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TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF CURRICULUM POLICY APPROACHES

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Summary

This report identifies global trends in curriculum policy, drawing from analysis of curriculum frameworks from 64 jurisdictions – countries and states within federal countries. It does not provide a fully comprehensive picture of global curriculum policy, although we believe that it is broadly indicative of global trends. The research was constrained by the variation in information available in the public domain and in English from each jurisdiction. We also note that representations of national policy (e.g., on official websites) can quickly become out-of-date, due continually shifting policy patterns and changes to publicly available information. We are grateful to the UNESCO regional experts and international curriculum scholars who provided feedback on our draft, in some cases identifying areas where national policy had changed between our analysis of public documentation and the drafting of the report. It is clear that, given the frequent and rapid changes in curriculum policy, any approach to curriculum policy analysis based on static typologies can become obsolete. In this report, we thus suggest an alternative approach based on dynamic typologies which capture the direction of travel in curriculum policy, rather than trying to capture policy at a fixed point in time. We identify a number of common trends across the globe including:

- Similar discourses and terminology between contexts.
- A shared emphasis on education as a response to global and local challenges.
- A belief that education is the means through which individuals become equipped to contribute to society.
- The co-existence of multiple curriculum ideologies within the same policy, making it difficult to apply theoretical typologies to real-world policy.

Key distinctions across the globe include:

- Different understandings of shared concepts such as ‘competency curriculum’.
- Different core values and ethical stances underpinning curricula.

Empirical research is necessary to discern the complex relationship between curriculum policy and its enactment in any given setting.

Introduction

This report provides an overview of curriculum policy across the globe. This is not a straightforward task. First, definitions of curriculum vary greatly and are highly contested; it is often said that there are as many definitions of curriculum as there are curriculum theorists. In the first section of the report, we offer some reflections on this complex issue, as well as a definition of curriculum that we hope provides some clarity. Second, there are conceptual difficulties in establishing the parameters of what constitutes policy. Policy in a broad sense can encompass discursive elements (ideas about what matters in education), operationalisation of such ideas into policy statements (e.g., National Curriculum frameworks) and the mechanisms for enacting policy (e.g., guidance and infrastructure). To understand National Curriculum policy frameworks, we must also seek to understand their discursive roots. These are often in ideas about education that are generated and circulate in international forums (such as projects convened by organisations such as the OECD). We must consider how such ideas are mediated and transformed by local imperatives such as national traditions concerning education. Policy is invariably a hybridisation of global and [often competing] local influences – a process termed ‘glocalisation’ (e.g., Robertson, 1995). We need to appreciate that curriculum policy is inevitably enacted by local actors such as teachers. It is filtered through layers of influences, both structural and cultural within particular education systems that can transform or even mutate policy intentions – a process termed ‘iterative refraction’ (Supovitz & Weinbaum, 2008).

The abovementioned issues are empirical questions, which are largely beyond the scope of this report, with its focus on the forms and approaches taken by curriculum policy. The narrower focus of the report, exploring the planned curriculum as it is presented in national education policy, means that we can only provide a partial picture of global curriculum trends. Such an approach has considerable limitations. While we have drawn on the websites of national governments and federal jurisdictions, transnational organisations such as the World Bank, OECD, ICA, Council of Europe, ASEAN and key academic literature, due to time and resource constraints we have only used documentation that is written in English, and we are aware this constrained our analysis. Moreover, not everything that is written in policy happens in schools and other educational spaces, while many of the most important experiences and processes in school might not fully reflect policy intentions. A particular lacuna is the meso curriculum (see section A), that is, the mediating layer which connects schools with policy (e.g., policy guidance and infrastructure such as professional networks). Recent research (e.g., see: Priestley, et al., 2021) suggests strongly that meso curriculum making is highly significant in shaping how curriculum policy is enacted, but these

processes are often difficult to ascertain from a global research perspective. This is because they are not always set out clearly in accessible documentation and, unlike top-level policy statements, are rarely available in English.

The rigorous overview of global policy of the kind presented here has, despite these constraints, allowed us to see broad trends in curriculum policy and the ways in which discourses and policies traverse the globe. We draw on two theoretical perspectives (set out in more detail in section A) to frame our findings. The first of these is a typology of curriculum making (Priestley et al., 2021), which provides a heuristic framing for understanding how curriculum is made differentially across different layers or sites of education systems. This allows us to examine policy in its global and local contexts, bearing in mind the above caveats about limitations on empirical evidence. The second is a four-part model representing different curriculum ideologies (Schiro, 2012), which allows us to locate the political orientations of different policy approaches.

In compiling this report, we were conscious of the contested nature of key vocabulary. This compounds the well-documented difficulty of connecting educational theory with practice in schools. In addition to our conclusions, we have compiled a set of questions that draw on the key themes we identified. We hope these will support readers of this report, as they interrogate approaches to curriculum making in their own setting. Throughout the report we exemplify our findings, but we have chosen six examples for more in-depth case studies; these exemplify the trends identified and provide nuance to the discussion of complexity.

The remainder of the report is divided into six sections.

- Section A: The theoretical framing for our analysis.
- Section B: A typology of directions of policy travel.
- Section C: Common trends across the globe.
- Section D: Key distinctions across the globe.
- Section E: Conclusions and key questions for curriculum planners.
- Section F: Case study examples.

Section A. Theoretical framing

In this section of the report, we first examine in closer detail the issues highlighted in the introduction, relating to curricular definitions and scope. We then introduce the theoretical framings used to conduct the analysis in the report.

The concept ‘curriculum’

Traditionally, and in many contemporary educational settings, the curriculum is viewed as content, a syllabus setting out the knowledge and skills to be acquired through education. In this conception, curriculum is set alongside pedagogy and assessment, what Bernstein (1977) famously termed the three message systems of schooling. Such views of curriculum are seductive and enduring, but unhelpful in our view, as they can reify curriculum as a set of policy statements specifying content. This neglects or even avoids analysis of the other practices that form the curriculum, for example classroom curriculum making where the enacted curriculum cannot be disentangled from pedagogy (Deng et al., 2013). The characterisation of curriculum as a list of content encourages linear and simplistic metaphors of curriculum making as implementation or, worse still, delivery. This causes an artificial separation of policy and practice and neglects consideration of the complex and nuanced nature of curriculum making. Policy statements are subject to mediation by practitioners, such as teachers, in what Doyle (1992) terms ‘a deliberative process of interpretation, judgment and responsibility’ (p.69). Contemporary curriculum policy is often cognisant of these issues. For example, Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence, offering a more holistic view, states that the curriculum is ‘the totality of all that is planned for children and young people throughout their education’ (Scottish Government, 2008). Such definitions are helpful in that they provide a broad conception of the education that occurs in schools. However, this sort of broad definition can also be confusing, if it does not allow us to specify the different practices that comprise curriculum. There is a risk that the term curriculum comes to mean different things to different people.

We offer an alternative, holistic definition of curriculum, as the multi-layered social practices, including content selection, infrastructure, pedagogy and assessment, through which education is structured, enacted and evaluated (Priestley et al., 2021). Such a definition moves us beyond thinking of the curriculum as a product, which needs to be delivered or implemented. Instead, it views curriculum as something that is socially-constructed, differentially across different layers of the education system, as the curriculum is made in different institutional settings. To paraphrase Bernstein (1990), the curriculum

is contextualised in policy, and recontextualised as it is [re]made (interpreted, translated, enacted) in different schools and other educational institutions. This definition of curriculum also requires us to consider how different curricular practices interrelate, and how the curriculum relates to educational purposes, to students, and to the wider social context. There are at least three dimensions to this understanding.

- The notion of curriculum as social practice; something ‘made’ by practitioners and other actors working with each other.
- The idea that curriculum is ‘made’ across multiple ‘sites of activity’ within education systems.
- The multitude of inter-related practices that comprise curriculum, which need to be considered in relationship to one another.

When adopting this understanding of curriculum, formal National Curriculum frameworks can be best viewed, as a particular dimension of the curriculum, as statements of intent. They stand as intellectual resources to inform curriculum making in practice contexts, such as schools.

Curriculum making

To further elaborate this understanding, we now introduce a typology which provides the basis for our analysis of curriculum frameworks in their wider social and discursive contexts. This understanding builds upon previous work to conceptualise curriculum making as activity that happens across multiple layers or levels of education systems (e.g., Goodlad, 1979; Doyle, 1992, Thijs & van den Akker, 2009). The typology has several important characteristics:

- It is designed as a heuristic tool for understanding curriculum making processes systemically in different contexts, rather than offering a normative view of how curriculum should be framed.
- It is non-hierarchical, accepting the possibility that curriculum making may be top-down, bottom up, a combination of the two, or influenced from the sides.
- It is non-linear, enabling analysis to capture the dynamic interflow of ideas and practices between different sites of activity.

Table 1: Levels of curriculum making.

Site of activity	Examples of activity	Examples of actors
Supra	[Transnational] curricular discourse generation, policy borrowing and lending; policy learning	OECD; World Bank; UNESCO; Europeans Union; national governments
Macro	Development of curriculum policy frameworks; legislation to establish agencies and infrastructure	National governments, curriculum agencies; teachers
Meso	Production of guidance; leadership of and support for curriculum making; production of resources	National governments; curriculum agencies; district authorities; textbook publishers; curriculum brokers; teachers
Micro	School level curriculum making; programme design; lesson planning	Principals; senior leaders; middle leaders; teachers; students; communities
Nano	Curriculum making in classrooms and other learning spaces: pedagogic interactions; curriculum events	Teachers; students; communities

[Adapted from Priestley et al 2021 p. 13]

This report is focussed predominantly on the macro curriculum, while recognising that:

- Supra curriculum making (social discourses about what matters educationally, especially those originating globally, exert influences on the framing (e.g., structure and language) of National Curriculum policies.

- Meso curriculum making, where actors are engaged with supporting, designing and communicating the planned curriculum, acts as an important mediating layer, which can have profound effects on how curriculum policy is framed in schools and other educational institutions.

It is important to note that, supra, macro and meso curriculum making can be readily conflated, because they often involve the same actors, for example, as countries establish non-government agencies and engage in transnational educational activity with inter-governmental organisations and private companies. In fact, these sites comprise quite different types of activity in the typology (e.g.: supra – discourse generation; macro – operationalisation of ideas into policy framings; meso – activity and infrastructure to support the development of practice). The typology provides a helpful tool for analysing different forms of curriculum, and especially for exploring the relationship between different forms of curriculum making. Our focus in this report is not on curriculum making at the nano or classroom level, or on school-level policies, although we have noted some evidence from the literature in relation to these issues (e.g., see Case Study 2).

We reiterate that, in some parts of the world, while we have been able to access macro curriculum framings in English in many countries, we had less access to supra and meso curriculum making, particularly the latter which is less likely to be readily available in the public domain in English. We note that many such countries tend to have a strong policy focus on achieving full enrolment at the primary stage and increasing retention and attainment at the secondary phase.

Curriculum Ideologies

Curriculum policy in recent years has been subject to a significant shift in emphasis. A ‘new curriculum’ approach (Priestley & Biesta, 2013) has been prompted by globalisation, as education systems have sought to utilise curricula as drivers of economic development and national competitiveness (Yates & Young, 2010). While the ‘new curriculum’ varies in form from country to country, researchers (e.g., Sinnema & Aitken, 2013) have identified common features. These include: a shift from the prescriptive specification of knowledge content evident in many earlier national curricula to what Young (2008) has termed genericism. A new focus on the centrality of the learner is evident. This is accompanied by the development of active forms of pedagogy and a view of teachers as facilitators of learning (Sinnema & Aitken, 2013). The curriculum is articulated and presented as assessable outcomes, modular courses and ladders of qualifications (Young 2008), accompanied by increasingly pervasive regimes of accountability

and cultures of performativity (Priestley et al., 2015). Many jurisdictions have followed a pathway that can be broadly summarised as beginning with a curriculum frame that prioritises subject content and, following periodic reviews, this then shifts to curricula that focus on broader competencies, including skills, dispositions, and values. The following examples are illustrative of contemporary trends.

The country envisions a **departure from** a focus on learning content, teacher-led instruction and assessment through memorisation and **movement towards** a focus on developing complex skills, student-centred learning and assessment through applying knowledge in novel situations.

[OECD Education in Saudi Arabia 2020 our emphasis]¹

Only two decades ago, the obsolescence of knowledge had virtually no impact on schools... Schools have to ensure that students develop the cognitive flexibility required today, and for this reason, it is just as important for them to teach students how to acquire knowledge as to convey it to them. It is in this perspective that the competencies should be understood.

[Québec Ministère de l'Éducation Cross-Curricular Competencies 2022]²

Deng (2015, p.723) observes that '[a]cross the globe, there is a shift from a concern with knowledge or content taught in school to a preoccupation with competencies, learning outcomes and high-stakes testing'. There is a tension evident here, because it is very difficult to assess competencies and therefore high-stakes testing is then targeted at the knowledge content aspects of the curriculum, which inevitably means these become re-privileged (e.g., see Lingard, 2021). Moreover, in some countries, as we shall discuss, there has been a more explicit reaction against competency-based curricula, and a [re]turn to so-called knowledge rich approaches.

Such trends are often driven by ideology, and curriculum orientations are invariably a political issue. In undertaking the analysis of curriculum policy in this report, we found it helpful to utilise a recognised framing of curriculum ideologies. This is provided by Schiro (2012), who outlined a four-part typology of

¹ <https://doi.org/10.1787/76df15a2-en> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

² <http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/teachers/quebec-education-program/elementary/> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

curricula, described as four competing visions for 'American' education. It is important to note that these are ideologies or orientations. They are positions that people hold, often implicitly, with limited recognition of the ideological positioning. Schiro's key point is that curriculum contestation occurs when these ideologies come into conflict. States often frame curricula which have traces of all of these typologies, which can be problematic and demand a nuanced analysis.

