity. An inclusive curriculum may be seen as a tool to encourage equity and quality as going hand in hand, and to support competencies for citizenship education and personal development, as well as a crucial factor in the improvement of the welfare of the poorest population by supporting key social and economic policies with a view to attaining social cohesion and inclusion. In the Arab States, “curriculum development and reform has been noted as a key engineering endeavour during all periods of reform, to reflect the new political and social realities”. (World Bank, 2008)
At the classroom level, one perspective of an inclusive curriculum is that of a common learning process and an empowering pedagogical tool for teachers (see table below). (Halinen, 2010) This view perceives an inclusive curriculum as one which provides the scope for teachers to ensure that the opportunities provided for learning are relevant to all learners within the community of a class or school.

From this perspective, an inclusive curriculum aims to bridge all dimensions and levels of learning, while also providing access to lifelong learning opportunities from a rights-based perspective for advancing the attainment of EFA goals. It also aims to support the diversification of teaching methods and learning materials to address the cultural, social and individual diversities of all learners. More broadly, it creates an essential tool for putting inclusive education into practice at the school in the classroom, while incorporating the multiple levels (i.e. global, national, local and school levels) and dimensions involved in the process.

In line with this vision, the following checklist has also been provided to policy-makers as guidance for reflection in developing and implementing an inclusive curricula (UNESCO, 2009a):

- Are principles of non-discrimination, appreciation of diversity and tolerance being fostered through the curriculum?
- Are human rights and children’s rights part of the curriculum?
- Does the curriculum address the coexistence of rights with responsibilities?
- Is the curriculum inclusive of all children?
- Is the content of the curriculum relevant to the needs and futures of children and youth?
- Are the programmes, learning materials and teaching methods well adapted and relevant to the lives of youth and adults?
- Does the curriculum allow for variation in working methods?
• Does the curriculum promote education on health and nutrition?
• Does the curriculum incorporate HIV/AIDS prevention education?
• Is the curriculum sensitive to gender, cultural identity and language background?
• Does the curriculum discuss education for sustainable development?
• Does the curriculum reflect visions and goals of wider development in your country?
• Is feedback gathered and integrated for regular revision of the curriculum to take new visions and circumstances into consideration?

The relationship between national, local and school interests

When conceptualising an inclusive curriculum in light of the 48th ICE, the third main concern which the interregional discourse has tended to consider is the appropriate relationship between national, local and school interests, with a particular focus on school-based curriculum.

Across all regions, there is a pressing need to develop curriculum content and pedagogical practices that recognise how everyone brings different prior learning and life experiences to the classroom. These help learners make sense of the world in diverse ways, even when they encounter common experiences. (Linklater et al, 2010) A “glo-local” curriculum can help create an effective learning environment that fosters such content and practices by merging global, national and local realities, expectations and needs, and recognising the relevance of individual learners’ experience as they participate in the community and culture of a school.

With this in mind, there are currently two main prototypes of curricular reform that stand out across the regions. The first model of reform focuses on the processes of curriculum development and implementation through phases of adoption, implementation and then generalisation. This model generally takes a top-down approach, which is adopted by education authorities. It usually entails adopting a centralised planning approach, which may create tensions between the prescriptive, implemented and experienced curriculum. The resulting gap has been described as the “hidden curriculum” (INRP, 2010) Another concern is that this model risks creating a perception of isolation between the different actors involved, and, therefore, resistance to change.

The second model of reform focuses more on the dynamic of actors in terms of phases of appropriation, the generalisation of practices and the integration of the reform within pedagogical routines. This interactive and dynamic relationship between teachers, schools and communities is increasingly understood as critical to all inclusive transformative curricular processes, moving away from previous perceptions of the school and its stakeholders as “noncontroversial recipients” of curricular reform. In a review of sixteen different national contexts, it was concluded that efforts for making school management participatory and consultative, involving teachers, parents and other stakeholders, was crucial to promote inclusive schools. (Govinda, 2009) In contrast, in one study of the introduction of inclusive assessment approaches, it was found that professional development had little effect if participating teachers were later hindered by the context of the teaching environment and by beliefs about teaching and learning. (Lock and Munby, 2000)

Various combinations of these two models have also been put forward. These attempt to
combine orientation, density and the strength of universal concepts with options and leeway, so that the curriculum can be developed as quality educational processes in schools and classrooms. For example, it has been suggested that a limited national core curriculum of essential knowledge, goals, and values should be defined, while the delivery of this standard curriculum should be adapted through the promotion of teaching processes such as differentiated instruction, multilevel instruction, teaching to multiple intelligences, etc. (Asian Development Bank, 2010) Such “curriculum differentiation” intends to help teachers respond “to the diversity among learners in any one classroom by using student characteristics such as student background, experiences, interests, learning modalities, abilities, and needs”. In other words, different content can be used in different ways, with different materials and methods, through innovation, flexibility and adaptation, in order to teach the required curriculum. (Ahuja, 2005)

