



## Supporting the Educational System in Iraq

### Workshop on

# Developing New Iraqi Curricula

Doha, 9-10 October 2010

## Concept note and Agenda



## Concept note

### Workshop context

The present workshop corresponds to the official launching of the project “*Developing New Iraqi Curricula*” elaborated by UNESCO Iraq Office with the cooperation of UNECO Office in Doha and in consultation with Iraqi education authorities and stakeholders, as well as UNESCO entities, such as IBE. Following a post-conflict Conference for Iraq in Paris, in November 2008, Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser Al Missned, First Lady of Qatar, decided to launch an initiative based on the partnership of Her Highness’s Office and other Educational Institutions in Qatar on one hand and UNESCO on the other hand to implement four programmes among which is the “Curriculum Development in Iraq” project which is to be implemented over a four-year period (2009-2013).

According to the Project Document, the general aim of this project is to contribute to modernization and reconciliation in Iraq society through rebuilding the Iraqi school curriculum and textbooks along side with teacher professional development to enhance and innovate educational practices. The project is part of an overall Iraqi educational reform and development strategy.

The specific objectives of the project are as follows:

1. Assess the current curriculum according to standards needed for Iraq based on international standards and identify needs and possibilities to improve learning strategies and outcomes.
2. Develop national awareness and understanding for the project objectives and plans.
3. Develop the capacity of curriculum developers, authors, teachers, school supervisors, and schoolmasters regarding the development and implementation of the new curriculum (up-dated scientific content, modern educational/teaching concepts, methodologies and techniques as well as globally agreed on human rights and democracy values and evaluation), based on field testing and piloting.
4. Strengthen the institutional support structures at the centre and regional levels.
5. Support rebuilding the Iraqi curriculum based on developing a comprehensive curriculum framework, as well as syllabuses, and learning materials (student textbooks, workbooks, teachers’ guidebooks, e-Learning materials, etc.).
6. Deploy and implement the new curriculum.

Among the anticipated project outputs and results are:

1. Assessment of the status and needs of the Iraqi curricula and textbooks in key disciplines.
2. Development of Curricula Framework based on Iraqi Educational Philosophy.
3. Capacity building of Iraqi experts/curriculum developers.

4. Establishment of an Educational Resource and Training Centre for Iraq to enable long-term capacity building for Iraqi curriculum experts and textbook authors in all disciplines.
5. Development of new curricula and blueprints for textbooks in the key disciplines.
6. Deployment and implementation of new curricula and teaching materials in selected pilot schools in all parts of Iraq, including Kurdistan.

It is expected that, though its particular focus on aligning curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment, the project will contribute to the enhancement of the overall education quality and equity within the Iraq education system especially by addressing “the enduring relevance of Education for All”. (UNESCO, 2007, p. 11)<sup>1</sup>

As stated in numerous analyses of the current Iraqi education system, despite of having been one of the best in the region, the constant erosion of its infrastructure and human capacities owing to wars and isolation from international developments before 2003, determined, among other, that Iraqi “education curricula have not been updated for more than three decades...which has also negatively influenced education outputs and results.”<sup>2</sup>

Curriculum, while not being the only factor influencing education quality, has nonetheless a regulatory role for the entire education system. In a broader sense, education quality is linked to three main aspects:

1. *Learner characteristics* (i.e. prior knowledge; learning styles; aptitudes; learning difficulties);
2. *Enabling inputs* i.e. learning time; teaching methods; learning content; teaching and learning materials; physical infrastructures; human resources; school governance); and
3. *Outcomes* (i.e. literacy, numeracy and life skills; creative and emotional skills; values; social benefits).<sup>3</sup>

Curriculum, understood as the selection and organization of learning experiences and opportunities for students based on adequate learning content and methods, does not pertain however *only* to enabling inputs for education quality. Quality curricula have to take *learner characteristics and needs* into account and anticipate expected *outcomes* (i.e. learner competencies), as well as appropriate methods for their assessment and evaluation. Given its impact on classroom practices, assessment, teacher training and school governance, curriculum is thus pivotal to education quality, being thus rightly considered the hub of education systems.

