



## **UNESCO IBE Glossary of Curriculum Terminology**

### **Introduction**

In many countries around the world the curriculum is increasingly viewed as laying the foundation for comprehensive educational reforms aimed at achieving quality learning outcomes. Contemporary curriculum change processes more frequently involve public discussion and consultation with a range of stakeholders, and the curriculum is progressively evolving into a topic of debate engaging policymakers, experts, practitioners, and society at large.

Curriculum terminology is no longer only used by specialists in this field who are aware of all the complexities involved, and this may generate confusion and misinterpretation. Many curriculum-related terms are frequently used interchangeably even if they refer to different concepts and, depending on the context, the same term may be understood in many different ways by various stakeholders. An example is the diversity of definitions for the term ‘curriculum’, a word that in many national languages does not even exist.

The main purpose of the UNESCO IBE Glossary of curriculum-related terminology is not to establish standard universally applicable definitions. Rather, it is intended to be a working reference tool that can be used in a range of activities and help to stimulate reflection among all those involved in curriculum development initiatives.

The first draft of this Glossary was developed by Mr Massimo Amadio (Italy), Senior Programme Specialist, and Ms Ruth Creamer (Ireland), Documentalist at UNESCO IBE on the basis of previous glossaries created by the IBE as well as specialized terminology selected from a range of authoritative sources (see the bibliography). The draft Glossary was then shared with several curriculum specialists and experts in the field of organizing information, who were invited to provide their feedback on the document. The present version benefitted from the comments and suggestions made by:

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The IBE is deeply indebted to these colleagues for their valuable contribution.

This version of the Glossary is being made available as a draft consultative document, and it is hoped that other curriculum specialists and organizations will offer feedback and recommendations so that it will be possible to further enhance its usefulness as a resource and working tool for curriculum specialists, practitioners and educationalists in general.

## A

<b>Ability</b>	Inherent or acquired faculty for doing or achieving something. In typical educational practice, the terms ‘abilities’ and ‘aptitudes’ are used synonymously to denote an individual’s potential for acquiring new knowledge or skill. ( <i>Source</i> : Pellegrino 1996).
<b>Academic year</b>	The annual teaching or examination period during which students attend courses or take final examinations, not taking minor breaks into account. It may be shorter than 12 months but would typically not be shorter than 9 months. It may vary for different levels of education or types of educational institutions within a country. This is also referred to as the ‘school year’, mainly for the pre-tertiary level. ( <i>Source</i> : UIS 2012).
<b>Achieved curriculum</b>	See ‘Attained curriculum’.
<b>Adult education</b>	Education specifically targeted at individuals who are regarded as adults by their society to improve their technical or professional qualifications, further develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge with the purpose to complete a level of formal education, or to acquire, refresh or update their knowledge, skills and competencies in a particular field. ( <i>Source</i> : UIS 2012).
<b>Apprenticeship</b>	A system of training regulated by law or custom which combines on-the-job training and work experience while in paid employment with formal off-the-job training. The apprentice enters into a contract of training or training agreement with an employer who imposes mutual obligations on both parties. ( <i>Source</i> : Deißinger & Hellwig 2011).
<b>Assessment</b>	The process through which the progress and achievements of a learner or learners is measured or judged.
<b>Assessment for learning</b>	Assessment of learner’s progress and achievement, the primary purpose of which is to support and enhance learning by adapting the educational process to meet the learner’s needs whenever required. See also ‘Formative assessment’.
<b>Assessment of learning</b>	Assessment of learner’s achievement the primary purpose of which is to provide information about what has been learned at a particular point in time. This

process often, although not always, involves the use of standardized tests or examinations.  
See also ‘Summative assessment’.

**Assessment of learning outcomes**

Assessment of an individual’s achievement of stated learning outcomes, using a variety of assessment methods (written, oral and practical tests/examinations, projects and portfolios) during or at the end of an education programme or a defined part of that programme. (*Adapted from: UIS 2012*).

**Attained curriculum**

Indicates the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that learners actually acquire as a result of teaching and learning, or as a result of the process of implementation of the intended curriculum.  
See also ‘Implemented curriculum’, ‘Intended curriculum’.

**Attainment targets**

These targets specify the knowledge, understanding and skills related to specific subjects or disciplines that learners are expected to have acquired by the end of a programme or educational level and to be assessed against a predetermined set of criteria. They are normally organized in clearly articulated levels specifying the degree of proficiency to be attained.

**Attitude**

A learned tendency to evaluate things or react to some ideas, persons or situations in certain ways, either consciously or unconsciously, that has an influence on behaviour.

**B**

**Basic education**

The foundation for lifelong learning and human development on which countries may build, systematically, further levels and types of education and training. For basic education to be equitable, all children, youth and adults must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning. (*Source: UNESCO 1992*). Basic education typically comprises primary and lower secondary education, and increasingly one or more years of pre-primary education.

**Basic learning needs**

These needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy, and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their

full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning. The scope of basic learning needs and how they should be met varies with individual countries and cultures, and inevitably, changes with the passage of time. (*Source: UNESCO 1992*).

**Basic skills**

The fundamental skills needed for learning, work and life. Within the curriculum, literacy and numeracy are normally considered as foundational, essential or basic skills. The term can include a range of skills that individuals need to live successfully in contemporary society.

**Benchmark**

Reference point or standard against which performance or achievements can be assessed. (*Source: OECD 2002*).

**Benchmark test**

A test designed to measure student achievement and mastery of predetermined curriculum standards. Its main purposes are to provide information that can be used to guide the teaching and learning process, as well as to determine placement levels before commencing intervention.

**Block teaching**

Refers to a ‘block’ of time – for example, a number of weeks – being devoted to a particular topic or prescribed set of learning objectives/outcomes. It can also indicate a way of organizing the school day using long class periods (more than 60 minutes and typically 90-minutes long) to incorporate more activities and materials to engage the learners.

**Bloom’s taxonomy**

A classification of cognitive objectives developed in the 1950s by a group of researchers headed by Benjamin Bloom of the University of Chicago. Commonly refers to the objectives for the cognitive domain, and provides a way to organize thinking skills into six levels, from the most basic to the more complex levels of thinking (e.g. knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation). The taxonomy is probably the original reference of the term higher-order thinking. (*Adapted from: ASCD*). During the 1990s Lorin Anderson, a former student of Bloom, updated the taxonomy changing the Bloom's six major categories from noun to verb forms, as the taxonomy reflects different forms of thinking and thinking is an active process. In the revised Bloom’s taxonomy the six categories and

cognitive processes are: remembering (retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge); understanding (constructing meaning through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining); applying (carrying out or using a procedure through executing, or implementing); analysing (breaking information into parts to explore understanding and relationships through differentiating, organizing, and attributing); evaluating (making judgements based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing); and creating (putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; generating new ideas, products or ways of viewing things). Higher-order thinking refers to the cognitive processes of analysing, evaluating and creating. (*Source: Anderson & Krathwohl 2001*).

## C

### **Carrier subject**

A subject that by its scope and nature is more likely to help learners develop certain knowledge, skills and attitudes that are not the domain of a single subject.

### **Child-centred approach**

Placing the child at the centre of the learning process in which they are active participants. Involves giving children choices of activities, with the teacher acting as facilitator of learning. More common in early childhood education.

### **Child-friendly environment**

Supportive educational and community environment that is inclusive, healthy, friendly, protective and rights-based. The Child-Friendly School model, supported by UNICEF, promotes inclusiveness, gender-sensitivity, tolerance, dignity and personal empowerment.

### **Classroom-based assessment (CBA)**

Assessment carried out by teachers, without reference to assessment being conducted in other classes or groups.