Table 2: Schiro's four ideologies

Scholar Academic	Scholar Academics believe that over the centuries our culture has accumulated important knowledge that has been organised into the academic disciplines found in universities. The purpose of education is to help children learn the academic knowledge of our culture: that of academic disciplines. ... The curriculum ... derives both its meaning and its reason for existence from academic disciplines. Scholar Academics' major concern is to construct curriculum in such a way that it reflects the essence of their discipline.
Social Efficiency	The social efficiency advocates believe that the purpose of schooling is to efficiently meet the needs of society by training youth to function as future mature contributing members of society. Their goal is to train youth in the skills and procedures they will need in the workplace and at home to live productive lives and perpetuate the functioning of society....[T]hree things that play an important role in the social efficiency ideology are the concept of learning (or change in human behaviour), the creation and sequencing of learning experiences (the causes, actions, and stimuli that lead to the desired effects, reactions, and responses), and accountability to the client for whom educators work.
Learner Centred	Learner-Centred proponents focus not on the needs of society or academic disciplines but on the needs and concerns of individuals. They believe schools should be enjoyable places where people develop naturally according to their own innate natures. The goal of education is the growth of individuals, each in harmony with his or her own unique intellectual, social, emotional and physical attributes. ... Learner-Centred curricula are thus thought of as contexts, environments, or units of work in which students can make meaning for themselves by interacting with other students, teachers, ideas and things.'
Social Reconstruction	Social Reconstructionists are conscious of the problems of our society and the injustice done to its members, such as those originating from racial, gender, social, and economic inequalities. They assume the purpose of education is to facilitate the construction of a new and more just society that offers maximum satisfaction to all of its members. ... They believe that truth and knowledge are based in and defined by cultural assumptions. ... The aim of social reconstruction is ... eliminating from their culture aspects that they consider undesirable, substituting in their place social values they consider desirable, and by doing so reconstruct their culture so that its members will attain maximum satisfaction of their material, spiritual and intellectual wants.

[Adapted from Schiro, 2012, pp.4-7]

We have found all these types well represented in current national curricula, but they are often described in slightly different terms to those used above. We note that the presence of these ideologies may be

evident to a lesser or greater extent in national policies, and it is possible to ascertain primary (or dominant) and secondary (less strong) orientations in particular policies. It is possible for a curriculum framework to be primarily influenced by social efficiency ideology, while containing strong or weak secondary orientations toward other ideologies. For example, there is a strong thread of social reconstruction found in the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence, with its emphasis on social justice and closing attainment gaps, although it is primarily oriented to social efficiency. We briefly summarise these trends below.

The scholar academic ideology is relatively uncommon in curriculum policies. While some curricula are claimed to be knowledge-rich, there are very few countries whose curricula are explicitly based on the liberal education tradition of academic disciplines as described by Young (2008). He makes a key distinction between the powerful knowledge (substantive and epistemic) enshrined in academic disciplines and more reductive approaches to teaching canonical knowledge, determined by tradition, where often the epistemology which underpins the disciplines is only weakly present (e.g., for three curricular scenarios see Young & Muller, 2010). Where we see a focus on so-called knowledge-rich approaches, it is predominantly this weaker, canonical framing. England is the main example of this. South Africa and Sweden have both returned to a content-based curriculum, although in the case of Sweden, the situation is complex (see below). The relative ease with which content-knowledge can be assessed can contribute to its dominant role in an enacted curriculum, even when the policy intent is to develop a learner-centred, socially reconstructive or so-called '21st century' aligned curriculum. An interesting development is that participation in comparative international tests (PISA and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)) and standardised national assessments (for example, as is the case in Australia) can lead to a refocusing on the traditionally valued domains of literacy and numeracy, particularly in primary stage schooling.

The social efficiency curriculum is now described in terms of the 21st century competencies or skills, which are generally understood to be additional to literacy and numeracy (although these can also be included as part of a range of 'transversal'/21st century competencies). The competencies usually include a mix of vocational skills such as use of IT, interpersonal capacities such as collaborative problem solving, and intrapersonal attributes such as creativity. There is often an unquestioned assumption that these skills lead to higher productivity and economic growth and more recently a suggestion that, without such skills, the sustainability of the planet is threatened (Schleicher, 2018). National assessment regimes and participation in PISA and TIMSS can also be understood in relation to social efficiency, as

can regional groupings designed to compare educational outcomes; for example, the group of southern and east African countries, *The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality* (SACMEQ)³.

The learner-centred curriculum tends to be understood less in terms of individual appreciation of the sum of human culture for its own sake, and more in terms of individual self-actualisation/awareness/identity as a physically and mentally healthy person, able to form and sustain respectful positive relationships. This approach is predominantly found in progressive schools (e.g., see Apple & Beane, 2007), and is rarely a dominant orientation of national curricula, despite the frequent rhetoric in such documents about learner-centredness. A rare example of a policy that explicitly foregrounds the learner is Slovenia:

The primary goal of the education system in Slovenia is to provide optimal development of the individual, irrespective of gender, social and cultural background, religion, racial, ethnic or national origin, and regardless of their physical and mental constitution or physical and mental disability.⁴

In some countries where religious traditions underpin curriculum policy making, this is understood within a religious framing, and, in many jurisdictions, particular philosophies or national spiritual leaders are referred to, for example, *seva*, *ahimsa*, *swachchhata*, *satya*, *nishkam karma*, and *shanti* in India⁵, *Hongik Ingan* in South Korea⁶, and *Unhu/Ubuntu/Vumunhu* in Zimbabwe⁷.

The social reconstruction curriculum is very strongly represented in current academic discourse. There are different strands involved in this, including a reimagining of the nation state, the role of education in producing the ideal citizen, and a commitment to the UN Global Sustainable Development goals (especially Goal 4.7⁸). The social reconstruction drive can include decolonising the curriculum and reasserting indigenous languages and knowledge. Typically, there is also inclusion of ideas deriving from

³ <http://www.sacmeq.org/> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁴ <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MIZS/Dokumenti/ENIC-NARIC-center/The-Education-System-in-the-Republic-of-Slovenia-2018-19.pdf> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁵ https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/nep//NEP_2020.pdf [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁶ <http://ncic.re.kr/english.kri.org.inventoryList.do> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]⁶

<http://ncic.re.kr/english.kri.org.inventoryList.do> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁷ http://mopse.co.zw/sites/default/files/public/downloads/Zim_Curriculum_Framework.pdf [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁸ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

the global citizenship agenda, although this is understood in very different ways, ranging from engagement with international travel and languages through to activism for human rights and social justice.

It is worth noting that many modern curricula are represented as learner-centred (by both critics and advocates), when the dominant approach might better be characterised as social efficiency (cf. the regular debate on social media in England framed as a dichotomy of traditional versus progressive curricula, where social efficiency approaches are frequently misrepresented as progressive and child centred). In many such cases, learner centrism is predominantly a secondary orientation. It is likely that such misconceptions are fuelled by the tendency for curricula with a primary orientation to social efficiency to utilise language from progressive education. We also note that, despite some similarities in terminology, social efficiency and social reconstruction represent quite different ideologies – the former to meet the needs of society as presently constituted, and the latter to transform society, for example through addressing social ills such as inequality.

Section B. A typology of direction of policy travel

It might be thought that the preceding discussion of curriculum ideologies would afford a neat typology, which could frame a more detailed discussion of curriculum policy around the world. Detailed analysis of curriculum documents reveals that no such neat taxonomy is possible. Approaches to curriculum reflect important political, social and ideological assumptions, but they are not doctrines. There is no definitive statement or of what comprises a 'scholar academic' ideology against which curricula can be compared. Indeed, the celebrated scholar Eisner (1979) preferred the term 'orientation' which is, perhaps, more accurate because it indicates not a fixed set of beliefs (as ideology might) but a sense of direction, or a set of presumptions which steer the course of the curriculum.

This dynamic view of curriculum as a pathway oriented in a particular direction helps inform the approach to analysis that we use in this paper. Rather than simply categorising or labelling curricula, we look, instead, for the 'direction of travel' in a country's policy. In addition to the problems posed by the term 'ideology', we adopt this approach for two further reasons. First, the school curriculum is rarely ideologically (or even educationally) coherent. The school curriculum is a site of political contestation between various civil society groups. As a result, policy bears the imprint of competing (and sometimes mutually incompatible) ideologies and aspirations. Curriculum documentation can be enormously lengthy, reflecting a cornucopia of initiatives, ideas and ideologies which have been included to ensure that a wide range of stakeholders can see their priorities have been addressed. There is no end to the societal problems that the school curriculum is called on to address, from economic inequality to climate change, to voter turnout. As Sweeney (2017, p.17) writes, it seems that, 'If society has an itch, it scratches education'. As we write elsewhere in this paper, curriculum documentation in most countries is now so expansive, it caters for all tastes, a 'magic mirror' that reflects whatever the viewer wishes to see.

Our second reason for avoiding neat typologies relates to the first: given the expansive and imprecise nature of curriculum policy, the meaningful curriculum-making work in most countries takes place in meso and micro sites. We focus here on macro curriculum policy. Across the globe this has coalesced around a very poorly delineated competency-centred approach, which avoids the specification of content and instead describes the kinds of citizens to be shaped by the curriculum. Since curricula invariably decline to specify how 'self-directed' (Portugal) or 'successful' (Scotland) learners might be cultivated, the work of operationalising these aspirations falls to national and regional implementation bodies (meso sites), or to schools and teachers (micro and nano sites). There are, therefore, considerable limits on the

conclusions that can be drawn in a report which analyses written policy documents, which are the outcomes of contestation at the macro site.

One of the least well-defined and applied concepts is that of a competency curriculum. A useful analogy might perhaps be drawn with health. It would be usual to view good mental and physical health as worthwhile for their own sake to allow an individual to live the fullest life possible. Traditional liberal views would support a similar view of education. Over the last half a century this has been gradually eroded and education is increasingly understood to be a preparation that will enable the individual to make an expected contribution to wider society. Within this reframing of education, a competency represents a behaviour that can be demonstrated (and often assessed). It is, of course, also possible to demonstrate knowledge, which is why it is not always possible to distinguish curriculum types as separate. In this report, we make a distinction between a competency curriculum and a post-competency curriculum; definitions of these terms are provided below.

What do we mean by a competency curriculum?

Traditionally, school curricula were based on subject disciplines, and the focus was on the content within these subjects, which students were expected to know. From the early 2000s onwards, jurisdictions across the globe redesigned their curricula in line with the growing policy consensus, promoted by the OECD and other international policy-influencing organisations, that education should be concerned with the development of skills, or competencies, as well as (or instead of) subject-based knowledge. This is what we describe as the shift from a disciplinary-based curriculum to a competency curriculum. There are very few examples of countries where this change has not occurred, to some extent at least.

Figure 1: A global trend towards a competency-based curriculum.



The interpretation of competencies varies considerably, making it difficult to provide a definition of competency within an educational context. Curricula generally contain a mix of different types of competencies, including vocational skills, interpersonal capacities and intrapersonal attributes. Literacy and numeracy competencies may also feature. Together, these may be described as transferrable, transversal or 21st century competencies. Overall, the focus is on what children can do and the sort of people they should become, rather than on what they know. Further, competency curricular models often place an importance on the need for learner-centred approaches, ideas which are derived variously from progressive education, theories of cognitive development and neoliberal discourses about autonomy, personalisation and responsibilisation (e.g., see Reeves, 2013). These trends are evident in much policy language and visuals that present the child as being at the core of education.

An underlying policy assumption is that competencies will provide children with the tools to become active citizens and productive members of society. These often economically framed policy arguments attest to the influence of the social efficiency ideology. In other words, an important contemporary priority of school education is that children are prepared for the ‘workplace of tomorrow.’ They must be able to demonstrate the transferrable skills needed for survival in an unpredictable and constantly fluctuating labour market, rather than acquiring knowledge for its own sake. The influence of this social efficiency ideology (or economic rationale) also has consequences for assessment, namely an emphasis on outcomes and measurement (for example, the OECD PISA 2022 assessment attempts to measure the concept of creative thinking, which it constructs as a 21st century competency). This leads to questions about whether the global policy emphasis on the necessity and desirability of comparative assessments (which are beyond the scope of this report). We also attempted to ascertain which countries are in receipt of World Bank funding for educational reform and improvement. The aim of this was to help analyse the macro-level influence of international policy influencing bodies such as the World Bank and the OECD, among others, on education policy trends.