From a broader perspective, it has been suggested that it is necessary to achieve a sound combination of national strategies, school-based curricula and local inputs, while facilitating genuine dialogue and cooperation among the different actors at national, local and school levels and across multiple sectors. (UNESCO-IBE, 2010) It is crucial for teachers, parents and students to work together actively. Indeed, the co-operation and interdisciplinary teamwork of teachers has been shown to be essential for extending and enhancing the educational provision in ways necessary to address the increasing diversity amongst learners in schools (e.g. collaborative teaching, peer tutoring), making an asset of the expertise of people with different perspectives from their own.

In Latin America and several Asian countries, for example, education systems are now beginning to mandate some of these approaches, e.g. by allowing a certain percentage of the standard curriculum in basic education to be adapted to the local context (UNESCO-IBE, 2009a). In the Arab region, some decentralisation of curricular development and reform of content has taken place, although curricula is generally more centralised, e.g. content, disciplines and school class times are prescribed at the government level. (World Bank, 2008) In some European countries, a core curriculum with complementary provisions, which provide room for flexibility and/or guidance on various content, has been developed. In other European contexts, a common, national core curriculum has been implemented, outlining common goals as foundations upon which local curricula are built, without quantifying local freedom. (UNESCO-IBE, 2009a)

In China, curricular reforms aim to diversify schools through school-based curriculum, within the national framework for basic education policies. This involves giving schools and teachers the opportunities to decide their own curricular contents and allowing students to select subjects, design their own future and develop their personalities. The reforms have also entailed the provision of comprehensive fieldwork activities (research-oriented learning, community service, etc.) and new innovations in senior high school curriculum systems, such as compulsory common modules complemented by elective ones. As such, a school-based curriculum allows schools, teachers and students to familiarise themselves with their own local conditions, traditions and social development. It is also motivating for schools and teachers to participate in the reform and develop a richer and more diverse curriculum. From this perspective, teachers are seen more as co-learners as well as co-developers of the curriculum and schools are perceived as learning communities. (UNESCO-IBE, 2010b)
Taking another national example, the Irish National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) activities are based on three complementary levels: the learning environment (early childhood settings, schools and classrooms); the committee level (specialist representative committees, who develop aims, objectives and learning outcomes, as well as design assessment and build consensus) and; the knowledge and research level (research and knowledge networks). These three levels work together on developing curriculum policies both across and within the traditional interactions between national, local and school interests. Implementing this approach has apparently allowed teachers to have access to evidence and also generate evidence, has given students room to actively participate in the process, made curriculum discussion a public concern and allowed schools and classrooms to lead the change rather than respond to change. As a consequence, it has also allowed more risks to be taken and achieved a greater balance between the national and the local levels. (UNESCO-IBE, 2010b)

Numerous international research studies have identified the advantages of an interactive curriculum planning and implementation process. For example, dialogue and cooperation has been shown to create commitment and willingness to act according to common guidelines, while also providing enough time and clear, local school structures for discussing the basic values, attitudes and practical arrangements for responding to the different needs of students. It has been suggested that it allows schools to make better use of the collective knowledge, expertise and creativity present within their community e.g. “good practices” of inclusive education can be effectively recognised and shared. (Ainscow and Miles, 2008)

However, many limitations have also been identified, even with a combination of the two prototypes. For example, without the local openness, competencies and skills to adapt and develop curricula to local and more inclusive contexts, curriculum differentiation can have a limited effect in practice. Indeed, the building of teachers’ capacity to be curriculum co-developers is seen as an important part of this process. (Asian Development Bank, 2010) Similarly, it has proved hard to adapt a curriculum if it is undermined by a rigid assessment system which does not take into account curricular adaptations. In China, other challenges in terms of implementation have also been identified, e.g. gathering organisational support at the different administrative levels, while implementing capacity development activities around the new curriculum policy in terms of funds for training and research programmes at national and local levels, setting up of resources centres at the local levels, etc. (UNESCO-IBE, 2010b)

A paradigm change is seen as essential; encouraging the participation of everyone in curricula development must be seen as a key strategy, and, where a common working process offers possibilities to take different local interests, needs and perspectives into account, engage actors and utilise their versatile expertise. On the other hand, the question remains how to facilitate such participatory processes in the first place. In Europe, it was noted that a key component has been strong leadership and clear vision at all levels. The education system also needs to support the different actors in the system to work together in renovated ways. Finally, a considerable amount of background policy-orientated research must be performed, especially where there are disparities among national, local and personal identities. (UNESCO-IBE, 2009a)
Supporting the implementation of the curriculum

A fourth main concern that emerges from the international discourse is the importance of understanding how the curriculum interacts with other elements of the education system, and how, as a consequence, an inclusive curriculum must be supported and empowered by education systems as a whole. Some of the key areas of these discussions, i.e. those most regularly featured in interregional discussions, are highlighted below, namely legislation, public policies, and teacher education.