### **Competence**

Within the European Union area a competence is defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. Competence indicates the ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context (education, work, personal or professional development). Competence is not limited to cognitive elements (involving the use of theory, concepts or tacit knowledge); it also encompasses functional aspects (involving technical

skills) as well as interpersonal attributes (e.g. social or organizational skills) and ethical values. (CEDEFOP 2011).

Competences can be domain-specific, e.g. relating to knowledge, skills and attitudes within one specific subject or discipline, or general/transversal because they have relevance to all domains/subjects.

See also 'Key competences/competencies or skills'.

**Competency-based curriculum**

A curriculum that emphasizes what the learners are expected to do rather than mainly focusing on what they are expected to learn about. In principle such a curriculum is learner-centred and adaptive to the changing needs of students, teachers and society. It implies that learning activities and environments are chosen so that learners can acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to situations they encounter in everyday life.

**Competency-based Education and Training (CBET)**

An approach to vocational education and training in which skills, knowledge and attitudes are specified in order to define, steer and help to achieve competence standards, mostly within a kind of national qualifications framework. (Source: Deißinger & Hellwig 2011).

See also 'Vocational education and training', 'National Qualifications Framework'.

**Constructivism**

A learning theory which places the learner at the centre of the educational process on the understanding that the learner actively constructs knowledge rather than passively receiving it. Thus, an individual's knowledge is a function of one's prior experiences, mental structures, and beliefs that are used to interpret objects and events. Largely influenced by the works of the psychologists Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky.

See also 'Learning'.

**Consultation (in curriculum)**

Process of soliciting and valuing opinions and experience of experts and varied stakeholders that is an integral part of the broader curriculum development process.

**Contact period**

Interaction time of teachers and learners engaged in active teaching and learning activities.

**Content**

See 'Learning content'.

**Content standards**

Statements describing what learners are expected to know and be able to do within a particular subject area

or discipline at different grade levels, ages, or other criteria.

See also ‘Standards-based curriculum’.

<b>Core curriculum</b>	The body of knowledge, skills and attitudes expected to be learned by all students, generally related to a set of subjects and learning areas that are common to all students, such as languages, mathematics, physical education, science and social studies.
<b>Core learning areas</b>	See ‘Core curriculum’.
<b>Criterion-referenced assessment</b>	Assessment of a learner’s progress and achievement against a pre-determined set criteria.
<b>Cross-curricular approach</b>	An approach to formulating curriculum which favours the inclusion of learning topics and themes to be covered and skills/competencies to be developed in a number of learning areas across the curriculum.
<b>Cross-cutting issues</b>	See ‘Cross-cutting themes’.
<b>Cross-cutting themes</b>	Important curriculum content which is to be covered across subjects (or disciplines or learning areas), rather than being taught and learned in one particular subject. They can connect programme content across disciplinary boundaries; enrich the curriculum without overloading it through the introduction of additional teaching subjects; and facilitate interdisciplinary thinking and collaborative learning. See also ‘Curriculum structure’.
<b>Culturally responsive curriculum</b>	A curriculum that respects learners’ cultures and prior experiences. It acknowledges and values the legitimacy of different cultures, not just the dominant culture of a society. It incorporates cultural aspects into the curriculum, rather than adding it on as an extra or separate module or course.
<b>Curriculum (plural curricula)</b>	In the simplest terms, ‘curriculum’ is a description of what, why and how students should learn. The curriculum is therefore not an end in itself. The objective of the curriculum is to provide learners with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to be successful in their lives. ( <i>Source: UNESCO IBE 2011</i> ). The term curriculum has many definitions, ranging from a planned ‘course of study’ (derived from the Latin) to an all-embracing view that includes all the learning experiences for which the school is responsible (e.g. “the curriculum is the totality of

experiences which are planned for children and young people through their education, wherever they are being educated”, Scottish Government 2009). Some examples of definitions: “The curriculum is a plan incorporating a structured series of intended learning outcomes and associated learning experiences, generally organized as a related combination or series of courses.” (Australian Thesaurus of Education Descriptors). The curriculum is the “inventory of activities implemented to design, organize and plan an education or training action, including definition of learning objectives, content, methods (including assessment) and material, as well as arrangements for training teachers and trainers.” (CEDEFOP 2011). “The curriculum defines the educational foundations and contents, their sequencing in relation to the amount of time available for the learning experiences, the characteristics of the teaching institutions, the characteristics of the learning experiences, in particular from the point of view of methods to be used, the resources for learning and teaching (e.g. textbooks and new technologies), evaluation and teachers’ profiles.” (Braslavsky 2003). Curriculum development and reform processes increasingly involve public discussion and consultation with a range of stakeholders, and the curriculum is progressively evolving into a topic of debate (with frequently conflicting visions) engaging policymakers, experts, practitioners, customers and society at large. From this perspective, the curriculum can also be viewed as a political and social agreement that, taking into account global, national and local expectations and needs, reflects a common vision of the society being pursued.

<b>Curriculum adaptation</b>	Adjusting the existing curriculum, teaching methods and assessment strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners of all abilities.
<b>Curriculum alignment</b>	Process aimed at ensuring coherence and consistency between the intended outcomes as specified in the formal curriculum and teaching methods, assessment tasks, and learning activities in the classroom. See also ‘Curriculum coherence’.
<b>Curriculum area</b>	See ‘Learning area’.
<b>Curriculum change</b>	Modifications introduced in the curriculum to improve or adapt it to new circumstances or priorities. This can be done through: minor adjustments that do not affect the curriculum structure; modernization to ensure that

the curriculum remains current and relevant, reflects new developments in society and adequately prepares learners for life; innovation that brings new approaches and solutions; review and revision which aim to identify gaps and weaknesses with a view to increasing curriculum effectiveness; and comprehensive reform that entirely reshapes the existing curriculum.

**Curriculum coherence**

A characteristic of curriculum indicating the extent to which the curriculum content, textbooks, teaching content, pedagogy, and assessment are all aligned and reinforce one another. Some research findings suggest that a high level of curriculum coherence is associated with high performing systems. (*Adapted from: Oates 2010*).  
See also ‘Curriculum alignment’.

**Curriculum design**

The process of constructing and interconnecting in some meaningful way the component parts of a curriculum so as to address such fundamental questions as what needs to be learned, the resources required and how learning will be assessed.

**Curriculum development**

The process of defining the national, local or school curriculum. In order to produce a quality curriculum, this process should be planned and systematic, led by curriculum professionals and supported by specialized bodies. It should value the input of stakeholders and also cater for sustainability and long-term impact. In contemporary educational practice curriculum development is seen as a cycle of development, implementation, evaluation and revision to ensure that the curriculum is up-to-date and relevant. (*Adapted from: UNESCO IBE 2011*).

**Curriculum evaluation**

The process of measuring and judging the extent to which the planned courses, programmes, learning activities and opportunities as expressed in the formal curriculum actually produce the expected results. If carried out effectively, this process can enable decisions to be made about improvements and future progress.

**Curriculum framework**

An overarching document that: places national statements of vision, economic development and education policy in a curriculum context; sets out broad aims and objectives of the curriculum at the various stages of schooling; explains the educational philosophy underlying the curriculum and approaches to teaching, learning and assessment that are

fundamental to that philosophy; outlines the curriculum structure, its subjects or learning areas and the rationale for the inclusion of each in the curriculum; allocates time to various subjects and/or learning areas in each grade or stage; provides guidelines to syllabus developers, teacher trainers and textbook writers; prescribes requirements for curriculum implementation, monitoring and evaluation. (*Source: UNESCO IBE 2011*).