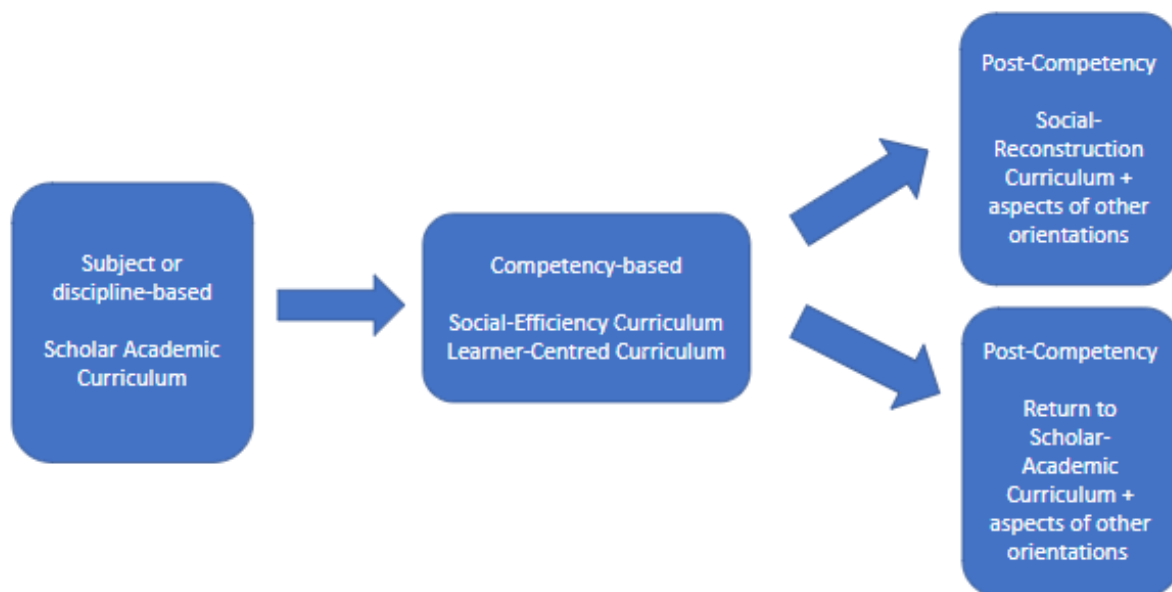
What do we mean by a post-competency curriculum?

Following the near-universal move to competency curricula that began in the early 2000s, many jurisdictions are now undertaking a refresh or complete redesign of their curricula. In some cases, these changes reflect criticisms of competency curricula, namely that they de-emphasise knowledge and understanding and thus do not adequately support the development of judgement and reflection, which

may be essential for deep learning. Further, there is a concern that competency curricula develop vocational skills that may be redundant by the time children enter the workforce.

However, countries have taken different directions of travel in response to these issues. A small minority have returned to a version of a conventional knowledge-based curriculum, as is the case in England, while others have undertaken a more radical approach which is influenced by ideas about the need for social reconstruction. This latter trend is particularly evident in British Commonwealth countries such as New Zealand, which has been going through a process to refresh the national curriculum to ensure that it is a bicultural curriculum that fulfils Treaty of Waitangi obligations. Some jurisdictions have retained elements of competency curricula, along with a learner-centred orientation, while placing a new emphasis on knowledge and understanding, as can be evidenced in the 'know-understand-do' model in British Columbia (Canada). These responses reach beyond the typical competency model, while continuing to be influenced by it, and as such we describe these as post-competency curricula. However, it should be noted that these models also contain elements, to a greater or lesser extent, of other curriculum orientations, including the traditional subject-based approach.

Figure 2: Movement in some jurisdictions to a post-competency curriculum.

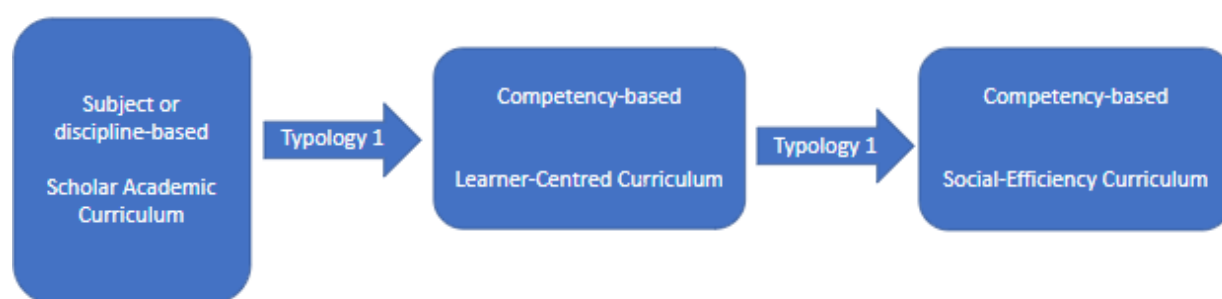


The diagrams above (figures 1 and 2) show that the dominant model of curriculum in the twentieth century in countries with state mandated curricula was oriented towards the scholar academic ideology (with reference to the caveats already noted about this orientation). In these countries, there was a

strong emphasis on knowledge organised in familiar subject domains. At the beginning of the 21st century, these kinds of curricula were replaced with those which emphasised the growth and perspective of the learner. These ‘new curricula’ aimed to dissolve boundaries between subjects and instead promised to equip students with the knowledge, skills and attributes to navigate the world in late modernity. As can be seen elsewhere in this report, international discourses, discourses generated by supranational bodies such as the OECD and the familiar phenomenon of ‘policy borrowing’ contributed to a shared globalised consensus about what curriculum ought to look like. In the past ten years or so, this international consensus has evolved in three different directions. To summarise, and with the above caveats in mind, we have identified three directional typologies:

Directional Typology 1 – The majority of countries which originally aspired to ‘learner-centred curricular’ have experienced considerable practical and logistical difficulties in realising this. Since it is, by definition, impossible to define national policy in ways which cater to the specific needs of individual citizens, there has been a shift towards ‘social efficiency’ under the guise of learner-centredness. As we explain elsewhere in the report, this has led to (and been influenced by) a presumption that the needs of the individual are the needs of the nation state in miniature. Consequently, learner-centredness has imperceptibly evolved into a particular view of the ideal learner – flexible, responsive to changing circumstances and solutions-focused. These characteristics are, not coincidentally, the same characteristics which governments identify as important in addressing national policy concerns.

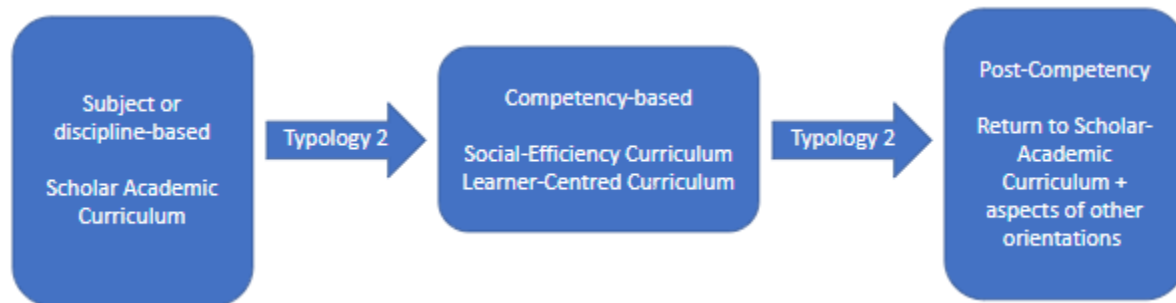
Figure 3: Directional typology 1.



Directional Typology 2 - Some countries (among them Sweden, South Africa, England and Brazil) introduced competency-based curricula in the early-2000s but have recently reverted to a version of Schiro’s scholar academic type. In Sweden, England and Brazil, these changes have coincided with the election of right-leaning governments. In Brazil, the competence-based curriculum framework remains in

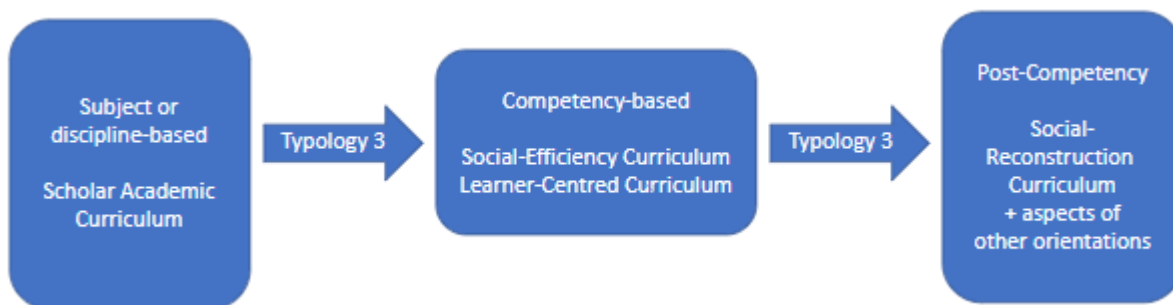
place, but with critical thinking removed in some subject areas and individual responsibility strongly emphasised. Also in Brazil, Pacievitch (2017) has detected a dilution of the commitment to recognise African, European and indigenous experience, in favour of a re-centring of European perspectives.

Figure 4: Directional typology 2.



Directional Typology 3— Finally, we identify an emergent trend towards a social reconstruction ideology. The pre-eminent example here is New Zealand, where the curriculum has moved beyond a bi-cultural approach to Māori -European identity and towards a curriculum that recognises these as different ways of knowing.

Figure 5: Directional typology 3.



Typology 1 is evident in states where there has been movement within what continues to be described as a competency curriculum. Typologies 2 and 3 by contrast represent states where there is a move away from describing the curriculum as competency-based. We continue to stress that what is enacted in classrooms under these macro level curriculum descriptors may actually have common characteristics across the trajectories and varying characteristics within them.

Section C. Common trends across the globe

The most striking aspect of curriculum policy across the globe is its homogeneity. Since the end of the 20th century, nations across the world have coalesced around a shared global language of curriculum, which exists at the supra level of discourse and in the interpretation of these at the level of the nation state. This section begins by exploring the nature of this shared discourse at a high-level before discussing four important dimensions to it. It closes by discussing the policy implications of such a powerful consensus and briefly refers to a few examples which defy the consensus.

Common trends

1. Education framed as a response to global or national challenges. This framing underpins point 2, below.
2. A hegemonic globalised discourse that emphasises the cultivation of the learner, rather than knowledge to be learned. In other words, curricula increasingly prioritise how children should be and act, over what they should know. In most cases this is transmitted through a language of '21st century skills.'
3. The coexistence of multiple ideologies within curriculum. National curricula are the product of contestation within national contexts and so regularly contain ideas which are contradictory as well as complementary. Curriculum documents can be enormously lengthy and so make space for a broad range of ideas. Schiro's 'ideologies' typology can help us here.
4. A glocalised discourse of identity which provides an opportunity to centre national or ethnic culture and values. This discourse is interpreted very differently in different national contexts.

Understanding the global discourse at a high level

Although the concept of curriculum has always been understood broadly in the field of curriculum studies, for much of the 20th century national curriculum policy (where it existed) consisted principally of a list of content knowledge organised within immediately recognisable subjects. Towards the end of the century, though, such curricula began to be supplanted by so-called 'new curricula' which took a more expansive view of the role of national curriculum policy within schooling. This approach emphasised the view that 'the curriculum' referred to the totality of a learner's experience in school and suggested that proper

planning of this experience required the identification of broader educational outcomes, rather than the stipulation of knowledge to be taught.

We can point to three key features of such curricula.

1. An emphasis on transferrable skills which are seen to exist across and between subjects.
2. This leads, in turn, to an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge and a blurring of the boundaries between subjects.
3. This can subsequently lead to a reluctance to stipulate specific content knowledge in policy, instead devolving this power to other sites of curriculum making within the system.

While such approaches to curriculum had long existed, these had been largely restricted to specialist organisations and charities, or the curriculum of unconventional and informal education providers. In these cases, the traditional subject-based curriculum was rejected because it was deemed unsuitable for (or discriminatory towards) a particular cohort of learners. The situation towards the end of the twentieth century was very different: national governments were increasingly taking the view that a traditional curriculum was unsuitable for *all* learners, and that *all* children would benefit from a curriculum which decentred content knowledge. Advocates of these kinds of curricula came from two very different traditions. Some advocates supported these curricula from a politically radical perspective, arguing that traditional curricula were inherently regressive because they centred and valorised elite knowledge in a way which excluded historically marginalised groups (e.g., see: Young, 1971). From this perspective, any curriculum which broadened the scope of permissible knowledge beyond a restrictive traditional canon was to be welcomed. However, the majority of supporters of the new curriculum adopted what can be seen as a technical-instrumentalist view of curriculum, the view that what is learned should be directly useful to the learner, especially in terms of employment. Using Schiro's typologies from Section A, we can see that 'new curricula' might be attractive to advocates of 'learner-centred', 'social reconstructionist' and 'social efficiency' curricula. Indeed, the appeal of these ideas to such a broad audience might explain their rise to dominance in the early twenty-first century.

In addition to this broad appeal, these so-called new curricula were helped by an increasingly convergent global education discourse. Education policy researchers have long pointed to the emergence of a global education community comprising 'policy elites' such as the OECD (Henry et al., 1997; Lingard, 2021). This phenomenon has been variously described as a 'Common World Educational Culture approach' (Dale,

2000), part of a 'world polity' trend (Meyer et al., 1997) and as a 'Global Education Reform Movement' (Sahlberg, 2011). According to Lingard (2021), national curriculum documents, while being 'very much about the nation' can also be seen as 'as expressions of and responses to globalization' (p. 29).

South Africa, New Zealand and Scotland were early adopters of these so-called 'new curricula' at a national level, but the trend towards such curricula was evident elsewhere. Young (2007) undertook a study of curriculum changes across a range of European countries and found an increased emphasis on generic skills or employability skills. More recently, the OECD's *The Future of Education and Skills* project has been particularly influential, creating the 'Learning Compass 2030', which explicitly aims towards a globally shared "understanding of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values students need in the 21st century."⁹

Education as a response to global and national challenges

Education, as noted previously, is viewed by national governments as one of the most effective policy levers in addressing national and global challenges. The challenges faced by countries differ enormously, based on factors such as demography and levels of inequality or economic development. As illustrative examples, we can compare Estonia, Kenya and UAE (extracts from policy in the table below).