Since 2003, an increase of national awareness can be documented with regard to the need of updating and improving the curriculum. However, given different hardships, only limited revision took place to date. Such reviews sometimes concerned some specialized schools at different education levels, but no scaling up at system level of an up-to-date curriculum was

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<sup>1</sup> See UNESCO, 2007 (*EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008: Education for All by 2015. Will we make it?*).

<sup>2</sup> See MOE of Iraq –The Current Situation and Future Prospects of the General Directorate for Curricula, English translation, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> See UNESCO 2004 (*EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005: Education for All. The Quality Imperative*).

ever carried out. It is therefore most important that the project provides the Iraqi specialists with the necessary skills to perform their own assessment of the existing curriculum, as well as of the needs for intervention in view of changing and improving it in compliance with internationally-relevant principles and practice supporting quality education for all. UNESCO's support will especially target areas such as Mathematic and Sciences that should be updated and improved as reference models of good practice for other learning areas.

While providing support for capacity development of education Iraqi specialists with a view to catering for the alignment of quality curricula with quality teacher training, classroom practices and assessment, the project will more particularly address the following issues:

- (1) Assessing the current situation of the Iraqi curriculum and identifying needs and priorities for change/improvement;
- (2) Developing national awareness of the need of, and directions for improving the curriculum as a basis for enhancing the quality of education of all in Iraq in compliance with principles such as learner-centredness; inclusion; and competency development for living and working together peacefully and constructively;
- (3) Developing capacities of policy makers and curriculum specialists to revise the curriculum and implement it in pilot schools, as a basis for system-wide scaling up. The efficient functioning of the Iraqi Curriculum Centre is envisaged as a major leverage in this respect.
- (4) Curriculum development and implementation ought to address the following items:
  - (i) An all-Iraqi Curriculum Framework; (ii) Syllabus blueprints for selected learning areas, such as Math and Sciences; and (iii) Textbook blueprints integrating and reflecting the updated and improved curriculum, including learner-centred classroom practices. Among different capacity development strategies, study visits abroad to renowned curriculum centers will be also envisaged.

Iraq education authorities and UNESCO Iraq Office, in collaboration with their partners, will cater that delivery is following a realistic work plan that is strategically positioned within the Iraqi *National Education Strategy*. The project process and delivery will be subject of monitoring and evaluation to help assess what came up at different stages, what to correct and how to build upon achievements.

The present workshop is particularly important for the reaching of shared understanding with regard to the project scope, approaches and expected outcomes, as well as for the development of a *detailed operational work plan* based on which specific activities will be carried out over the next four years.

## Participants

The Doha workshop will be attended by relevant education partners and stakeholders, as follows:

1. Iraqi MOE representatives (Baghdad and Kurdistan MOEs: policy makers, curriculum, textbook and TT specialists) – see attached Participant list
2. Her Highness Office (HHO)
3. Qatar resource persons
4. UNESCO IBE (Ms. Dakmara Georgescu, programme specialist)
5. UNESCO Office Iraq (Mr. Mohammed Djelid, Director and UNESCO Country Representative; Mr. Philippe Maalouf, Education Programme Coordinator; Mr. Addejlalil Akkari, consultant)

## Objectives

Following other preparatory activities, the Doha workshop is bringing together more than 20 Iraqi and international specialists with a view to:

1. Officially launch the project with relevant Iraqi and international education partners, beneficiaries and stakeholders;
2. Share international experiences that may inform the development of new Iraqi curricula;
3. Agree on a detailed implementation/operational plan over a four-year time span;
4. Initiate the setting up of appropriate working groups/committees, as well as coordinating and support mechanisms by the Iraqi MOE;
5. Plan upcoming activities to be carried out in the near future (end of 2010/early 2011).

## Expected outcomes

The Doha workshop will constitute an opportunity for operational planning by specifying the project objectives, activities, and expected outcomes for each of the four years of the projects' life span, with a particular emphasis on the preparation of some important project activities during the next upcoming months. The main expected outcomes of the workshop are:

1. Shared understanding of the project's scope, objectives, expected outcomes and working strategies;
2. Mapping out of needed working groups/committees and of coordinating and support structures, and profiles and ToRs drafted;
3. Agreement on the detailed four-year implementation/operational plan to be formalised by Iraqi MOE and UNESCO Iraq Office;

4. Calendar of upcoming activities (second part of 2010 and early 2011).

### **Working methodology**

The workshop will be highly interactive allowing for the active participation of all participants based on an accommodating and flexible Agenda including:

1. Plenary sessions (overviews and inputs provided by Iraqi and other experts; presentations of group work; summarizing and concluding sessions);
2. Group activities (hands-on group work guided by specific questions and tasks);
3. Permanent, including informal dialogue among the participants;
4. Flexible adjustments of the Agenda based on the participants' feedback;
5. Evaluation by the participants of the workshop's effectiveness;
6. Simultaneous translation (Arabic-English).