The term can also be used to refer to a document which specifies the general outcomes (to be attained throughout the grades), the specific outcomes (to be attained by the end of a given grade), and the achievement indicators (e.g. a representative list of the depth, breadth, and expectations of the outcome) for a particular subject or subject area.

**Curriculum harmonization**

Initiatives developed by sub-regional and regional organizations (for example the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and the East African Community) intended to harmonize curricular contents, standards, and assessment in some subject areas such as mathematics and science education, as a way to foster integration and facilitate the mobility of students and teachers across countries. Harmonization is seen as a means of achieving an increasingly networked and interrelated group of curriculum and examination systems and improving education against common agreed benchmarks of excellence.

**Curriculum implementation**

The process of putting the formal curriculum into practice in schools. In the case of a new or revised curriculum this process normally includes in-service teacher training and the development of new textbooks and guidelines.

**Curriculum in action**

See ‘Implemented curriculum’.

**Curriculum innovation**

See ‘Curriculum change’.

**Curriculum integration**

Process of combining/articulating learning content and subjects with a view to promoting holistic and comprehensive learning.  
See also ‘Interdisciplinary approach’.

**Curriculum knowledge**

The body of knowledge purposefully selected for inclusion in the curriculum, noting that the curriculum cannot embrace the whole body of accumulated human knowledge.

<b>Curriculum models</b>	Broad theoretical frameworks used to design and organize the curriculum according to certain principles and criteria. For example, the product model that emphasizes plans and intentions, and the process model that focuses on activities and effects. Other examples include subject-centred (e.g. traditional or discipline-based curriculum), learner-centred, and problem-centred models.
<b>Curriculum monitoring</b>	A process of gathering information for assessing the effectiveness of the curriculum and ensuring that the intended, implemented and attained curricula are aligned. This process typically focuses on such issues as the effective implementation, relevancy and appropriateness of the intended curriculum, as well as whether learners are achieving the expected learning outcomes. It measures the extent to which the curriculum is commensurate with the diverse needs of all the learners. See also 'Intended curriculum', 'Implemented curriculum', 'Attained curriculum'.
<b>Curriculum orientation</b>	See 'Curriculum models'.
<b>Curriculum planning</b>	The process concerned with making decisions about what to teach, why, and how to organize the teaching and learning process taking into account existing curriculum requirements and the resources available. At the general level, it often results in the definition of a broad curriculum framework, as well as a syllabus for each subject to be used as reference by individual schools. At the school level, it involves developing course and assessment plans for the different subjects. At the classroom level, it involves developing more detailed plans for individual lessons and lesson sequences.
<b>Curriculum policy</b>	Formal decisions made by government or education authorities that have a direct or significant effect on the curriculum and its development. These decisions are normally recorded in a range of official documents.
<b>Curriculum reform</b>	See 'Curriculum change'.
<b>Curriculum relevance</b>	Applicability and appropriateness of a curriculum to the needs, interests, aspirations and expectations of learners and society in general.
<b>Curriculum review</b>	See 'Curriculum change'.

**Curriculum strands** Designate the way content is organized for the purpose of planning for student learning. The term ‘strands’ is used to indicate: (a) the disciplines within a learning area, e.g. history, geography, economics and civics under ‘social studies’, each with its own associated goals for learning; (b) domains that group the related general and specific learning outcomes or achievement aims and objectives within a particular learning area or discipline. For example, in the New Zealand Curriculum of 2007 science education includes ‘nature of science’ as a core, unifying strand, and ‘the living world’, ‘the planet earth and beyond’, ‘the physical world’ and ‘the material world’ as strands providing contexts for learning. Another example is mathematics which can include, depending on the country, the following content strands: ‘number sense and operations’, ‘algebra’, ‘geometry’, ‘measurement’, and ‘statistics and probability’.

**Curriculum structure** The way in which the curriculum is organized, including the subjects or learning areas, when they must be studied and the ‘pattern’ in which they must be studied. The curriculum may be composed, for example, of core and elective subjects studied with some variation between grades. It may also comprise cross-cutting or cross-curricular themes.

**Curriculum trends** Changes that are taking place in the field of curriculum to respond to current and anticipated developments in society and education.

**D**

**Developmental curriculum** A curriculum designed for learners with severe cognitive impairments who need a curriculum that reflects their developmental stage. It should be age appropriate, rather than merely being a curriculum for younger children.  
See also ‘Functional curriculum’.

**Diagnostic assessment** Assessment aimed at identifying a learner’s strengths and weaknesses with a view to taking necessary action to enhance learning. Also used prior to the teaching and learning process to appraise the learner’s readiness or level of achievement.

**Differentiated instruction** An approach to teaching that involves offering several different learning experiences and proactively

addressing students' varied needs to maximize learning opportunities for each student in the classroom. It requires teachers to be flexible in their approach and adjust the curriculum and presentation of information to learners of different abilities.

**Disposition**

See 'Attitude'.

**E**

**Early childhood development (ECD)**

The first phase of human development (starting during pregnancy), ECD is an integrated concept that cuts across multiple sectors – including health and nutrition, education, and social protection – and refers to the physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development of young children. The definition of ECD includes children up to age 8 on the premise that a successful transition to primary school depends not only on the child's school readiness, but also on the readiness of schools to adapt to the specific needs of young learners in the early grades. ECD is also known as early childhood care and development (ECCD) and encompasses early childhood education (ECE), early childhood care and education (ECCE), and other designations. (*Source: Naudeau et al. 2011*).

**Early childhood education**

Early childhood education provides learning and educational activities with a holistic approach to support children's early cognitive, physical, social and emotional development and introduces young children to organized instruction outside of the family context. It aims to develop socio-emotional skills necessary for participation in school and society and to develop some of the skills needed for academic readiness and to prepare children for entry into primary education. Within the framework of ISCED 2011 it includes early childhood educational development and pre-primary education. The former has educational content designed for younger children (in the age range of 0 to 2 years), whilst the latter is designed for children from age 3 years to the start of primary education. (*Source: UIS 2012*).

See also 'ISCED'.

**E-learning**

All forms of electronically supported teaching and learning, especially the web-based and computer-based acquisition of, and engagement with, knowledge and skills. May take place in or out of the classroom. It is

often an essential component of distant education and may involve virtual learning environments.

<b>Elective curriculum</b>	Courses or subjects from which learners can choose according to their interests and needs, also referred to as ‘electives’. Typically offered in secondary and tertiary education and complementing the core curriculum that all learners must follow.
<b>Elementary education</b>	See ‘Primary education’.
<b>Emerging issues</b>	As the curriculum is often overloaded but still needs to respond to emerging issues as they arise (for example, HIV/AIDS prevention, peace education, sustainable development, etc.), one approach that can be adopted is to integrate or mainstream knowledge, skills and attitudes that will bring the desired behaviours related to these issues into the existing learning areas or subjects, thereby engaging learners in the process of solving ‘real-life’ problems. ( <i>Adapted from: UNICEF 2000</i> ).
<b>Emotional intelligence</b>	The capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. ( <i>Source: Mayer, Salovey &amp; Caruso 2004</i> ).
<b>Evaluation (in teaching and learning)</b>	A systematic process aimed at judging the effectiveness of any teaching and learning programme.
<b>Expanded learning time</b>	Lengthening of the school day, school week or school year for all students to focus on core academic and enrichment activities to enhance learner success. Initiative launched in the USA.
<b>External assessment</b>	A process and method of assessment developed and used by an examination body or agency other than the learner’s school. This process commonly involves standardized testing, and often serves to grade candidates for further educational opportunities and/or for certification purposes.
<b>Extra-curricular activities</b>	A range of activities organized outside of the regular school day, curriculum or course intended to meet learners’ interests. These activities can help learners become more involved in their school or community

and can help them to develop social skills and to promote well-being. These activities can include athletics, sport, voluntary work, photography, drama, music, etc.