Legislation

As a key starting point for inclusion, legislation is seen as playing an essential part in the efforts towards inclusion. In particular, it can provide: the articulation of principles and rights in order to create a framework for inclusion (e.g. legislation for inclusion, alongside anti-discrimination legislation, in schools and the workplace); the reform of elements in the existing system, which constitute major barriers to inclusion (e.g. policies preventing specific groups to attend their local school); the mandating of fundamental inclusive practices (e.g. schools should educate all local children); and the establishment of procedures and practices to facilitate inclusion (e.g. a flexible curriculum, community governance). (UNESCO-IBE, 2008b)

For example, article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been seen as a significant step in binding governments to a guarantee and eligibility for free, high-quality and inclusive education systems. Moreover, this legal obligation, which encompasses inclusive policies, systems, legal remedies etc, aims at achieving high-quality education, not only for learners with disabilities, but for all learners. (UNESCO-IBE, 2009a) This represents an important paradigm shift from focusing on the problems of learners (the so-called medical model or defectology approach) to placing the focus on the provision of equitable learning opportunities for all learners, taking into account their specific needs and existing barriers.

Public policies

It is also commonly agreed that an inclusive education system requires a high-level and visible policy commitment to inclusive education, promoting diversity as a philosophy and practice. (UNESCO-IBE, 2009a) This commitment does not only have a symbolic significance but it also helps to orient all actors around a common goal of inclusion and supports a change in attitudes and culture towards inclusion. Indeed, according to interregional research, a crucial step towards inclusion is to convince stakeholders that diversity is not a hindrance to the attainment of good learning outcomes by all students. (OECD, 2010)

It has been suggested that a policy commitment should take the form of a comprehensive, intersectoral National Action Plan, with immediate, transitional and long-term targets. These targets should be meaningful and measureable, with a clear timeline and statement of resources. For example, a clear plan of action could be constructed to enable the progressive transformation of specialised institutions into resource centres and to develop close collaboration between specialised and general education systems. Along these lines, policies
should be backed up with effective financial and human resources and a comprehensive needs analysis (based on statistical and qualitative tools) in order to enable rational planning.

Another area of interregional consensus is that planning should be done by the government in active consultation with key partners. The curriculum is both a policy and technical issue involving multiple stakeholders from inside and outside the education system, as well as a continuous and dynamic development of processes and outcomes. “Understanding the articulation between the system’s overall policies, school and classroom sectoral policies may allow the whole education sector to break the vicious circle of reciprocal demands made by governments on teachers and by teachers on governments”. (Braslavsky, 2001) Along these lines, some Latin American experts have emphasised the development and implementation of more “subjective policies”, i.e. the consideration and sharing teachers personal and social narratives in order to better understand what they are thinking and doing as well as for developing a culture of trust within and outside the education system. Such policies would truly engage teachers and other educational stakeholders in the inclusion process. (UNESCO-IBE, 2010a)

The OECD has also recommended that teachers should be “active agents” in analysing their own practices and their own students’ progress, and should be actively involved in policy formulation. (OECD, 2005) Indeed, by recognising teachers as co-developers of an inclusive curriculum, it can support teachers’ ownership of an inclusive curriculum reform within their own local, national and regional context, to help understand and respect teachers’ identities, and to ensure the sustainable investment in the learning competencies of teachers within teachers’ professional development strategies. (UNESCO-IBE, 2010a)

At the same time, it is interesting to note that in some European countries, a certain policy-making autonomy was granted to schools and teachers in the past. However, trends seem to be now moving back towards certain specification and prescription at the national level, especially in domains such as literacy and numeracy, and attention to continuous learning standards. These reforms aim to make the education system more focused and accountable, by creating structure, transparency and continuity, providing more data and evidence and more national orientation. They also aim to provide a conceptual and methodological framework as well as strengthen public, professional and political debates about priorities for curriculum improvement and renewal. (UNESCO-IBE, 2010b)

**Teachers and teacher education**

Across all regions, research findings show that the key factor for good learning outcomes is not only what is taught but how it is taught. For example, the quality of teaching can have a much more significant role in determining the learning outcomes of students than other often mentioned challenges for quality, like class-size or class heterogeneity. (Halinen and Savolainen, 2009) Teachers play a considerable role in creating inclusive environments for learning and will have a direct impact on how new curricula are implemented and how knowledge, skills, attitudes and values are shared and assessed.