## Draft Agenda

### Day One: Sat, 9 October 2010

Timing	Activity	Comments
09:30-10:15	Official opening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Welcome &amp; Opening speeches (20-25 minutes)</li>   <li>➤ Agenda overview and participant expectations (15 – 20 minutes)</li> </ul>	Opening speeches will be delivered by <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- HHO</li> <li>2 - UNESCO Iraq Office</li> </ol> Agenda overview and participants' expectations (facilitated by D. Georgescu)
10:15-10:45	<b>Break</b>	
10:45-12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Current Situation in Iraq (MOE/ Baghdad presentation) – (20-25 minutes)</li> <li>➤ Current Situation in KRG (MO/ KRG presentation) – (20 – 25 minutes)</li> </ul> Discussion	This session will serve for stocktaking of achievements and challenges to date in Iraq. Interventions will be based on questions such as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the most important changes in the education system since 2003?</li> <li>2. What are main achievements to date with regard to curriculum, assessment and teacher training?</li> <li>3. What are main challenges to be considered?</li> </ol> What are priority needs of the MOE that the project should consider?
12:30-14:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Panel session: International developments &amp; trends with regard to curriculum and curriculum-related matters (UNESCO IBE, UNESCO Iraq Office consultant &amp; Qatar consultant)</li> </ul>	This session should help inform curriculum processes in Iraq based on different experiences across the world: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Experiences from Qatar (Qatar consultant)</li> <li>2. Experiences from Maghreb and other Arab countries (Prof. Abdeljalil Akkari)</li> <li>3. Other international experiences (Dakmara Georgescu, UNESCO IBE)</li> </ol>
14:30-15:30	<b>Lunch break</b>	
15:30-16:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Overview of the project “Developing new Iraqi curricula” and of the detailed proposed implementation plan (facilitated by UNESCO Iraq Office and UNESCO IBE)</li> </ul> Discussions: questions and answers for clarification	This session will allow UNESCO to refresh the participants' awareness of the project scope, objectives and expected outcomes as well as to share a detailed suggested implementation plan focusing on realistic deliverables and timing

## Day Two: Sun, 10 October 2010

Timing	Activity	Comments
09:30-10:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Summary of the previous day</li> <li>➤ Introduction of group work</li> </ul>	<p>Based on the presentation of the project overview and proposed implementation plan of Day 1, the participants will be asked to divide in smaller groups and provide their comments and suggestions based on the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think are the strengths of the operational plan?</li> <li>2. What do you think are weakness of &amp; challenges to this operational plan?</li> <li>3. What changes/amendments of the work plan would you like to suggest?</li> <li>4. What shall be the priority activities over the next six months?</li> <li>5. Draft profiles and ToRs for different working groups/committees and coordinating committees</li> <li>6. Other issues you would like to raise</li> </ol>
10:00- 11:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Hands-on group work: clarifying issues and amending the work plan</li> </ul>	Participants will be divided into two/three smaller groups and will be given the opportunity to using flip charts/computers to prepare their presentations
11:30-12:00	<b>Break</b>	
12:00- 13:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Plenary presentation of the outcomes of hands-on group work</li> </ul>	The rapporteurs can present by using ppts or flip-chart presentations. Based on the presentations, a summary of the main outcomes will be drawn on computer in Arabic and English.
13:00- 14:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Plenary discussion</li> <li>➤ Summary (agreement on the detailed implementation/operational plan)</li> </ul>	The chair will provide a summary of the main issues to be considered in finalising the project implementation/operational plan.
14:00-14:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Follow up and concluding remarks</li> <li>➤ Workshop evaluation</li> </ul>	Iraq MOE, UNESCO Iraq Office, HHO
14:30-15:30	<b>Lunch break</b>	

**End of the workshop**