## F

### **Formal education**

Education that is institutionalized, intentional and planned through public organizations and recognized private bodies and – in their totality – constitute the formal education system of a country. Formal education programmes are thus recognized as such by the relevant national education authorities or equivalent authorities, e.g. any other institution in cooperation with the national or sub-national education authorities. Vocational education, special needs education and some parts of adult education are often recognized as being part of the formal education system. (*Source: UIS 2012*).

### **Formative assessment**

Assessment conducted throughout the educational process with a view to enhancing student learning. It implies: eliciting evidence about learning to close the gap between current and desired performance (so that action can be taken to close the gap); providing feedback to students; and involving students in the assessment and learning process. (*Source: CCSSO 2008*).

See also ‘Assessment for learning’.

### **Four pillars-oriented curriculum design**

Curriculum that takes into account the four pillars defined as the foundations of education in the Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (*Learning: the treasure within*, 1996): learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be.

See also ‘Curriculum design’.

### **Functional curriculum**

A curriculum designed to teach important skills deemed necessary for living and working independently to learners with cognitive impairments.

See also ‘Developmental curriculum’.

## G

### **General capabilities**

In the Australian Curriculum (2013), ‘general capabilities’ encompass the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that, together with

curriculum content in each learning area and the cross-curriculum priorities, will assist students to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century. The Australian Curriculum includes seven general capabilities, namely: literacy; numeracy; Information and Communication Technology (ICT) capability; critical and creative thinking; personal and social capability; ethical understanding; and intercultural understanding. Students develop capability when they apply knowledge and skills confidently, effectively and appropriately in complex and changing circumstances, both in their learning at school and in their lives outside school. The encouragement of positive behaviours and dispositions underpins all general capabilities. While each of the capabilities covers a particular body of learning, it should be noted that some knowledge, skills, dispositions and behaviours are shared across capabilities. In some cases, a particular aspect of one capability is covered in another, for example, the application of social and ethical protocols in the use of digital technologies is included in ICT capability. When combined in learning area contexts, general capabilities enhance and complement each other. The capabilities are intended to be ‘general’ and operate across the whole curriculum. More ‘specialized’ knowledge and skills are detailed in learning areas, particularly in relation to literacy, numeracy and ICT. (Source: ACARA 2013).

See also ‘Key competences/competencies or skills’.

**General education**

Education programmes that are designed to develop learners’ general knowledge, skills and competencies, as well as literacy and numeracy skills, often to prepare students for more advanced education programmes and to lay the foundation for lifelong learning. General education includes education programmes that are designed to prepare students for entry into vocational education but do not prepare for employment in a particular occupation, trade, or class of occupations or trades, nor lead directly to a labour market-relevant qualification. (Source: UIS 2012).

**Gender mainstreaming in the curriculum**

Ensuring consideration of gender issues as part of the design, implementation and monitoring of certain policies or programmes with the aim of achieving and maintaining gender equality.

**General or generic competencies**

See ‘Key competences/competencies or skills’.

## H

**Hard skills** Skills typically related to the professional knowledge, procedures, or technical abilities necessary for an occupation. Normally they are easily observed and measured.  
See also ‘Soft skills’.

**Hidden curriculum** This term has various interpretations and in general it refers to unofficial norms, behaviours and values that students learn at school and which are not necessarily a product of conscious intention. The hidden curriculum acknowledges that schooling takes place in a broad social and cultural environment that has an influence on learning. Increasingly referred to as ‘school-related factors’.

**High-stakes test** An examination which may have significant consequences for learners, such as determining their future educational pathways. Also refers to forms and uses of assessment that may be of ‘high stakes’ for teachers and schools within an accountability system that links results to rewards and sanctions.

**Higher-order thinking** See ‘Bloom’s taxonomy’.

**Holistic learning approach** An approach that seeks to fully activate all aspects of the learner’s personality (intellect, emotions, imagination, body) for more effective learning.

## I

**ICCS (International Civic and Citizenship Education Study)** ICCS, conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) in 2009, investigates the ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their roles as citizens in the 21st century in a range of countries. It reports on student achievement in a test of knowledge, conceptual understanding, and competencies in civic and citizenship education. It also provides evidence on student dispositions and attitudes relating to civics and citizenship. It focuses on grade 8 students, e.g. students approximately 14 years of age.

**Implemented curriculum** Refers to the actual teaching and learning activities taking place in schools, e.g. how the intended curriculum is translated into practice and actually

delivered. Also defined as the ‘curriculum in action’ or the ‘taught curriculum’.

See also ‘Attained curriculum’, ‘Intended curriculum’.

**Inclusive curriculum**

Curriculum which takes into consideration and caters for the diverse needs, previous experiences, interests and personal characteristics of all learners. It attempts to ensure that all students are part of the shared learning experiences of the classroom.

**Inclusive education**

UNESCO defines inclusive education as a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve Education for All. As an overall principle, it should guide all education policies and practices, starting from the fact that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society. (*Source: UNESCO 2009*). Inclusive schools are based upon a child-centred pedagogy capable of successfully educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities. The merit of such schools is not only that they are capable of providing quality education to all children; their establishment is a crucial step in helping to change discriminatory attitudes, in creating welcoming communities and in developing an inclusive society. (*Source: UNESCO 1994*).

**Informal learning**

Forms of learning that are intentional or deliberate but are not institutionalized. It is consequently less organized and structured than either formal or non-formal education. Informal learning may include learning activities that occur in the family, workplace, local community and daily life, on a self-directed, family-directed or socially-directed basis. (*Source: UIS 2012*).

**Instruction**

The creation and implementation of purposefully developed plans for guiding the process by which learners gain knowledge and understanding, and develop skills, attitudes, appreciations and values. Instruction is frequently associated with the term ‘curriculum’ and generally refers to the teaching methods and learning activities that a teacher uses to deliver the curriculum in the classroom. The terms ‘teaching’ and ‘instruction’ are often used interchangeably. (See Kridel 2010).

See also ‘Teaching’.

<b>Instructional time</b>	<p>The amount of time during which students receive instruction from a classroom teacher in a school context. Instructional time does not include holidays or teacher professional development days when students are not expected to be in school; breaks during the school day; or time spent on learning outside of school (e.g. homework, tutoring). Intended instructional time is usually specified in school or education policies or regulations. Note that the intended instructional time may be very different from the actual instructional time students receive. (<i>Source</i>: UIS-IBE 2013). See also ‘Learning time’.</p>
<b>Intended curriculum</b>	<p>A set of formal documents which specify what the relevant national education authorities and society expect that students will learn at school in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills, values, attitudes and competences to be acquired and developed, and how the outcomes of the teaching and learning process will be assessed. It is usually embodied in curriculum framework(s) and guides, syllabi, teacher’s guides, content of tests and examinations, regulations, policies and other official documents. Also referred to as the ‘official curriculum’.</p> <p>See also ‘Attained curriculum’, ‘Implemented curriculum’.</p>
<b>Interactive teaching and learning</b>	<p>The practice of involving learners in the educational process by encouraging them to bring their own experience and knowledge into the process.</p>
<b>Interdisciplinary approach</b>	<p>An approach to curriculum integration that generates an understanding of themes and ideas that cut across disciplines and of the connections between different disciplines and their relationship to the real world. It normally emphasizes process and meaning rather than product and content by combining contents and perspectives from two or more disciplines. The term should not be confused with the multidisciplinary approach (which focuses primarily on the different disciplines and the diverse perspectives they bring to illustrate a theme or issue) or the transdisciplinary approach, which dissolves the boundaries between the conventional disciplines and organizes teaching and learning around the construction of meaning in the context of real-world problems or themes.</p> <p>See also ‘Curriculum integration’.</p>
<b>International assessments of student achievement</b>	<p>See ‘ICCS’, ‘PIRLS’, ‘PISA’, ‘TIMSS’.</p>