It is also important to highlight that expectations with regard to teachers’ roles have evolved across different interregional contexts, particularly in connection with issues of diversity and inclusion; “teachers are now expected to have much broader roles, taking into account the
individual development of children and young people, the management of learning processes in the classroom, the development of the entire school as a “learning community” and connection with the local community and the wider world". (OECD, 2005) Indeed, in China, the Netherlands and South Africa, effective professional development now aims at educating teachers to develop curricula as well as knowledge, skills and teaching approaches for diverse learners (e.g. skills for critical self-reflection, using individual learning plans to support students’ welfare and development), build teacher communities and leaders, as well as create links back to research and other policies in terms of feedback and evaluation, amongst other things. (UNESCO-IBE, 2010b)

It has been recommended that teachers should feel supported as well as challenged in relation to their responsibility to keep exploring and developing effective ways of enhancing the learning of all students. In particular, teachers need to be recognised, engaged and supported to be professional curriculum co-developers, whose confidence, competencies, knowledge and positive attitudes can invaluably reinforce the principles of inclusion and inclusive curricula. (Opertti et al, 2009)

In contrast, in most regions of the world, many teachers are still under-trained, under-paid and work in difficult conditions. There have been numerous calls for governments to value and support the teaching profession through teacher education for inclusion and improve their working conditions. (EFA GMR 2005; 2010) Many of the new expectations and recommendations about inclusive teachers have not necessarily been considered in the principles of curricular reform, e.g. in school curricular content and timings, which can put pressure on teachers, as well as on their relationship with learners.

For example, this could be the case in countries where teachers are not free to creatively adapt the curriculum based on local or individual needs, due to a strict curriculum that dictates the content of teaching and learning up to the everyday work in the classrooms. In some contexts, such creativity is even directly forbidden and differentiation from the expected is sanctioned by inspectors, even if it seems evident that the national level curriculum does not fit well with the local culture and conditions. (Halinen and Savolainen, 2009)

Similarly, there is often a mismatch between basic and secondary curricular reform and teacher education curricula. In most countries, preparation of a national curriculum is the task of the Ministry of Education, whereas the responsibility for designing teacher education curriculum may be left with rigid academic institutions or different departments. One example can be found in the current emphasis on wider competencies instead of solely focusing on subject-based knowledge. This view can be very new to many teachers compared to how they have been trained in relation to subject knowledge and how learning outcomes are defined. (Halinen and Savolainen, 2009)

Taking this into account, the OECD have recommended that “teacher profiles need to encompass strong subjective matter knowledge, pedagogical skills, the capacity to work effectively with a wide range of students and colleagues, to contribute to the school and profession and the capacities to continue developing”. (OECD, 2005) These profiles should guide both pre- and in-service training, as well as continuous professional development.
Forging the agenda around a conceptualisation of an inclusive curriculum

In conclusion, despite a general consensus on a broadened concept of inclusive education and the key role of inclusive curricula, developing and implementing inclusive curricula remains a significant challenge across all regions. A re-conceptualisation of an inclusive curriculum in light of a broadened concept of inclusive education may help stakeholders reflect upon various core dimensions of an inclusive curriculum, connecting it to other efforts towards inclusion within the entire education system, as well as help find new ways of working together, across different dimensions, levels, regions etc. These reflections should aim to include all stakeholders from inside and outside the education system, be informed by evidence as well as bear in mind ideological considerations, and contribute to the clarification of concepts and strategies, as well as alternatives.

The following key challenges represent open debates towards the development of an inclusive curriculum:

- What do we understand as an inclusive curriculum? In particular, what are its main rationale, objectives, strategies and contents? Who are the main stakeholders?

- Are all stakeholders willing to re-consider the role, objectives and scope of education? Are all stakeholders ready to consider in more depth how teachers and students position themselves, and how they respond to processes of curricular reform? What are the incentives to do so in terms of access, retention and achievement?

- Are the “conventional” subjects of curricula relevant to the skills and competencies that young people need today? How should education face future cultural, social and economic challenges and opportunities, such as citizenship education and education for sustainable development?

- Do all stakeholders agree on the need for developing an inclusive curriculum from childhood to adult education, based on a perspective of education as a human right and a pillar of personal and social development? Have the following key dimensions been considered: developing a common conceptual framework, addressing gaps in curricula, establishing common core competencies, facilitating the navigability between the different tracks and promoting diverse strategies and options for students’ learning and assessment?

- How much do policy-makers, supervisors and teachers disengage from the objective-based tradition and how close do they get to a competency-based approach? Can they establish bridges and links between both approaches?
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