⁹ <https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Table 3: Extracts from the national curriculum policies of Estonia, The UAE and Kenya.

Estonia ¹⁰	The UAE ¹¹	Kenya ¹²
Looking ahead, we should take account of demographic change, people's changing preferences and lifestyles, climate change, globalisation, technological progress, as well as the development of democracy and civil society. These developments change the nature of work and people's lives and imply changes in education.	The government of the United Arab Emirates has taken a set of procedures and decisions related to the educational system in the country, as an essential step for the transition from an economy that is oil-dependent and reliant on traditional sectors, to a knowledge economy which depends on knowledge generation, employment and transmission, in addition to innovation and entrepreneurship.	The Kenya Vision 2030 defines education as a tool of ensuring development of the human and social capital in a clean, secure and sustainable environment. Integrating disaster risk reduction (DRR) into the national curricula and building safe school facilities are two priorities that will enhance this country's progress towards attainment of global educational goals.

In Kenya, we have a description of the challenges of security and inequality facing an economically less-developed country, which the curriculum refers to as 'the six broad areas of pertinent and contemporary issues.'¹³ In Estonia, we see issues facing a post-Soviet European country – the challenges are social, cultural and demographic – and there is limited discussion of what the future Estonian economy might look like or the role of education within this. In the UAE, meanwhile, we see a much clearer focus on economic change and 'the transition from an economy that is oil-dependent and reliant on traditional sectors, to a knowledge economy which depends on knowledge generation.'¹⁴ In these cases, education is presented as a response to the challenge in two ways: first, at a societal level by providing the kinds of citizens and workers that the future economy/ society requires; and second, at the level of the individual, but ensuring that the learner can navigate the changing rules and norms of the future economy/society. This framing reflects the work of Ozga and Lingard (2007), who argue that education policy is now simultaneously local and global, with supra-national policy 'pressures' being translated into the local domain to reflect historical and cultural beliefs about education and society.

The dominant global challenge is that of improving living standards in an era when the environmental implications of traditional extractivist approaches to hydrocarbon-powered economic growth are

¹⁰ https://www.hm.ee/ministeerium-uudised-ja-kontakt/ministeerium/strateegilised-alusdokumendid-ja-programmid?view_instance=0¤t_page=1#haridusvaldkonna-are [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

¹¹ <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/c18abdb4bd08419eaf45ef70510b3fd9> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

¹² https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/education_in_emergency_policy_july_2018_1.pdf [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

¹³ <https://kicd.ac.ke/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CURRICULUMFRAMEWORK.pdf> [Accessed: 23 April 2023]

¹⁴ <https://www.moe.gov.ae/En/ImportantLinks/Documents/matrix/MOEducationSystem2020-2021.pdf> [Accessed: 23 April 2023]

increasingly apparent. In 2015, the World Education Forum led to the Incheon declaration for Education 2030, which made explicit reference to the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals¹⁵. The Fourth UN Sustainable Development Goal is to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.' A subdivision of this declaration places a particular expectation on the kinds of curricula we should see.

By 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development (p.21).

Again, while there is a shared sense of sustainable development as a global good, this appears differently in the curricula of different countries. Consider the examples below from Rwanda, UAE and Myanmar.

Table 4: Extracts from the national curriculum policies of Rwanda, The UAE and Myanmar.

Rwanda ¹⁶	The UAE ¹⁷	Myanmar ¹⁸
Integration of Environment, Climate Change and Sustainability in the curriculum focuses on and advocates for the need to balance economic growth, society well-being and ecological systems. Learners need basic knowledge from the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities to understand to interpret principles of sustainability.	In this context, the Ministry of Education seeks to define the future of education to produce a generation aware of what life requires and how to keep pace with its developments, this being a method of work to fulfil the requirements of knowledge-based economy and sustainable development.	Education and Training the learning generation through quality education to become good human beings with team spirit and innovation, taking accountability and responsibility in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

As we have seen, international discourses and national policies are united in describing the world as a complex and rapidly evolving space. They are similarly united in their conception of what education can do to tackle this through the development of young people with flexible and responsive learning habits

¹⁵ https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

¹⁶ https://mudarwan.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/curriculum_framework_final_printed-compressed.pdf [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

¹⁷ <https://www.moe.gov.ae/En/AboutTheMinistry/Pages/QUALITYEDUCATION.aspx> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

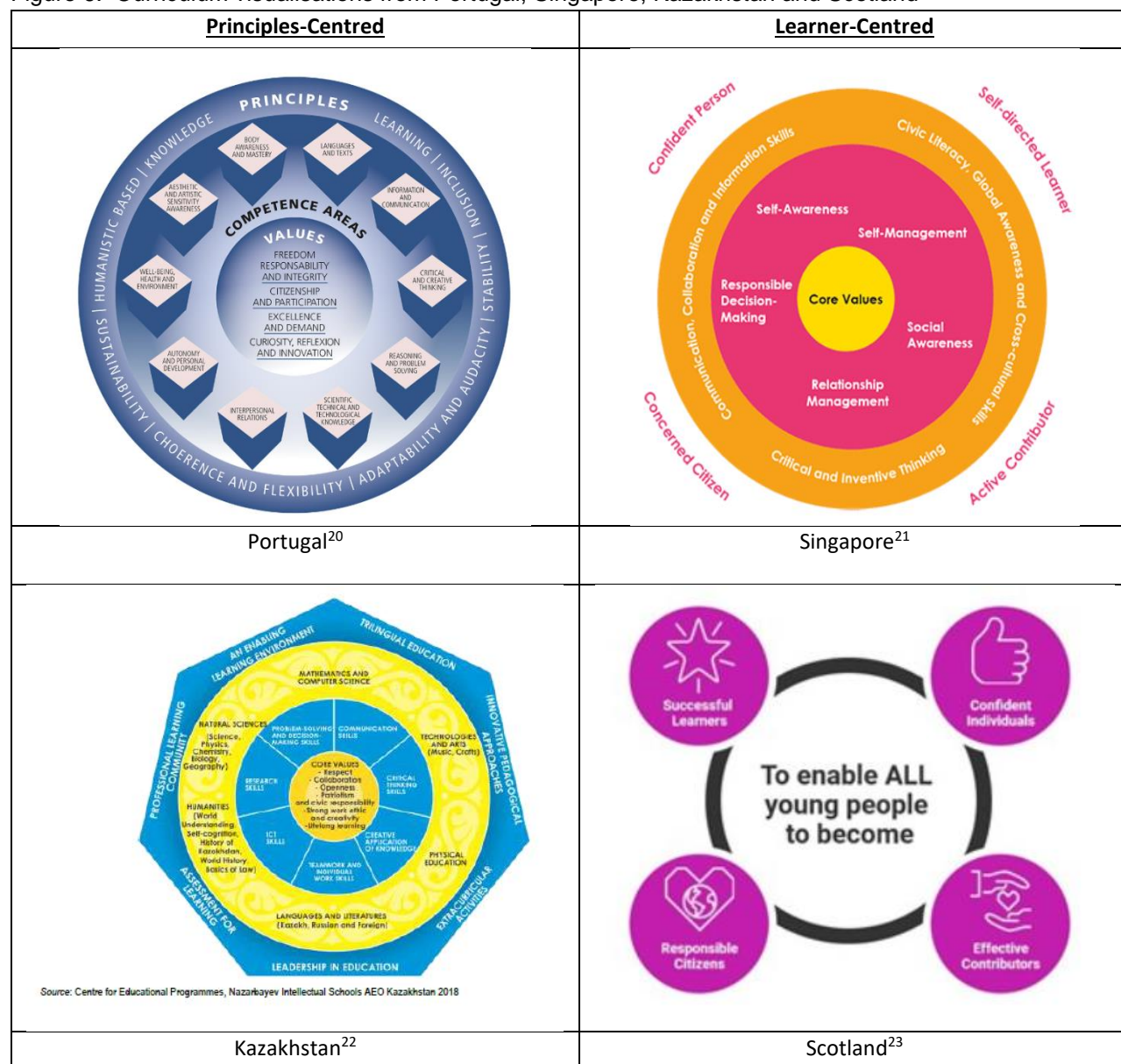
¹⁸ <https://myanmar.gov.mm/ministry-of-education> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

and a broad range of transferrable skills. This sense of flexibility and responsiveness is reflected in the way that curriculum is presented in policy. Increasingly, policy documents avoid textual descriptions, perhaps because these reflect a linear conception of curriculum with its association with ‘transmission’ of content. Instead, policy is presented through colourful graphics, which aim to capture a more dynamic sense of curriculum as a series of experiences and insights. The preference for circular diagrams is also important because circles do not imply hierarchies in the way more linear diagrams might. In many cases, these circular diagrams are difficult to read (or may not have a way of ‘being read correctly’). It is not always clear if they are to read from the centre of the circle outwards, from the edge of the circle inwards, or rotationally. This trend towards ‘visualisations’ of curriculum has influenced, and been influenced by, the OECD’s own approach to representing education in graphical terms. One of the most influential of these visualisations has been the OECD’s Learning Compass of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. This diagram is intended to show how the learner can navigate their way to future wellbeing. The OECD itself has become keenly aware of this trend towards visualisations and has produced its own analysis of these¹⁹.

However, the ubiquity of data visualisations does not mean that all countries use visualisations in the same way. Consider the following examples from Singapore, Portugal, Kazakhstan and Scotland.

¹⁹ https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/curriculum-analysis/National_or_regional_curriculum_frameworks_and_visualisations.pdf [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Figure 6: Curriculum visualisations from Portugal, Singapore, Kazakhstan and Scotland



²⁰ https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/curriculum-analysis/National_or_regional_curriculum_frameworks_and_visualisations.pdf [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

²¹ <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education-in-sg/21st-century-competencies> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

²² https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/curriculum-analysis/National_or_regional_curriculum_frameworks_and_visualisations.pdf [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

²³ <https://scotlandscurriculum.scot/3/> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Although all four countries adopt a circular approach to curriculum visualisation, in the examples on the left we can see that ‘principles’ are the organising feature. In other words, the quality and effectiveness of education is judged according to some self-evident goods such as ‘coherence’ and ‘leadership’. On the right of the diagram, we see two curricula which are organised around the kinds of ‘learners’ that the curriculum aspires for young people to become. Although the adjectives differ between the two, the learner-centred purposes (citizen, contributor, confident individual and successful learner) are almost identical. All four visualisations emphasise the type of learner to be cultivated and the importance of the contribution this learner makes.

A hegemonic globalised discourse which emphasises the cultivation of the learner

The majority of jurisdictions across the world are actively engaged in transnational educational programmes through, for example, the World bank, UNESCO, OECD, IEA, as well as via regional collaborations such as the EU, ASEAN, SACMEQ, etc. It is perhaps no surprise that the ease of knowledge exchange through internet communications has contributed to a common discourse that is almost ubiquitous in documentation at the level of strategic and sector plans. Lingard (2021) has written of ‘discursive convergence’ with respect to curriculum, in the same way in which PISA tests have become a common global metric. In many ways, reports such as this, which aim to identify ‘types of curriculum,’ (e.g., Marope, 2017) are made more challenging by this discursive similarity. However, as we detail later, although there are important transnational similarities and shared trajectories described using the same language, some of this language does not have a shared meaning (e.g., see Sinnema & Aitken, 2013).

The idea of 21st century competencies originated in an OECD project, DeSeCo (Definition and Selection of Key Competencies²⁴). This project developed out of the need to create a new conceptual framework so that the PISA tests could be expanded to cover problem-solving and other means of adapting to ever-changing work and life situations (New Zealand Centre for Educational Research 2018). The guiding question for the DeSeCo project was ‘what demands does today’s society place on its citizens?’ As can be seen in the many examples and case studies in this report, countries have responded to this question in

²⁴ <https://www.deseco.ch/bfs/deseco/en/index/02.html> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

various ways when rethinking their curricula, although there is near-global acceptance that competencies (or skills, etc) are the appropriate means for achieving educational goals.

In terms of how 21st century competencies are conceptualised in curricula, Pellegrino (2017) identifies three domains:

- The **Cognitive Domain** includes three clusters of competencies: cognitive processes and strategies; knowledge; and creativity. These clusters include skills such as critical thinking, reasoning and argumentation, and innovation.
- The **Intrapersonal Domain** includes three clusters of competencies: intellectual openness; work ethic and conscientiousness; and self-regulation. These clusters include skills such as flexibility, initiative, appreciation for diversity and metacognition.
- The **Interpersonal Domain** includes two clusters of competencies: teamwork and collaboration; and leadership. These clusters include skills such as co-operation and communication, conflict resolution and negotiation.

As will be explored below, many curricula feature sets of competencies (or capabilities, capacities or skills) that combine, or conflate, all of these different domains. In the example below from Tanzania²⁵, all of Pellegrino's types are exemplified but labelled differently. The cognitive domain is termed 'learning skills', the intrapersonal 'life skills' and the interpersonal 'soft skills'. Literacy skills have been added in a 21st century reformulation as digital literacy.

²⁵ <https://www.tie.go.tz/uploads/documents/sw/1568799160-National%20Curriculum%20Framework%20for%20Basic%20and%20Teacher%20Education.pdf> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Table 5: Extract from the Tanzanian national curriculum.