**International benchmarking (and the curriculum)**

The term benchmarking is used to describe a large variety of different measurement and evaluation technologies which have been collected with one single aim: the improvement of organizational performance. Benchmarking can be conducted using a case study approach or through performance indicators. International indicators provide an opportunity to compare a country performance with that of other countries, to identify similarities and differences between one system and others, and to suggest new approaches to the challenge of providing a world-class education. (*Source: Wyatt 2004*). Policy debates and decision-making processes with regard to the curriculum increasingly evoke international benchmarks or the need to benchmark to international standards as a tool to ensure high quality, effectiveness and accountability and achieve a world-class education system. While evidence from international comparisons is certainly useful to inform national policies, most researchers and analysts recommend being cautious in interpreting the success of others.

**International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)**

ISCED has been designed to serve as a framework to classify educational activities as defined in programmes and the resulting qualifications into internationally agreed categories. ISCED classifies education programmes by their content using two main cross-classification variables: levels of education and fields of education. The basic concepts and definitions of ISCED are intended to be internationally valid and comprehensive of the full range of education systems. ISCED is a product of international agreement and adopted formally by the General Conference of UNESCO Member States. (*Source: UIS 2012*).

**K**

**Key competences/competencies or skills**

Within the European Union area key competences are defined as the sum of skills (basic and new basic skills) needed to live in a contemporary knowledge society. In their recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning (2006), the European Parliament and the Council set out eight key competences: communication in the mother tongue; communication in foreign languages; competences in mathematics, science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; interpersonal, intercultural and social competences, and civic competence; entrepreneurship; and cultural

expression. (Source: CEDEFOP 2011). Curriculum policies increasingly focus on competences that students are expected to develop during the whole process of learning across specific subjects or disciplines and that they need to succeed in education and for personal development, employment and inclusion in a knowledge society. A variety of terms are used to indicate these competences, the most frequent ones being competences or competencies (defined as key, core, general, generic, basic, cross-curricular or transversal competences) and skills (defined as key, foundation, core, basic, essential, cross-thematic, cross-curricular or 21st century skills). Beyond the European Union, different organizations, including also partnerships and consortia, have defined and endorsed core competences/skills frameworks using different foci, emphases, groupings and terminologies. An example is ‘the 4 Cs’ (e.g. communication, critical thinking, creativity and collaboration).

**Key stages of the curriculum**

A way of organizing the curriculum into blocks of years and normally covering the period of compulsory schooling. This typically implies defining the knowledge, skills, attitudes and the related attainment targets appropriate for the learner’s age and maturity level within each stage.

**L  
Learner centredness**

An approach to organizing teaching, learning and assessment based on the learner’s needs and interests.

**Learning**

The individual acquisition or modification of information, knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values, skills, competencies or behaviours through experience, practice, study or instruction. (Source: UIS 2012). Note that the definition of learning depends on the philosophical and psychological approach adopted. There are at least three different frameworks. Behaviourism views learning as a measurable change of behaviour resulting from environmental factors. Cognitive theories emphasize internal mental organization of knowledge, stressing the acquisition of knowledge, mental structures, and the processing of information. Constructivism views learning as a process in which the learner actively constructs new ideas or concepts based on prior knowledge and/or experience. (Source: Kridel 2010).

See also ‘Teaching’.

<b>Learning area</b>	Grouping of traditionally discrete but related subjects intended to integrate students’ learning. For example, the learning area ‘social sciences/studies’ can include elements of geography, history, citizenship, economy/commerce, philosophy, and sociology. ( <i>Adapted from: UNESCO IBE 2011</i> ). Many education systems organize the curriculum of general education around broad learning areas or fields of learning. For example: language and communication (including a first and a second language); mathematical thinking; exploration and understanding of the natural and social world (including natural sciences, geography, history, biology, physics, and chemistry); and personal and social development (including artistic education, citizenship, ethics and physical education). (Mexico, <i>Study plan of basic education, 2011</i> ).
<b>Learning content</b>	The topics, themes, beliefs, behaviours, concepts and facts, often grouped within each subject or learning area under knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, that are expected to be learned and form the basis of teaching and learning.
<b>Learning environment</b>	This term is used in a variety of ways. At a minimum, it indicates the learner’s immediate physical surroundings (classroom, school), the resources made available to support the learning process, and the social interaction taking place within this context and having an influence on learning.
<b>Learning objectives</b>	Specification of learning to be achieved upon completion of an educational programme or learning activity. These encompass the knowledge, skills and competencies within any personal, civic, social or employment-related context. ( <i>Adapted from: UIS 2012</i> ).
<b>Learning outcomes</b>	The totality of information, knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values, skills, competencies or behaviours an individual is expected to have mastered upon the successful completion of an education programme. ( <i>Source: UIS 2012</i> ).
<b>Learning progression</b>	A description of increasing levels of difficulty and complexity in knowledge, skills and attitudes within a domain. It implies that learning is a process of increasing difficulty and complexity, rather than a body of content to be covered within specific grade levels.

Teachers need to have in mind a continuum of how learning develops in any particular knowledge domain so that they are able to locate students' current learning status and decide on pedagogical action to move students' learning forward. Learning progressions that clearly articulate a progression of learning in a domain can provide the big picture of what is to be learned, support instructional planning, and act as a touchstone for formative assessment. (*Adapted from: CCSSO 2008*).

See also 'Formative assessment'.

### **Learning styles**

A set of behaviours and attitudes that influence how students learn and interact with teachers and peers. Learning styles are cognitive, affective, and physiological behaviours that serve as indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment. For David Kolb (1984), learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. In Kolb's model, learning is based on two continuums, namely: (a) processing continuum, e.g. approach to a task, such as preferring to learn by doing (active experimentation) or watching (reflective observation); (b) perception continuum, e.g. emotional response, such as preferring to learn by thinking (abstract conceptualisation) or feeling (concrete experience). The four combinations of processing and perceiving determine one of the learning styles (or learning preferences) of how individuals prefer to learn.

According to the VAK (Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic – movement –, sometimes known as VAKT, Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, and Tactile) model, learners use these three/four modalities to receive and learn new information, one or two of these being normally dominant. An individual may have several learning styles which can change over time and according to the learning task.

### **Learning time**

Generally the amount of time during which learners are actively working on tasks and are effectively engaged in learning. There are different approaches to time in education. For example, a distinction can be made between: (a) allocated time, which includes school time (i.e. the total amount of time spent in school), classroom time (i.e. the amount of time spent in the classroom), and instructional time (i.e. the portion of classroom time devoted to the teaching and learning of curriculum subjects); (b) engaged time or time-on-task, which refers to the portion of time during which

students are paying attention to a learning task and attempting to learn; and (c) academic learning time, which indicates that portion of engaged time that students spend working on tasks at an appropriate level of difficulty for them and experiencing high levels of success (see, for example, Berliner 1990).

See also 'Instructional time'.

### **Lesson plan**

An outline of a topic to be taught in a given period which can take a variety of forms and be prepared on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. It normally involves defining specific learning objectives aligned with the existing curriculum, selection of subject matter, required materials and resources, the activities that will take place as well as time and class management notes, assessment methods, and the links between previous and following lessons.

### **Levels of education (ISCED)**

An ordered set of categories, intended to group educational programmes in relation to gradations of learning experiences and the knowledge, skills and competencies which each programme is designed to impart. Levels of education are therefore a construct based on the assumption that education programmes can be grouped into an ordered series of categories. These categories represent broad steps of educational progression in terms of the complexity of educational content. The more advanced the programme, the higher the level of education. The ISCED 2011 classification consists of nine levels of education, namely: early childhood education (level 0); primary education (level 1); lower secondary education (level 2); upper secondary education (level 3); post-secondary non-tertiary education (level 4); short-cycle tertiary education (level 5); bachelor's or equivalent level (level 6); master's or equivalent level (level 7); doctor or equivalent level (level 8). (*Source: UIS 2012*).

See also 'ISCED'.

### **Life skills**

Originally defined by the World Health Organization as a group of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner. Life skills are not normally seen as a domain, or a subject, but as cross-cutting applications of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills, which are important in the process of individual development and lifelong

learning. They are not just a set of skills, nor are they equal to survival skills, livelihood skills, or vocational skills but are part of these skills. (Source: UNESCO 2004). In some cases the term is used as an equivalent of key competencies/skills, and in certain contexts it is used to indicate a subject area. For UNICEF life skills are part of a rights-based approach to learning. Children are fundamentally entitled to quality education that respects their dignity and expands their abilities to live a life they value and to transform the societies in which they live. Child-friendly schools promote and enhance life skills.

See also ‘Child-friendly environment’.

**Lifelong learning**

All learning activity undertaken throughout life, which results in improving knowledge, know-how, skills, competences and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons. (Source: CEDEFOP 2011).

**Literacy**

The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling an individual to achieve his or her goals, develop his or her knowledge and potential and participate fully in community and wider society. (Source: UNESCO 2005). New forms of literacy needed in modern life are also increasingly taken into account in the curriculum, in particular those related to new technologies such as digital literacy, information literacy, mass media literacy and social media literacy.

**Localization of curriculum**

Process of defining parts or components of the curriculum at community/local level, normally with the involvement of local staff, stakeholders and institutions, so as to address issues that are locally relevant and allow for more meaningful learning experiences.

**Lower secondary education**

Lower secondary education programmes are typically designed to build on the learning outcomes from primary education. Usually, the aim is to consolidate the foundation for lifelong learning and human development upon which education systems may then expand further educational opportunities. Some education systems may already offer vocational education programmes at this level to provide individuals with skills relevant to employment. Programmes at this level are usually organized around

a more subject-oriented curriculum, introducing theoretical concepts across a broad range of subjects. Teachers typically have pedagogical training in specific subjects and, more often than at primary level, a class of students may have several teachers with specialized knowledge of the subjects they teach. (Source: UIS 2012).

## M

- Mainstreaming (in special needs education)** The integration of learners with special needs into general educational settings or regular schools, facilitated by appropriate curriculum and infrastructure adjustments and by the provision of specially trained staff.
- Mathematical literacy** Within the framework of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), mathematical literacy is defined as an individual's capacity to identify and understand the role that mathematics plays in the world, to make well-founded judgements and to use and engage with mathematics in ways that meet the needs of that individual's life as a constructive, concerned and reflective citizen. Mathematical literacy is concerned with the ability of students to analyse, reason, and communicate ideas effectively as they pose, formulate, solve, and interpret solutions to mathematical problems in a variety of situations. (Source: OECD 2009). See also 'PISA'.
- Multi-grade/multi-class teaching** The teaching of learners from two or more grade levels in the same classroom environment by using appropriate and specifically designed teaching methods.
- Multiple intelligences** A theory of intelligence developed in the 1980s by Howard Gardner (professor of education at Harvard University), which defines intelligence broadly as "the capacity to solve problems or fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural settings." Gardner originally identified seven intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. He later suggested the existence of several others, including naturalist, spiritual, and existential. According to Gardner, everyone has all the intelligences, but in different proportions. Using this approach in teaching implies striving to present subject matter in ways that allow students to use several intelligences. (Adapted

from: ASCD).

## N

### **National assessments of student achievement**

National and international assessments became extremely popular tools for determining the quality of education in the 1990s and 2000s. This increase in popularity reflects two important developments. First, it reflects increasing globalization and interest in global mandates. Second, it represents an overall shift in emphasis in assessing the quality of education from a concern with inputs to a concern with outcomes, such as the knowledge and skills that students have acquired as a result of their exposure to schooling. A national assessment is designed to describe the achievement of students in a curriculum area aggregated to provide an estimate of the achievement level in the education system as a whole at a particular age or grade level. It provides data for a type of national education audit carried out to inform policymakers about key aspects of the system. Normally, it involves administration of achievement tests either to a sample or to a population of students, usually focusing on a particular sector in the system. The assumption is frequently made not only that national assessments will provide information on the state of education, but also that use of the information should lead to improvement in student achievements. Whether this improvement ultimately happens remains to be seen. (*Source: Greaney & Kellaghan 2007*).

### **National curriculum**

A description – normally set out in a document or series of related documents – of the common goals, objectives and quality and/or content criteria of a national school system. This may take the form of standards (defined objectives and achievement criteria at given levels of education and in specific subjects or learning areas). It may also indicate the extent to which decisions on curriculum content can be made on the local or school level. (*Adapted from: OECD 2004*).

### **National Qualifications Framework (NQF)**

An instrument for the development, classification and recognition of skills, knowledge and competencies along a continuum of agreed levels. It is a way of structuring existing and new qualifications, which are defined by learning outcomes, i.e. clear statements of what the learner must know or be able to do whether learned in a classroom, on-the-job, or less formally.

The Qualifications Framework indicates the comparability of different qualifications and how one can progress from one level to another, within and across occupations or industrial sectors (and even across vocational and academic fields if the NQF is designed to include both vocational and academic qualifications in a single framework). The scope of frameworks may be comprehensive of all learning achievement and pathways or may be confined to a particular sector for example initial education, adult education and training or an occupational area. Some frameworks may have more design elements and a tighter structure than others; some may have a legal basis whereas others represent a consensus of views of social partners. All qualifications frameworks, however, provide a basis for improving the quality, accessibility, linkages and public or labour market recognition of qualifications within a country and internationally. Individual countries may choose to define ‘qualifications framework’ in a more specific way. (Source: Tuck 2007).

**Non-formal education**

Education that is institutionalized, intentional and planned by an education provider. The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative and/or complement to formal education within the process of the lifelong learning of individuals. It is often provided to guarantee the right of access to education for all. It caters to people of all ages but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway-structure; it may be short in duration and/or low-intensity, and it is typically provided in the form of short courses, workshops or seminars. Non-formal education mostly leads to qualifications that are not recognized as formal or equivalent to formal qualifications by the relevant national or sub-national education authorities or to no qualifications at all. Non-formal education can cover programmes contributing to adult and youth literacy and education for out-of-school children, as well as programmes on life skills, work skills, and social or cultural development. (Source: UIS 2012).

**Norm-referenced assessment**

Assessment of learner’s progress and achievement with reference to the levels of achievement of his/her peer group and/or by reference to norms derived from a sample of a similar population.

**Numeracy**

The ability to use mathematical skills in appropriate and meaningful ways in order to meet the varied

demands of personal, study, social and work life.  
See also 'Mathematical literacy'.