Learning Skills	Literacy Skills	Life Skills	Soft Skills
Enable students to develop mental processes required to adapt and improve upon a modern work environment	Focus on how students can discern facts, publishing outlets and technology behind them	Take a look at intangible elements of a student's everyday life, personal and professional qualities	Enable students to acquire interpersonal relationships
Critical thinking	Information	Flexibility	Emotional intelligence
Complex problem solving	Media	Decision making	Customer focus/service orientation
Creativity	Technology	Negotiation leadership	Personal skills
Collaboration		Initiative	
Communication		Productivity	

There is sometimes an elision between curricular content and pedagogy in the discourse, such that content knowledge becomes associated with a didactic pedagogy of transmission, whereas developing 21st century competencies is associated with active pedagogy such as collaborative problem solving in context. In Jamaica's National Education Strategic Plan²⁶, which informs the curriculum, 'positive behaviour management' is emphasised in the 'Maintenance of Competence Based Curricula'. In Singapore, a strong emphasis is placed on self-management and personal responsibility. As such, the 21st century competencies tend to emphasise pro-social dispositions, including personality traits that are orientated towards social conformity (Banaji et al. 2010) and compliance. For example, in Alberta (Canada), 'personal growth and wellbeing' is conceptualised as a competency which requires children to be optimistic (as well as requiring them to strive for personal excellence and to be resourceful and reflexive)²⁷. These dispositional requirements represent a reconfiguration of the idea of what it means to

²⁶ <https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2012/national-education-strategic-plan-2011-2020-7266>

[Accessed: 23 April 2023]

²⁷ <https://education.alberta.ca/competencies/descriptions-indicators/everyone/descriptions-indicators/>

[Accessed: 20 April 2023]

be educated, even going so far as state-mandated positivity. Such stipulations are not unique to Alberta; for example, the Curriculum of Mexico requires that children ‘show astonishment’²⁸.

Figure 7: Extract from the Alberta (Canada) Curriculum documentation.



Despite these differences, we found very little divergence between countries with respect to the stated purposes of their curriculum and their aspirations for young people. Consider the following three statements of purpose from countries in Europe, Asia and Africa.

²⁸ <https://www.planiprogramasdestudio.sep.gob.mx/index-english-skills-keylearnings.html> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Table 6: Extract from the curriculum policies of India, Lithuania and Ghana.

India ²⁹	Lithuania ³⁰	Ghana ³¹
The purpose of the education system is to develop good human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper and creative imagination, with sound ethical moorings and values. It aims at producing engaged, productive, and contributing citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society as envisaged by our Constitution.	To develop an educated, mature personality, which can be characterized by: focus on values based on national awareness and openness to the world's humanistic culture; modern competences and a commitment to lifelong learning; readiness and motivation to contribute to the country's sustainable development and development of a democratic society.	Through the education that Ghana's young people receive, the Ministry of Education expects that Ghana's young people will be nurtured into honest, creative and responsible citizens, making meaningful contribution to society. Learners from the pre-tertiary education system are expected to be fluent in Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic and cReativity, in addition to being developed into lifelong learners, who are digitally fluent.

Two important features can be drawn out from almost all curricula across the globe:

- A description of the ideal type of person to be formed as an 'outcome' of the curriculum.
- The expectation that this person will then act in ways that benefit their national community.

Schiro's curriculum ideologies discussed in Section A can be used to explore these features further. In superficial terms, the focus on the 'development of the learner' implies a learner-centred approach to curriculum design; however, the clear steer about the way that 'learners should be and how they should behave' is more redolent of a social efficiency approach. As Watson has written, the aims of most curricula across the world now 'set out not what children are expected to know, but how they should be' (Watson 2010, p. 99.).

The coexistence of multiple ideologies within curriculum

National curricula are the product of contestation within national contexts and so regularly contain ideas which are contradictory as well as complementary. Curriculum documents can be enormously lengthy

²⁹ https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

³⁰ <https://www.mokykla2030.lt/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Guidelines-for-updating-the-general-curriculum-framework.pdf> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

³¹ <https://nacca.gov.gh/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/National-Pre-tertiary-Education-Curriculum-Framework-final.pdf> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

and so make space for a broad range of ideas. Schiro's 'ideologies' typology can help us here. The result of such broad and expansive curricula can, as we have noted already, be to make the curriculum a magic mirror – something that reflects whatever the viewer wishes to see.

As we have seen, curricula across the world have largely converged on a shared vision of education based around the preparation of flexible learners for a rapidly changing global context. Although this is an ostensibly non-ideological vision for education, it is striking that traces of all four of Schiro's curriculum ideologies are evident to a greater or lesser extent, often only implicitly, in many national curriculum documents. Take, for example, the aims of Zimbabwe's 2015 curriculum³².

motivating learners to cherish their Zimbabwean identity and value their heritage, history and cultural traditions and preparing them for participatory citizenship [*social reconstruction and social efficiency ideologies*];

preparing learners for life and work in an indigenised economy and increasingly globalised and competitive environment [*social efficiency ideology*];

ensuring learners demonstrate desirable literacy and numeracy skills including practical competences necessary for life [*scholar academic and social efficiency ideologies*]; and

preparing and orienting learners for participation in voluntary service and leadership; [*social reconstruction and social efficiency ideologies*].

fostering lifelong learning in line with the emerging opportunities and challenges of the knowledge society. [*learner-centred and social efficiency ideologies*]

At the level of aims and purposes, most curricula adopt a social efficiency framing (for reasons discussed in the previous section). Uzbekistan is typical in this respect.

³² <http://mopse.co.zw/pillars-aims-principles-organisation-assessment-curriculum> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Children and youth prepared for life through quality education and life-long learning, leading to an improved quality of life, enhanced job opportunities and a consistent increase in real income.³³

However, after these statements of purpose, national curricula are frequently structured around the organisation of knowledge into subject areas, notionally reflecting academic disciplines. We can speculate about the reasons for this. Tradition is clearly an important driver; the notion that knowledge should be arranged in traditionally configured subjects is deeply rooted. This is what Cuban (1993) called the grammar of schooling and those who use the curriculum - teachers, parents, students - are likely to anticipate knowledge organised in this way (e.g., Anthony-Newman, 2019). In addition, curriculum is usually devised to conform to existing structures, cultures and practices within a system. These include qualifications systems, based often around a narrow range of 'academic' subjects, which can serve maintain patterns of curriculum provision. Consequently, we frequently see curricula based around 21st century competencies simply grafted onto a system with older notions of what a school curriculum is. An interesting exception to this is South Korea, where an explicit connection is made between dissolving subject boundaries and developing the person:

The 2015 Revised Curriculum ... removes high school curriculum tracks: liberal arts and sciences – with the aim of 'unleashing the humanities imagination and scientific and technological creativity of creative convergence talent'³⁴. The following are the characteristics of a person upon which the 2015 Revised Curriculum lays stress:

- Well-rounded person who has a positive self-concept and reclaims his or her career and life Creative person with basic abilities who challenges his or her ideas
- Educated person who enjoys human culture on the basis of cultural literacy and respect for pluralism
- Democratic and global person who considers and shares with other people based on a sense of community³⁵

³³ <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/education-sector-plan-2019-2023-uzbekistan> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

³⁴ <http://english.moe.go.kr/sub/infoRenewal.do?m=0301&page=0301&s=english> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

³⁵ <http://english.moe.go.kr/sub/infoRenewal.do?m=0301&page=0301&s=english> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Although this blend of social efficiency ideologies with older notions of knowledge arranged in subjects is the most common hybridisation, some jurisdictions have gone further in developing a more thoroughgoing approach to learner-centredness. In many curricula, learner-centredness could be interpreted as social efficiency by stealth. Here we find language which is focused on the development of ‘the learner’, instead aims for the development of ‘useful’ members of society. The unit of analysis is the needs of the state, rather than those of the student. The New Zealand curriculum, meanwhile, adopts a view of learner-centredness which focuses on the child and how they relate to knowledge and to the world. A particular driver for this has been the need to centre the perspectives of both European and Māori learners. This is an example of an apparent turn towards social reconstructionism within the curriculum, in terms of decolonisation and a reassertion of indigenous languages and cultures. The policy language of the refreshed curriculum reflects these concerns, and speaks specifically to how different ways of knowing can be included in a curriculum:

Aotearoa New Zealand has a rich whakapapa and history of knowledges, traditions, and cultures that reflect our unique story as a nation. Māori and tauīwi accounts have shaped the stories of our past and continue to shape our present and future. These stories are important for describing our individual and collective worlds. They help us to understand who we are as a nation and our aspirations as tangata whenua and tangata Tiriti for a future in which differences are celebrated and diversity is embraced.³⁶

Other examples include Ontario’s (Canada) inclusion of Native Languages (Algonquian and Iroquoian Language Families) in the K-12 curriculum; these are studied from Grade 1 onwards. In Ontario’s secondary curriculum, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies are taught through the disciplines of art (dance, drama, installation/performance art, media, music, storytelling, utilitarian/functional art, and visual art), history, languages and literature, and social studies (politics, geography, social policy, global issues)³⁷. In Singapore, it is compulsory for all students to learn a ‘Mother Tongue Language (MTL)’ in primary school (the MTLs being Chinese, Malay and Tamil). The curriculum documents emphasise the importance of learning a MTL, stating that this helps students ‘appreciate their cultural heritage’ and ‘connect with wider communities across Asia and the world’.³⁸ A decolonial or anti-racist approach

³⁶ https://curriculumrefresh-live-assetstorages3bucket-l5w0dsj7zmbm.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2022-10/Te%20Mataiaho%20draft%20for%20feedback_0.pdf?VersionId=JQW6U.pg4ppc.QAhI27CmLbsSTtWgvnm [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

³⁷ <https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

³⁸ <https://www.moe.gov.sg/primary/curriculum/mother-tongue-languages/learning-in-school> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

underpins the US state of California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) for K-12, which was approved in 2021 after four years of development. It is voluntary, not mandatory. The rationale informing the curriculum is that it is important for students to learn about the cultures, histories and experiences of Black people, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Latino Americans, Native Americans, and Jewish and Arab Americans.³⁹

These trends have not, however, gone unchallenged. The social realist criticism of the decentring of knowledge which has been heard since the early-2000s has been given renewed impetus in a New Zealand context by critiques of a curriculum which aims to accommodate Māori and European epistemes. This approach has been criticised from two angles: firstly, for trying to formalise, essentialise and homogenise Māori experience and secondly, for drawing equivalence between scientific and cultural explanations for natural phenomena (e.g., Rata, 2017; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2022).

In almost all jurisdictions there are pragmatic meso level curriculum documents, which guide schools with respect to subjects to be taught, instructional material to be used and assessment regimes to qualify young people on exit (micro/nano curriculum). It has not been possible to consider how curriculum is enacted at the micro level, except where academic research is available. This is a limitation, as the tensions and lack of coherence between the different sites of curriculum making is a significant issue.

³⁹ <https://www.cde.ca.gov> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Section D. Key distinctions across the globe

We can summarise the trends in curriculum in most parts of the world as a shift towards a social efficiency curriculum that uses the language of learner-centredness, while also observing a noticeable growth in curricula which draw on issues from social reconstructionism, such as decolonisation. This section looks at important distinctions *within* the dominant competency-based social efficiency model of curriculum. While there is much similarity across the globe, it is important to recognise that global policy trends are reinterpreted and negotiated within local settings (Wahlstrom & Sundberg 2017). Robertson's (1995) concept of 'glocalisation' is used here to explore the interwoven processes of homogenisation (universality) and heterogenisation (particularity). At the nation-state level, global policy ideas are translated in ways that reflect local values and priorities. Two such areas are explored:

- a) The interpretation of a 'competency curriculum'.
- b) Bases of ethics and values within curriculum.

The interpretation of a competency curriculum

The vocabulary of curriculum policy is very similar across the globe. However, the meanings ascribed to terms such as 'competency' are not consistent. An emphasis on competencies was one of the findings of Sinnema and Aiken (2013) in their study of curriculum policy from six countries in the global north. The ubiquitous use of 'competency' suggests a common understanding, yet this is largely missing. There is a lack of clarity about what a competency is and how it might be developed and assessed. Curricula feature different variations of the term, namely 'competence', 'competency' and 'competencies', but these are not necessarily interchangeable. To further complicate matters, some curricula feature concepts which are regarded as synonymous with competence, such as 'capabilities' and 'capacities'. For instance, there is disagreement as to whether the General Capabilities in the national Australian Curriculum are the same as 'competencies' (Gilbert 2019).

Descriptions of global curricula have typically featured categories such as 'skills-based, content-based, outcomes-based, competency-based and standards-based' (OECD/UNESCO 2016, p.94). Often, there is a distinction made between competency-based models with an emphasis on the outcomes, and content-based models with an emphasis on specification of inputs (e.g., Kelly, 2004). We have found this distinction to be no longer helpful. Almost every curriculum is associated with outputs which are measured and monitored both to ensure value for money in the context of public spending and in efforts

to achieve equality of opportunity across socioeconomic, racial and gender divides. Perhaps the biggest problem however is the diverse understanding and use of the notion of a ‘competency.’ In the context of education, any competency will need to be taught, or at the very least a context will need to be provided within which it can be developed. In general, the competency dimensions of the curriculum lack the second level outlined by Deng et al. (2013), which translates ideals into usable programmes.

The Council of Europe undertook a project to delineate competencies for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue. This extensive project begins with careful definitions of all its terminology, including competence.

‘competence’ is defined as the ability to mobilise and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by a given type of context⁴⁰

The project then outlines twenty competencies within four areas: values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding. Descriptors at three levels of proficiency are provided for each competency in order that they can be assessed.