## O

<b>Official curriculum</b>	See 'Intended curriculum'.
<b>Opportunity to learn</b>	The provision of learning conditions, including suitable adjustments, to maximize a student's chances of attaining the desired learning outcomes. ( <i>Source: CCSSO 2005</i> ).
<b>Outcomes</b>	See 'Learning outcomes'.
<b>Outcomes-based education (OBE)</b>	An approach to schooling that makes outcomes (intended results) the key factor in planning and creating educational experiences. In the 1990s this approach was controversial in the USA and now the term is not frequently used. ( <i>Source: ASCD</i> ).
<b>Overarching competences/competencies</b>	See 'Key competences/competencies or skills'.

## P

<b>Peer assessment</b>	Assessment of learners' work by other learners.
<b>Peer learning</b>	Learning process based on exchange of knowledge and information between learners who may also act as mentors. Also referred to as peer education.
<b>Peer teaching/tutoring</b>	Practice in which students share their knowledge and support the learning of their peers through assuming a teaching role within a school setting.
<b>Performance assessment</b>	Assessment that is designed to measure and judge what learners know and are able to do based on how they perform certain tasks. ( <i>Source: ASCD</i> ).
<b>Performance standards</b>	See 'Standards-based curriculum'.
<b>PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study)</b>	PIRLS, conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), investigates changes over time in children's reading achievement at the fourth grade (age 9-10). First assessed in 2001, PIRLS has been on a regular five-year cycle since then. In general, participating countries use PIRLS in various ways to explore educational issues, including among others monitoring system-level

achievement trends in a global context, establishing achievement goals and standards for educational improvement, and stimulating curriculum reform.

**PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment)**

Launched by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1997, PISA represents a commitment by governments to monitor the outcomes of education systems through measuring 15-year-old student achievement on a regular basis and within an internationally agreed common framework. It aims to provide a new basis for policy dialogue and for collaboration in defining and implementing educational goals, in innovative ways that reflect judgements about the skills that are relevant to adult life. The PISA assessment takes a broad approach to measuring knowledge, skills and attitudes that reflect current changes in curricula, moving beyond the school-based approach towards the use of knowledge in everyday tasks and challenges. PISA covers the domains of reading, mathematics and science not merely in terms of whether students can reproduce specific subject matter knowledge, but also whether they can extrapolate from what they have learned and apply their knowledge in novel situations. Emphasis is on the mastery of processes, the understanding of concepts and the ability to function in various situations within each domain. (*Source: OECD 2009*).

**Predictive assessment**

The process of identifying potential successes and failures in learners' development and suggesting appropriate action to stimulate progress and deal with anticipated shortcomings.

**Pre-primary education or preschool education**

Typically designed for children from 3 years of age to the start of primary education. The educational properties of pre-primary education are characterized by interaction with peers and educators, through which children improve their use of language and social skills, and start to develop logical and reasoning skills. Children are also introduced to alphabetical and mathematical concepts, and encouraged to explore their surrounding world and environment. Supervised gross motor activities (i.e. physical exercise through games and other activities) and play-based activities can be used as learning opportunities to promote social interactions with peers and to develop skills, autonomy and school readiness. (*Source: UIS 2012*). See also 'Early childhood education'.

**Primary education**

Primary education provides learning and educational activities typically designed to provide students with fundamental skills in reading, writing and mathematics (i.e. literacy and numeracy) and establish a solid foundation for learning and understanding core areas of knowledge and personal development, preparing for lower secondary education. It focuses on learning at a basic level of complexity with little, if any, specialization. (Source: UIS 2012).

**Programme of study  
(in/for a subject)**

See ‘Syllabus’.

**Q**

**Qualification**

The term qualification is commonly used in at least two different ways/contexts: (a) formal qualification: the formal outcome (certificate, diploma or title) of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards and/or possesses the necessary competence to do a job in a specific area of work; a qualification confers official recognition of the value of learning outcomes in the labour market and in education and training, and can be a legal entitlement to practise a trade; (b) job requirements: knowledge, aptitudes and skills required to perform the specific tasks attached to a particular work position. (Source: CEDEFOP 2011).

**R**

**Reading literacy**

Within the framework of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), reading literacy is defined as an individual’s capacity to: understand, use, reflect on and engage with written texts, in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential, and to participate in society. (Source: OECD 2009).

See also ‘PISA’, ‘Literacy’.

**Realized curriculum**

See ‘Attained curriculum’.

**Remedial activities**

Activities or programmes aimed at helping students with learning difficulties or supporting students that may need to develop better learning skills as well as master content.

## S

<b>School-based curriculum development</b>	Curriculum developed at the level of an individual school. This notion suggests a decision-making process with regard to the curriculum involving school staff, ranging from individual teachers adapting existing curricula to the whole school staff collaboratively working together to develop new curricula in order to make them more relevant and meaningful for learners. The school-based curriculum development movement was particularly active in the 1980s as an alternative to centralized curriculum decision-making.
<b>Scientific literacy</b>	Within the framework of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), scientific literacy is defined as an individual's scientific knowledge and use of that knowledge to identify questions, to acquire new knowledge, to explain scientific phenomena, and to draw evidence-based conclusions about science-related issues, understanding of the characteristic features of science as a form of human knowledge and enquiry, awareness of how science and technology shape our material, intellectual, and cultural environments, and willingness to engage in science-related issues, and with the ideas of science, as a reflective citizen ( <i>Source: OECD 2009</i> ). See also 'PISA'.
<b>Scope and sequence (in curriculum)</b>	Interrelated concepts that refer to the overall organization of the curriculum in order to ensure its coherence and continuity. Scope refers to the breadth and depth of content and skills to be covered. Sequence refers to how these skills and content are ordered and presented to learners over time.
<b>Secondary education</b>	Secondary education provides learning and educational activities building on primary education and preparing for labour market entry, post-secondary non-tertiary education and tertiary education. Broadly speaking, secondary education aims at learning at an intermediate level of complexity. ( <i>Source: UIS 2012</i> ). See also 'Lower secondary education', 'Upper secondary education'.
<b>Self-referenced assessment</b>	Assessment of learner's progress and achievement with reference to himself/herself.
<b>Skill</b>	The ability to perform tasks and solve problems. ( <i>Source: CEDEFOP 2011</i> ). It is the ability, proficiency

or dexterity to carry out tasks that come from education, training, practice or experience. It can enable the practical application of theoretical knowledge to particular tasks or situations. It is applied more broadly to include behaviours, attitudes and personal attributes that make individuals more effective in particular contexts such as education and training, employment and social engagement. (Scottish Government 2009).

**Soft skills**

Term used to indicate a set of intangible personal qualities, traits, attributes, habits and attitudes that can be used in many different types of jobs. As they are broadly applicable they are also seen as transferable skills, even if the idea of transferability is often questioned because individuals learn to perform tasks in particular contexts and may not be able to apply them to others. Examples of soft skills include: empathy, leadership, sense of responsibility, integrity, self-esteem, self-management, motivation, flexibility, sociability, time management, and making decisions. The term is also used in contrast to ‘hard’ skills that are considered as more technical, highly specific in nature and particular to an occupation, and that can be (generally) taught more easily than soft skills.

**Special needs education**

Education designed to facilitate learning by individuals who, for a wide variety of reasons, require additional support and adaptive pedagogical methods in order to participate and meet learning objectives in an education programme. Education programmes in special needs education may follow a similar curriculum as that offered in the parallel regular education system, but they take individual needs into account by providing specific resources (e.g. specially-trained personnel, equipment or space) and, if appropriate, modified educational content or learning objectives. These programmes can be offered to individual students within already-existing education programmes or as a separate class in the same or separate educational institutions. (Source: UIS 2012).