Typically, competencies become subdivided into different types some of which may be taught discretely whilst others are expected to be developed through the teaching of subject content, making an explicit link between pedagogy and content. For example, it would not be possible to develop collaborative problem-solving skills through mathematics if the curriculum is being taught through direct instruction of procedures to be copied and practised individually in silence. Some of the global trends (and variation) can be seen in the following table, which shows how curricula adopt competencies pertaining to all three of Pellegrino’s domains, or which combine different domains within the one ‘competence’.

⁴⁰ <https://rm.coe.int/the-conceptual-foundations-of-the-framework-reference-framework-of-com/16809940c1>
[Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Table 7: Descriptions of competencies across the globe.

Country	Description of competencies	Examples (where available)
Estonia ⁴¹	In the sense of the national curriculum, competence is the aggregate relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes that ensure the ability to operate productively in a particular area of activity or field. Competence can be categorized as general competences or subject field competences.	<p><u>General competencies:</u> value, social, self-management, learning to learn, communication, mathematics and entrepreneurship</p> <p><u>Subject field competencies:</u> language and literature, foreign language, mathematics, natural science, social science, art subjects, physical education</p>
India ⁴²	Competencies are learning achievements that are observable and can be assessed systematically.	<u>Cultural awareness and expression</u> are among the major competencies considered important to develop in children in order to provide them with a sense of identity, belonging, as well as an appreciation of other cultures and identities.
Alberta (Canada) ⁴³	<p>Competencies are combinations of attitudes, skills and knowledge that students develop and apply for successful learning, living and working.</p> <p>Students use and develop competencies when they encounter unfamiliar or challenging situations.</p> <p>Competencies help students draw and build upon what they know, how they think and what they can do.</p>	<p><u>Student competencies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical thinking • Problem solving • Managing information • Creativity and innovation • Communication • Collaboration • Cultural and global citizenship • Personal growth and wellbeing <p><u>Example: Collaboration:</u> involves working with others to achieve a common goal. Students participate, exchange ideas and share responsibilities. They respect competing views and nurture positive relationships. Students are adaptable, willing to compromise and value the contributions of others.</p> <p><u>Indicators:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing responsibilities and supporting others to achieve a common goal;

⁴¹ <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/524092014014/consolide> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁴² https://dse.education.gov.in/sites/default/files/update/NCF_for_Foundational_Stage_20_October_2022.pdf [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁴³ <https://education.alberta.ca/competencies/descriptions-indicators/everyone/descriptions-indicators/> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating sensitivity to diverse cultures, audiences or contexts when working with others; • Exhibiting reciprocity and trust when sharing ideas or roles; • Valuing flexibility, compromise and the contributions of others to nurture positive working relationships.
Iceland⁴⁴	<p>The National Curriculum Guide defines competence criteria for each subject area and each subject.</p> <p>Competence is therefore more than knowledge and skills; it also encompasses attitudes and moral strength, feelings and creative force, social skills and initiative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competence involves overview and ability to utilise knowledge and skills. The prerequisites of competence are a sense of responsibility, respect, broadmindedness, creativity, moral awareness and the individuals' understanding of their own capabilities. • Additionally, self-confidence and ability to work autonomously are of importance. Competence involves the students' analysis of their own knowledge and skills by comparing, connecting, simplifying, drawing conclusions and reasoning. • Analytical competence is based on critical thinking and professional reflection. • Communicating competence involves various forms of expression where cognitive, artistic, and practical knowledge and skills are interconnected with the moral and social attitudes of the individual. Communicating competence requires creativity, responsibility, and functionality

⁴⁴ https://www.government.is/library/01-Ministries/Ministry-of-Education/Curriculum/adskr_grsk_ens_2012.pdf
[Accessed: 20 April 2023]

South Korea ⁴⁵	<p>The vision of the 'educated person' is:</p> <p>A. A self-directed person who builds a self-identity and explores a career and life on the basis of holistic growth.</p> <p>B. A creative person who discovers something novel by means of diverse challenges and ideas based upon basic abilities.</p> <p>C. A cultivated person who appreciates and promotes the culture of humankind on the basis of cultural literacies and understanding of diverse values.</p> <p>D. A person who lives in harmony with others, fulfilling the ethics of caring and sharing, as a democratic citizen with a sense of community and connection to the world,</p>	<p><u>Key competencies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-management • Knowledge-information processing skills • Creative thinking skills • Aesthetic-emotional competency • Communication skills • Civic competency <p><u>Integrated subjects:</u></p> <p>There are 'integrated subjects' or cross-curricular priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplined life • Intelligent life • Pleasant life <p><u>Example: Pleasant Life:</u></p> <p>[A]n integrated subject focusing on fun plays and activities for students to develop a sound body and mind and to cultivate creativity, appreciation and aesthetic attitudes. It coordinates physical and expressive activities based on students' experiences to make for a pleasant school life in each level of development. Students satisfy their needs for physical and emotional activities and achieve creativity, appreciation and aesthetic attitudes by participating in plays and activities in 'Pleasant Life'.</p> <p>'Pleasant Life' presents main themes and activity themes for each school grade. For the first graders, the main themes are family and friends, animals and plants, mountains and fields and skies and the sea, and fourteen activity themes are chosen. For the second graders, the main themes are spring, summer, fall and winter, and 16 activity themes are chosen.</p>
British Columbia (Canada) ⁴⁶	<p>At the heart of British Columbia's redesigned curriculum are the Core Competencies, essential learning and literacy and numeracy foundations. All three features contribute to deeper learning.</p> <p>Core Competencies underpin the curricular competencies in all areas of learning. They are directly related to the educated citizen and as such are what we value for all students in the system.</p>	<p><u>Core competencies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Thinking • Personal and social <p><u>Example: Personal and social:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Awareness and Responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Self-advocating ○ Self-regulating ○ Well-being • Positive Personal and Cultural Identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understanding relationships and cultural contexts

⁴⁵ <http://ncic.re.kr/english.kri.org.inventoryList.do> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁴⁶ <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/competencies> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recognizing personal values and choices ○ Identifying personal strengths and abilities • Social Awareness and Responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Building relationships ○ Contributing to community and caring for the environment ○ Resolving problems ○ Valuing diversity
Singapore ⁴⁷	<p>We have identified a list of competencies that are essential for your child to develop to prepare them for the future.</p> <p>To help our students thrive in this fast-changing world, we have identified a suite of core values and competencies that are increasingly important. They underpin the holistic education that our schools provide to better prepare students for the future.</p>	<p><u>Social-Emotional Competencies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Awareness • Self-Management • Responsible Decision-Making • Social Awareness • Relationship Management <p><u>21st Century Competencies for a globalised world:</u></p> <p>The following competencies are necessary for the globalised world we live in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic Literacy, Global Awareness and Cross-Cultural Skills • Critical and Inventive Thinking • Communication, Collaboration and Information Skills
New Zealand ⁴⁸	<p>Key competencies are the capabilities people have, and need to develop, to live and learn today and in the future.</p>	<p><u>Key competencies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking • Relating to others • Using language, symbols, and texts • Managing self • Participating and contributing <p><u>Example: Using language, symbols, and texts</u></p> <p>‘Using language, symbols, and texts is about working with and making meaning of the codes in which knowledge is expressed. Languages and symbols are systems for representing and communicating information, experiences, and ideas. People use languages and symbols to produce texts of all kinds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written, oral/aural, and visual • informative and imaginative

⁴⁷ <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education-in-sg/21st-century-competencies> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁴⁸ <https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Key-competencies> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • informal and formal • mathematical, scientific, and technological. <p>Students who are competent users of language, symbols, and texts can interpret and use words, number, images, movement, metaphor, and technologies in a range of contexts. They recognise how choices of language, symbol, or text affect people's understanding and the ways in which they respond to communications. They confidently use ICT (including, where appropriate, assistive technologies) to access and provide information and to communicate with others.'</p>
Scotland⁴⁹	<p>Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence places learners at the heart of education. At its centre are four fundamental capacities. These capacities reflect and recognise the lifelong nature of education and learning. The four capacities are aimed at helping children and young people to become:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful learners • Confident individuals • Responsible citizens • Effective contributors 	<p>The language of competencies is not used. Instead, there are <u>skills and capacities</u>.</p> <p><u>Example: creativity⁵⁰</u>:</p> <p>Creativity can be thought of as the colour that brings Curriculum for Excellence to life. The four core creativity skills run throughout the four capacities and are integral to the meta skills which are increasingly important in today's workplace</p> <p>The four core creativity skills:</p> <p>Here in Scotland we define creativity skills in a way that educators across all sectors can identify, value and discuss with learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curiosity • Open-Mindedness • Imagination • Problem solving
Rwanda⁵¹	<p>This is an approach where teaching and learning is based on discrete skills rather than dwelling on only knowledge or the cognitive domain of learning.</p>	<p><u>Basic competencies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy; • Numeracy; • ICT; • Citizenship and National identity; • Entrepreneurship and Business • Development; • Science and Technology; • Communication in the official language <p><u>General competencies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical thinking • Creativity and innovation • Research and problem solving • Communication

⁴⁹ <https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5/what-is-curriculum-for-excellence/> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁵⁰ <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/what-are-creativity-skills> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁵¹ https://reb.rw/fileadmin/competence_based_curriculum/index0.html [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-operation, interpersonal relations and life skills • Lifelong learning
OECD ⁵²	A competency is more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilising psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use language, symbols and texts interactively. Use knowledge and information interactively • Use technology interactively • Relate well to others • Co-operate, work in teams • Manage and resolve conflicts • Act within the big picture • Form and conduct life plans and personal projects • Defend and assert rights, interests, limits and needs

The question of when and how these competencies should be assessed offers another point of difference between countries. In some contexts, competencies are understood to be taught through subject teaching, especially where alignment is straightforward (e.g., where numeracy, literacy and use of ICT are designated competences). In other contexts, they are understood to be separate to the standard curriculum and given a new label such as ‘life orientation’ (South Africa) or ‘zest for life’ (Japan), which has its own space within the timetable. There are some examples of jurisdictions attempting to track and record the progress/attainment of learners outside the standard learning of subject content. India has proposed a ‘progress card’, which will be a ‘holistic, 360-degree, multidimensional report that reflects in great detail the progress as well as the uniqueness of each learner in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. It will include self-assessment and peer assessment, and progress of the child in project-based and inquiry-based learning, quizzes, role plays, group work, portfolios, etc., along with teacher assessment.’⁵³ In Zimbabwe there are plans in the new curriculum framework for 20% of the school leavers’ assessment to be a personal profile. In this case, the individual is described with respect to the wider competencies within the curriculum. This proposal has not yet been implemented. The OECD has begun a series of developments to assess 21st century competencies as part of the PISA programme, beginning with global competency in 2018, and to be followed in 2022 by creative thinking. We note here that the OECD and UNESCO have remarked upon the difficulty of developing a competence outside of a context.

In practice, no successful curriculum restricts itself to a single design model. For example, even if a competency-based curriculum consists entirely of identified competencies which are to be

⁵² <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/35070367.pdf> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁵³ <https://www.education.gov.in/shikshakparv/docs/transforming%20system%20of%20assessment.pdf> [Accessed: 23 April 2023]

developed in learners, those competencies need to be achieved through some content selected and delivered by the teacher. In addition, a student competency – itself a result of a combination of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are adapted, combined and applied in a specific context – must also be perceived as an outcome⁵⁴.

Bases of ethics and values within curriculum

According to Sinnema and Aitken (2013, p.150), the emphasis on values in curricula is ‘not as a stand-alone or peripheral consideration, but a vital element of curriculum design’. We note here that values may have different roots. In stark contrast to the shared supranational discourses of 21st century skills, a further important development has been a renewed interest in national or ethnic identity in policy. This might be considered to be a response to (or reaction against) increasing globalisation and might be termed an example of ‘glocalisation’ (Yang & Li, 2022). The statutory inclusion of cultural heritage and indigenous languages as subjects to be studied, the contextualisation of curricula to account for (religious) beliefs and the promotion of a defined national ‘character’ all suggest the desire to reassert national, regional and/or ethnic perspectives.

In some countries, there is a strong patriotic imperative. In Singapore, the curriculum regards patriotism and commitment to the nation as a capability in which a child may show progression over time. The key stage outcomes at primary, secondary and post-secondary key stages include:

- Know and love Singapore.
- Believe in Singapore and understand what matters to our country.
- Be proud to be Singaporean and understand Singapore in relation to the world.⁵⁵

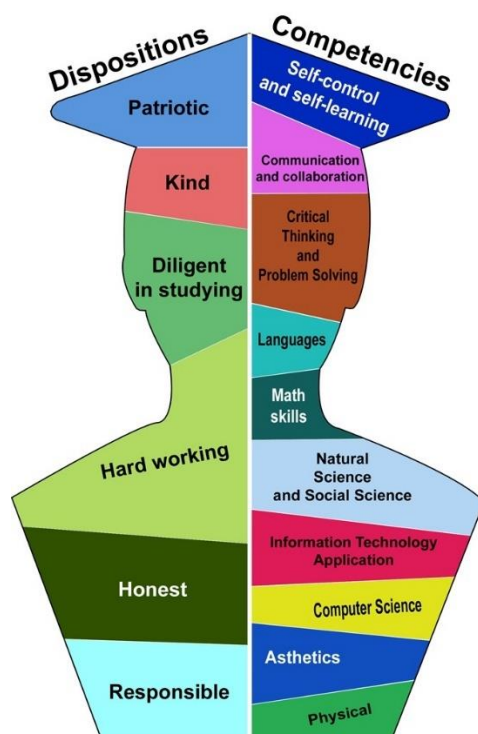
Similarly, the Mexican curriculum, under the ‘skill’ of citizenship and social life, contains an expectation that by the end of secondary education, a 15-year-old should ‘foster a Mexican identity and a love for

⁵⁴ <https://www.oecd.org/countries/thailand/education-in-thailand-9789264259119-en.htm> [Accessed: 23 April 2023]

⁵⁵ <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education-in-sg/desired-outcomes> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Mexico⁵⁶. Meanwhile, in this infographic from the Vietnamese curriculum, 'Patriot' is identified as an important quality alongside 'kindness, honest[y], responsibility and 'laborious[ness]⁵⁷.

Figure 8: Visualisation of qualities and competencies from the Vietnamese curriculum documentation



Elsewhere, there is a less overt sense of obligation to the nation *per se*, but a clear obligation towards the national culture. For instance, Thailand asserts the importance of '[a]wareness of the need to preserve all aspects of Thai culture and Thai wisdom'⁵⁸. In Estonia, this can be seen in the move towards all teaching being in the Estonian language.

⁵⁶ <https://www.planyprogramasdestudio.sep.gob.mx/index-english-skills-keylearnings.html> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁵⁷ https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/curriculum-analysis/National_or_regional_curriculum_frameworks_and_visualisations.pdf [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁵⁸ https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-in-thailand_9789264259119-en#page1 [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Estonian schools have the responsibility to safeguard and develop the Estonian nation, language and culture and this is why special attention in basic school learning and educational process is paid to studying the Estonian language.⁵⁹

In Saudi Arabia, this can be seen in the requirement that the curriculum aligns with Islamic teaching.

The [curriculum] Framework is based on a group of pillars linked to Islam, the Arabic language, national identity, the Kingdom's geography and history, its religious, civilizational and economic components, and its aspirations drawn from its vision, plans, and strategies. It is also based on the fundamental requirements of education and knowledge in the present and the horizons of knowledge and technology in the future.⁶⁰

In South Korea, the curriculum is underpinned by the 'Vision of an Educated Person', which is based on the ideal of Hongik Ingan, the founding spirit of the first kingdom of Korea. However, the difference here is that there is an outward-facing perspective, since the education system is described as:

contributing to the overall benefit of humankind [and] aims to enable every citizen to lead a life worthy of human dignity, contribute to the development of a democratic state, and support the realization of an ideal of shared human prosperity, by ensuring cultivation of character, development of abilities for independent life and necessary qualities as a democratic citizen under the humanitarian ideal.⁶¹

In each of these cases the nation state could be seen as attempting to define itself and its citizens against the backdrop of a globalised discourse.

⁵⁹ <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/524092014014/consolide> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁶⁰ <https://etec.gov.sa/ar/productsandservices/NCSEE/Cevaluation/Documents/English%20Book.pdf> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁶¹ <http://ncic.re.kr/english.kri.org.inventoryList.do#> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Section E. Summary and questions for curriculum planners

The preceding sections signal some of the trends in supra curriculum discourses and macro curriculum policy across the globe, seeking to align them with the notion of curriculum orientations or ideologies. The discussion illustrates the complexity of the terrain of curriculum policy making, and the difficulties inherent in any attempt to map curriculum types into a simple set of categories. It also highlights a prevalent homogeneity in curriculum discourses, which seeps into national policy frameworks, in terms of the language utilised, but also a heterogeneity engendered by local differences in culture, demographics and resourcing, which plays out in often subtle ways. This is often most evident in meso and micro curriculum making practice that are beyond the scope of this report. Nevertheless, it is possible to differentiate to some extent between curricula, most notably in relation of directions of travel. In this final section of the report, therefore, we return to the directional typologies of curriculum approaches amidst this complex and not always coherent terrain.

The issues we have identified suggest several questions that curriculum planners might use to engage stakeholders in their settings.

1. How has your curriculum policy developed over the last decade and to what extent does it map to one of the directional typologies outlined here?
2. What are the core purposes of your curriculum?
3. What values or beliefs underpin your curriculum?
4. What are the key concepts used within your current curriculum documentation and where are they defined or exemplified?
5. [How] does your curriculum policy respond to global, national, and local challenges?
6. To what extent does your curriculum seek to define what is expected of young people?
7. What meso curriculum processes and structures (e.g., teacher networks) are in place to enable meaningful connections between micro/nano and macro curriculum?
8. To what extent are micro and nano curriculum making (e.g., in schools and classrooms) connected to the purposes, principles and values outlined in macro level curriculum policy?
9. How is your curriculum assessed, and enacted in schools?

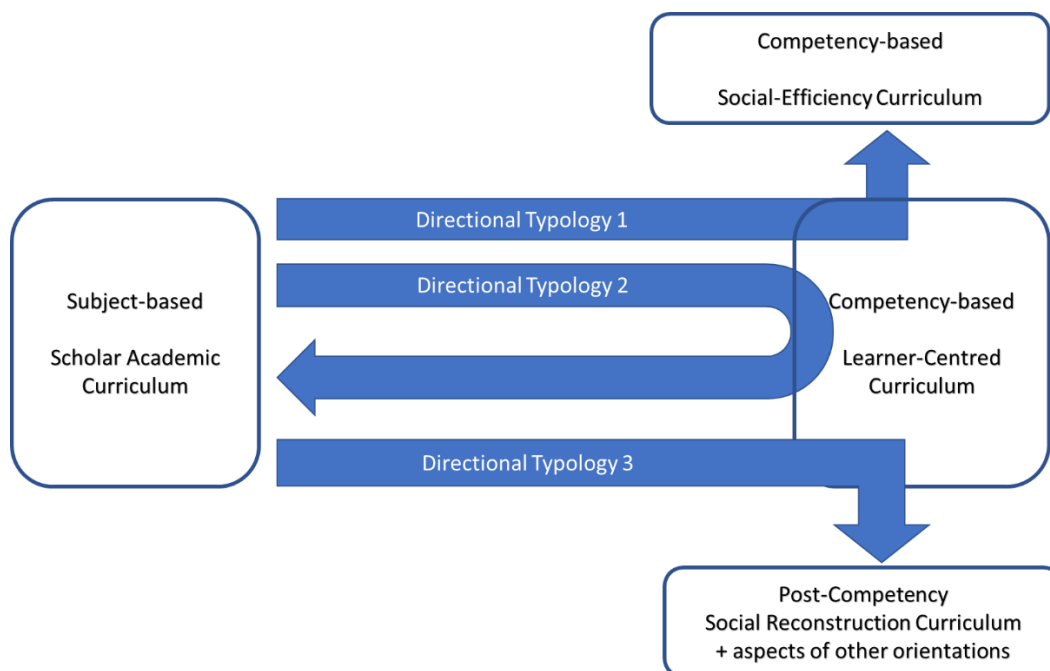
As outlined in section B, we set out three directional typologies. Each one is illustrated by one or more case studies in this section of the report. We also offer a final case study of an outlier curriculum, the International Baccalaureate, which provides an alternative way of framing policy to the prevalent approaches represented in the three directional typologies.

Directional Typology 1, the competency-based approach, is illustrated by two case studies, Pakistan and Singapore, which provide different variants of this majority model.

Directional Typology 2 is illustrated by two case studies of jurisdictions that have moved beyond or pulled back from the competency-based approach. The first case, British Columbia (Canada), represents a Big Ideas approach to framing knowledge in the curriculum, while retaining many of the core features of the competency-based approach. The second is the case of England, which has overtly rejected the competency model in favour of a so-called knowledge-rich curriculum (although as we have noted, this is not a fully-fledged scholar-academic orientation).

Directional Typology 3 represents a different emphasis, with an overt shift in a social reconstructionist direction – the case of New Zealand illustrates this minority trend.

Figure 9: Three directional typologies



Section F: Case studies

Case study 1: Revised disciplinary curriculum – Pakistan

Introduction

Pakistan is one of UNESCO's 'E9' countries, which together make up 75% of the world's population and include 70% of the world's illiterate adults. The formidable challenges it faces in providing education for all have been further exacerbated by both the pandemic and the 2022 floods.

Recent historical context

The 1973 constitution gave concurrent responsibility for education to both federal and provincial governments. At the beginning of the 21st century Pakistan had three types of schools: public, usually teaching in Urdu; private, usually teaching in English; and madrassas, which focus strongly on Arabic. In addition, there is non-formal education outside the school system. Students with strong English language skills are hugely advantaged in the jobs market and hence the schooling system has served to sustain inequality⁶². Curriculum development, since independence in 1947, has focussed on alignment with the constitution and the Islamic faith, and ongoing response to the changing needs of society. There is a strong tradition of textbook production in Pakistan, with textbook boards in every province. Their content is closely controlled (Durrani & Dunne, 2010), constituting the de facto syllabus for teachers. Private schools have been allowed to offer qualifications such as English A Levels or the International Baccalaureate. This diversity of provision was further accentuated in 2010 when the passing of the 18th constitutional amendment devolved education, to the provincial governments.

Education in Pakistan has been monitored by a citizen-led household-based survey⁶³, the *Annual Status of Education Report*, which provides considerable detail about the day-to-day experience in schools across the country.

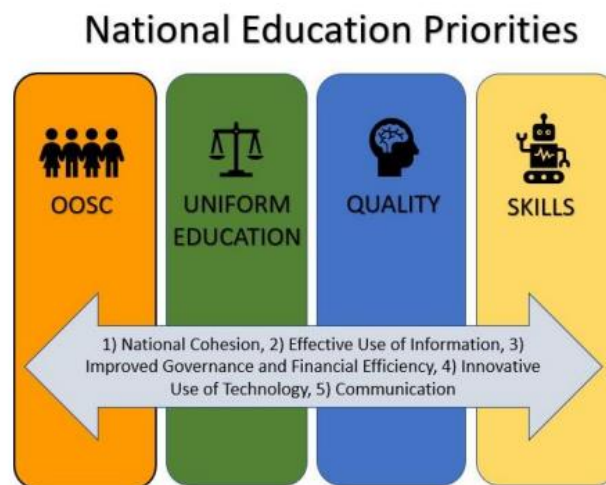
⁶²[https://www.sahe.org.pk/publications/Who%20gets%20the%20good%20jobs_%20Educational%20experiences%20that%20result%20in%20economic%20and%20social%20mobility%20\(2016\).pdf](https://www.sahe.org.pk/publications/Who%20gets%20the%20good%20jobs_%20Educational%20experiences%20that%20result%20in%20economic%20and%20social%20mobility%20(2016).pdf) [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁶³ http://aserpakistan.org/document/aser/2021/reports/national/ASER_report_National_2021.pdf [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Current policy

Whilst there has been national legislation regarding responsibility, in practice the provinces have chosen to maintain their coordination and all provinces agreed to implement the 2009 curriculum guidelines. In 2014, a national curriculum council was established consisting of delegates from each province. In 2018 a new national education policy framework⁶⁴ identified four priority areas, one of which is a uniform education to support national cohesion⁶⁵ and reduce inequality. The framework set an overarching goal 'to ensure that all children have a fair and equal opportunity to receive a high quality of education to achieve their full potential.'

Figure 10: National Education priorities for Pakistan 2018. (Note OOSC are out of school children)⁶⁶



The strategic priority areas are:

Priority 1: Decrease OOSC and Increase School Completion

Priority 2: Uniformity in Education Standards

Priority 3: Improve the Quality of Education

Priority 4: Enhance Access to and Relevance of Skills Training

⁶⁴<http://mofept.gov.pk/SiteImage/Policy/National%20Educaion%20Policy%20Framework%202018%20Final.pdf> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁶⁵<http://www.mofept.gov.pk/ProjectDetail/MzkyNDc2MjMtY2VjYy00ZDA4LTk5OTUtNzUyNDI3ZWZmZnRm#:~:text=One%20system%20of%20Education%20for,a%20step%20in%20that%20direction> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁶⁶ <http://mofept.gov.pk/SiteImage/Policy/National%20Educaion%20Policy%20Framework%202018%20Final.pdf> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

The national curriculum framework, also published in 2018, is a clear and pragmatic response to a wide range of ideological, academic, and socio-cultural concerns. The document sets out the principles upon which the curriculum has been developed and how it contributes to the national vision for education.

The NCF spells out and provides guidelines for achieving national Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives of education. NCF has been developed in consultation with all Federating Units. It includes chapters on (i) Curriculum Development and revision, (ii) textbooks and learning materials, (iii) teacher education and training, (iv) learning resources and school environment, (v) evaluation and feedback and (vi) mechanism for coordination among Federating Units, public and private sectors and various streams of education on curriculum aspects.⁶⁷

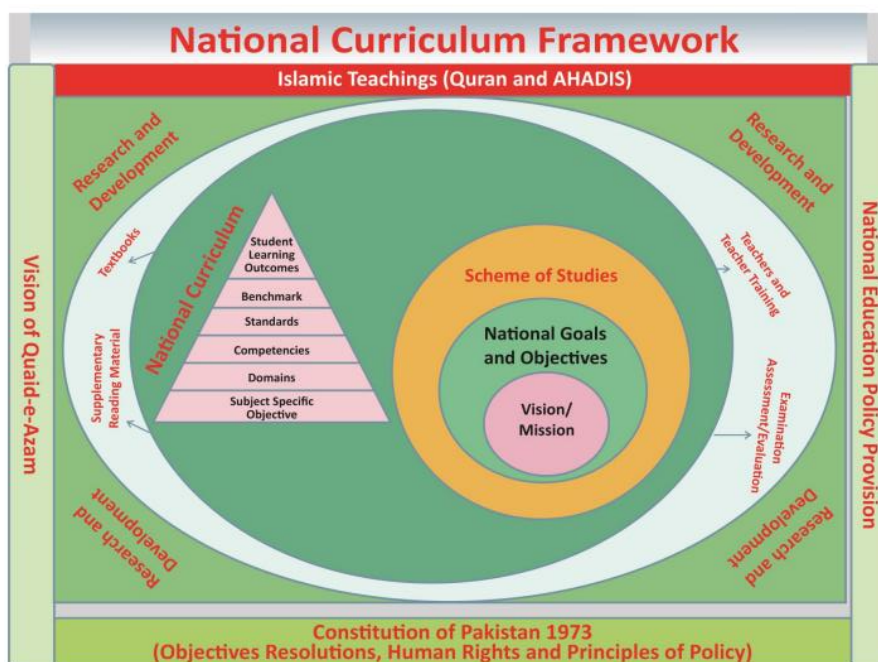
The medium-term strategy is to produce a Single National Curriculum (SNC) through to grade 12, which will be followed in all schools, including private and religious establishments. The SNC is based on the 2017 framework and was drafted in 2020 with the intention being to roll out from 2021, from ECE up to grade 8. However, due to a change of government in 2022, this has not been achieved, and it is the national curriculum framework of 2017 that is mainly in place.