**Spiral curriculum**

Curriculum design (based on the ideas of the American psychologist Jerome Bruner) in which key concepts and topics are repeatedly presented over time in the context of new, broader and more complex learning experiences. It serves for consolidating pre-existent learning as well as broadening and exploring more in-depth the different learning content.

<b>Standard(s)</b>	<p>A standard is a document that provides requirements, specifications, guidelines or characteristics that can be used consistently to ensure that materials, products, processes and services are fit for their purpose. (Source: <a href="#">Website of the International Organization for Standardization</a>–ISO). In the field of curriculum, the term usually refers to specific criteria for what students are expected to learn and be able to do. See also ‘Standards-based curriculum’.</p>
<b>Standardized testing</b>	<p>Tests that are administered and scored under uniform (standardized) conditions. (Source: ASCD). See also ‘Norm-referenced assessment’.</p>
<b>Standards-based curriculum</b>	<p>A curriculum directed toward mastery of predetermined standards. Content standards refer to what learners are expected to know and be able to do in various subject areas. Performance standards specify what levels of learning are expected and assess the degree to which content standards have been met. (Source: ASCD).</p>
<b>Subject/subject area</b>	<p>A branch of knowledge organized as a discrete learning discipline and taught in a systemic way over time. Other terms often used interchangeably include teaching subject, academic subject, academic discipline, study area.</p>
<b>Summative assessment</b>	<p>Assessment of learner’s achievement at the end of a term, stage, course or programme typically, although not necessarily, involving formal testing or examinations. Summative assessment is most commonly used for ranking, grading and/or promoting students, and for certification purposes. See also ‘Assessment of learning’.</p>
<b>Syllabus (plural syllabi or syllabuses)</b>	<p>A syllabus is a document which outlines the aims, the selection and sequence of contents to be covered, mode of delivery, materials to be used, learning tasks and activities, expected learning objectives or outcomes, and assessment/evaluation schemes of a specific course, unit of study or teaching subject. It is often used incorrectly as an equivalent of the term ‘curriculum’.</p>

## T

<b>Taught curriculum</b>	See ‘Implemented curriculum’.
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<b>Teaching</b>	<p>There are diverse approaches to teaching which also implicitly reflect the approach to learning. The didactic approach mainly entails lecturing and is typically teacher-centred and content-oriented, i.e. teaching as transmission where the learners are considered to be the passive recipients of information transmitted. Teaching can also be seen as supporting the process of learners' knowledge construction and understanding, building on what is already known by the learner and involving a learner-centred approach (i.e. teaching as facilitation). Another approach emphasizes the development of learners' cognitive processes and awareness and control of thinking and learning. See also 'Learning'.</p>
<b>Technical education</b>	<p>See 'Technical and vocational education'.</p>
<b>Technical and vocational education (TVE)</b>	<p>A comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Technical and vocational education is further understood to be: (a) an integral part of general education; (b) a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work; (c) an aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship; (d) an instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development; (e) a method of facilitating poverty alleviation. (<i>Source</i>: UNESCO 2001).</p>
<b>Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)</b>	<p>Refers to a range of learning experiences that are relevant for employability, portability of competencies and qualifications and recognition of skills, decent work opportunities and lifelong learning in and related to the world of work. The concept embraces the importance of innovation, competitiveness, productivity and the growth of the economy, considering that innovation creates new employment opportunities and also requires new approaches to education and training to meet the demand for new skills. The learning experiences may occur in a variety of learning contexts, including private and public training institutions, workplaces and informal learning places. (<i>Source</i>: ILO 2010).</p>
<b>Test</b>	<p>An examination or assessment exercise designed to measure the learner's acquired knowledge and skills.</p>

Tests may be set and marked by the teacher or by an external agency.  
See also ‘Summative assessment’.

**Textbook**

A written source of information, designed specifically for the use of students, on a particular subject or field of study that is usually developed based on a syllabus and geared towards meeting specific quality and learning requirements. School textbooks pertain to an instructional sequence based on an organized curriculum. Ideally they serve as a complement to a good teacher and an inquiring learner. (*Adapted from: UNESCO 2003 and UNESCO IBE 2006*).

**Tertiary education**

Tertiary education builds on secondary education, providing learning activities in specialized fields of education. It aims at learning at a high level of complexity and specialization. Tertiary education includes what is commonly understood as academic education but also includes advanced vocational or professional education. (*Source: UIS 2012*).

**Time allocation**

The amount of time to be devoted to instruction in a certain subject or discipline according to official regulations, requirements or recommendations. It should be distinguished from the time that is actually spent on learning.  
See also ‘Learning time’.

**TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study)**

TIMSS, conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), is a worldwide research project that measures trends in mathematics and science achievement at the fourth and eighth grades (e.g. students aged 9-10 and 13-14). It has been conducted on a regular four-year cycle since 1995. In general, participating countries use TIMSS in various ways to explore educational issues, including among others monitoring system-level achievement trends in a global context, establishing achievement goals and standards for educational improvement, and stimulating curriculum reform.

**Transferable skills**

Skills that are typically considered as not specifically related to a particular job, task, academic discipline or area of knowledge and that can be used in a wide variety of situations and work settings (for example, organizational skills).  
See also ‘Soft skills’.

**Transversal competences/competencies**

See ‘Key competences/competencies or skills’.

**U**

**Upper secondary education**

Upper secondary education programmes are typically designed to complete secondary education in preparation for tertiary education or provide skills relevant to employment, or both. Programmes at this level offer students more varied, specialized and in-depth contents than programmes at lower secondary education level. They are more differentiated, with an increased range of options and streams available. (Source: UIS 2012).

**V**

**Validation of learning outcomes**

Evaluation of an individual’s achievement of learning objectives using a variety of assessment methods (written, oral and practical tests/examinations, projects and portfolios) not presuming participation in an education programme. (Source: UIS 2012).

**Values education**

Any explicit and/or implicit school-based activity which promotes student understanding and knowledge of values, and which develops the skills and dispositions of students so they can enact particular values as individuals and as members of the wider community. (Source: Australian Government 2005).

**Vertical and horizontal articulation (of the curriculum)**

Organization of contents according to the sequence and continuity of learning within a given knowledge domain or subject over time (vertical articulation to improve coherence) and the scope and integration of curricular contents from different knowledge domains within a particular grade level (horizontal articulation or balance to develop integration between subjects, disciplines or knowledge domains).

**Vocational education**

Education programmes that are designed for learners to acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies specific to a particular occupation, trade, or class of occupations or trades. Vocational education may have work-based components (e.g. apprenticeships, dual-system education programmes). Successful completion of such programmes leads to labour market-relevant vocational qualifications acknowledged as occupationally-oriented by the relevant national

authorities and/or the labour market. (*Source*: UIS 2012).

**Vocational education and training (VET)**

Education and training which aim to equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required in particular occupations or more broadly on the labour market. (*Source*: CEDEFOP 2011).

**W**

**Wash-back effect**

The way in which testing or examining influence teaching and learning and might shape the curriculum by undue concentration on the form, content and focus areas of the test or examination.

**Whole person approach**

See ‘Holistic learning approach’.

**Whole school approach**

Involves addressing the needs of students, staff and the wider community, not only within the curriculum, but across the whole-school and learning environment. It implies collective and collaborative action in and by a school community to improve student learning, behaviour and wellbeing, and the conditions that support these.

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*Note:*

Additional standard definitions included in ISCED 2011 (in English, French and Spanish) can be consulted online:

[Revision of the International Standard Classification of Education \(ISCED\)](#)

[Révision de la Classification internationale type de l'éducation \(CITE\)](#)

[Revisión de la Clasificación Internacional Normalizada de la Educación \(CINE\)](#)