The SNC describes standards and benchmarks for every subject, with the maths and science content aligned to the TIMSS⁶⁸ framework. Home languages are encouraged as the medium of instruction, with English and Urdu taught as a second languages. There is considerable guidance about the gradual introduction of a second language and the language requirements of textbooks by subject and grade.

⁶⁷ <http://mofept.gov.pk/SiteImage/Policy/National%20Eductaion%20Policy%20Framework%202018%20Final.pdf>
[Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁶⁸ Pakistan took part in TIMSS in 2019

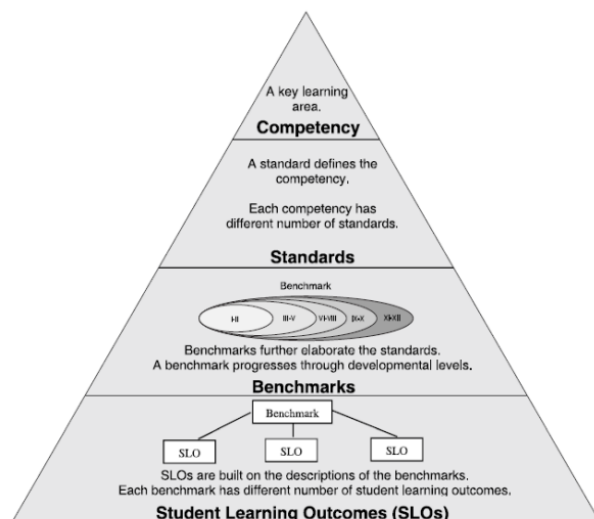
Figure 11: National Curriculum Framework



The SNC documents also include a glossary of 40 terms⁶⁹. The diagram below demonstrates the naming system used.

⁶⁹ [https://snc.gov.pk/SiteImage/Downloads/\[final\]%20SNC%20-%20Glossary%20of%20Terms.pdf](https://snc.gov.pk/SiteImage/Downloads/[final]%20SNC%20-%20Glossary%20of%20Terms.pdf) [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Figure 12: Curriculum structure



The individual subject guidance divides the subject into domains by content (e.g., citizenship is a domain of social studies), and for each domain it outlines benchmarks and SLOs (e.g. see below). The guidelines for textbook writers describe clearly how these fit together.⁷⁰

The subjects covered are: Islamiyat, Urdu, English, mathematics, science, geography, history, social studies and computer science. The detailed benchmarks and SLOs for each subject is hosted online.⁷¹

An example of benchmarks and SLOs from mathematics is given below and demonstrates this inclusion of the Islamic taxes Zakat and Ushr.

Figure 13: Single National Curriculum 2022 Mathematics⁷²

⁷⁰ [https://snc.gov.pk/SiteImage/Downloads/\[Final\]%20SNC%20-%20Guidelines%20for%20textbooks%20authors.pdf](https://snc.gov.pk/SiteImage/Downloads/[Final]%20SNC%20-%20Guidelines%20for%20textbooks%20authors.pdf) [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁷¹ <https://snc.gov.pk/index> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁷² [https://snc.gov.pk/SiteImage/Misc/files/\(link\)%20SNC%20-%20Math%20-%20Required%20Standards%20and%20SLOs\(1\).pdf](https://snc.gov.pk/SiteImage/Misc/files/(link)%20SNC%20-%20Math%20-%20Required%20Standards%20and%20SLOs(1).pdf) [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Benchmarks: Students will be able use language, notation and Venn diagrams to describe sets and their elements, operate with real numbers, their properties and identify absolute value of real numbers, apply commutative ,associative and distributive laws on real numbers , compare, arrange and round off real numbers to required degree of accuracy, calculate factors, multiples, HCF and LCM, square roots and cube roots, ratio, rate, proportion, percentages, profit, loss, discount, Zakat, Ushr, commission, Taxes, insurance, partnership and Inheritance and apply all of these concepts in real life contexts.		

<u>[SLO: M-07-A-18]</u> Explain income tax, property tax, general sales tax, value-added tax, zakat and ushr.	<u>[SLO: M-08-A-13]</u> Explain and calculate profit/markup, principal amount and markup rate.
--	---

The secondary/higher certificate of education is administered by the 31 provincial boards who set assessments according to national guidelines provided by the 2009 national education policy and the 2006 national curriculum framework. The boards are in turn are co-ordinated by an Interboard of chairmen⁷³ which ensures standards are equivalent across the country and attests to the validity of certificates awarded by boards.

The Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education's website⁷⁴ hosts the syllabus, model question papers and model solutions for every subject. The secondary certificate has four compulsory subjects: Urdu, English, Islamic studies (or Religious Studies for minority faiths) and Pakistan studies. Students then choose options from one of four strands: science, humanities, technical and matric

⁷³ <https://ibcc.edu.pk/> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁷⁴ <https://www.fbise.edu.pk/> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

technical (vocational). The higher school certificate has the same structure and the same four compulsory subjects. The optional groups which are focussed for university entry or specific employment are: science, humanities, commerce, medical technology and pre-home economics.

Future directions

The aim of the education policy is to have a single curriculum for senior schools and an accompanying unified assessment system. This would be a significant change for private schools who usually offer international qualifications. In 2003, a National Education Assessment System (NEAS) was established with assistance from the World Bank and UK DFID. NEAS has now merged with the Academy of Educational planning and management to form the Pakistan Institute of Education.

Pakistan has a young population with more than 120 million people below 18 years old⁷⁵. A *Skills For All* policy, which has been informed by the success of the *Skills Future policy* in Singapore, aims to significantly develop technical and vocational education and training.

A digital education platform provided by the federal government e-Taleem⁷⁶ provides a range of online, TV and radio programmes. There are plans to further develop this resource, although access to electricity and wifi is severely restricted in some parts of the country.

However, significant challenges exist in relation to achieving the goal of the SNC. It should be acknowledged that Pakistan, as is the case in many other countries, faces very challenging issues which limit implementation. These include practical difficulties, such as a lack of books and other resources available in regional languages, as well as wider political and cultural tensions (Abbas et al. 2022). The critique is that the SNC is part of a political move to impose a single national identity that denies the validity of other languages, religions and cultures.

Nevertheless, Pakistan's curriculum can be considered a hybrid of a social efficiency model that aspires to a fully literate population, a social transformation model aspiring to unify the country around a set of Islamic values, and a scholar academic model as exemplified by the subject discipline structure and focus.

⁷⁵ <http://mofept.gov.pk/SiteImage/Policy/National-Skills-for-All-Strategy-2018-1.pdf> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁷⁶ <https://etaleem.gov.pk/> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Case study 2: A competency curriculum – Singapore

Introduction

Education in Singapore has been the focus of much study, as a consequence of its high levels of success⁷⁷ in the international PISA and TIMSS tests. The supra and macro levels of curriculum making are very well presented on the ministry of education website.

Current policy

The 1997 reform termed *Thinking Schools Learning Nation* aimed to prepare young people for a knowledge economy. Singapore's Ministry of Education is the centralised curriculum-making and textbook authorising body for all school subjects, although schools can adopt some school-based curriculum development to cater for specific needs. The curriculum was reviewed and content reduced to free up time to focus on thinking skills. The Teach Less, Learn More (TLLM) initiative aims to promote specific pedagogic approaches at the nano, or classroom level. A significant investment has been made in ICT, and recent developments have seen every child having access to an online portal, the Student Learning Space.

The official Singapore curriculum site is aimed at parents as key stakeholders in education, and forms part of a parental engagement communication strategy. It explicitly states, as its top line, that the curriculum is framed around 21st Century Competencies 'essential for your child'. The competencies comprise six 'core values, described as shared societal and national values: Respect, responsibility, resilience, integrity, care and harmony. In addition, there are five 'Social-Emotional Competencies'. These values and competencies, which together comprise the Singapore Framework for 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes, are depicted in a circular diagram (see fig.6).

These are then followed by three global competencies ⁷⁸:

- Civic Literacy, Global Awareness and Cross-Cultural Skills
- Critical and Inventive Thinking
- Communication, Collaboration and Information Skills

⁷⁷ <https://www.moe.gov.sg/news/press-releases/20191203-singapore-students-show-well-developed-thinking-and-reasoning-skills-oecd-pisa-2018-study> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁷⁸ <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/education-system/21st-century-competencies> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

The official curriculum site then outlines the 'Desired Outcomes of Education'⁷⁹, described as attributes that every Singaporean should possess, by the time they complete their formal education:

- A good sense of self-awareness
- A sound moral compass
- The necessary skills and knowledge to take on challenges of the future.

The six years of primary education focus on subject learning⁸⁰, with project work and additional activity strongly encouraged for the holistic development of the child. All primary school students need to participate in project work, co-curricular activities (CCA) and Programme for Active Learning (PAL). Subjects are offered at different levels depending upon the scores achieved in assessments. This is referred to as subject based banding (SBB). Subject based banding provides an opportunity for students to take a combination of subjects at standard and foundation levels. All children sit the high stakes Primary School Leaving Exam (PSLE), which determines their eligibility for the different types of secondary school and the different bands of courses within the school. Children may sit the leaving exam up to three times, and although children can stay in primary school until the age of 15, those who fail the PSLE and wish to remain in education attend two specialist schools (Northlight and Assumption Pathway) that offer a curriculum for academically low-performing students. Several specialised programmes are available for high attaining students.

At present, the secondary curriculum is streamed into three courses, with entry dependent on the student's PSLE results: Express (leads to GCE O Levels or 'Integrated Programme': GCE A Levels/International Baccalaureate/NUS High School Diploma – O Levels not necessary); Normal (Academic) (leads to GCE N-level exam in S4); Normal (Technical) (leads to GCE T-level exam in S4). There are opportunities to move between these pathways and to take subjects at different levels within them. However, it should be noted that from 2024, students will have greater flexibility to study more subjects at different levels that suit their interests, aptitude and learning needs. There will no longer be separate Express, N(A), and N(T) streams, and students will be in mixed form classes where they can interact with peers of different strengths and interests. This reflects the policy change to full subject based banding,

⁷⁹ <https://www.moe.gov.sg/docs/default-source/document/education/files/desired-outcomes-of-education.pdf> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

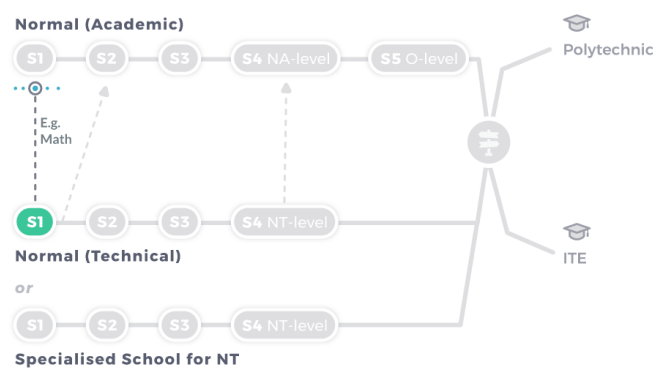
⁸⁰ <https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/syllabuses> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

piloted in 28 secondary schools as of 2020. It is being progressively rolled out to more secondary schools each year between 2022 and 2024.

Schools are encouraged to specialise and develop innovative programmes. The heterogeneous system is explicitly hierarchical and competitive.

The pathways for Normal (Technical) and Normal (Academic)⁸¹ differ from the Express pathway in terms of outcomes and subjects:

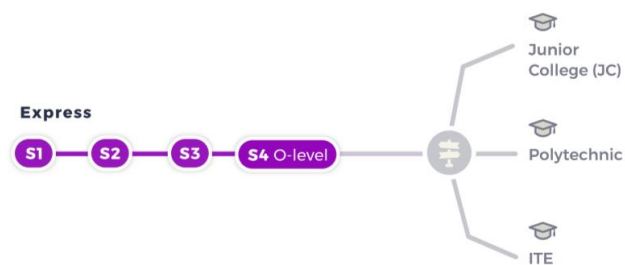
Figure 14: Curriculum Pathways



⁸¹ <https://www.moe.gov.sg/secondary/courses/normal-technical> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Normal (Technical) course at a glance

Course length	4 years
Course eligibility	PSLE Score 25 - 30* * PSLE Score of 25 is in the Normal (Academic)/Normal (Technical) Option Band
Subjects at lower secondary	<p>Students are exposed to a wide range of subjects at the lower secondary level to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help them make informed choices on their subjects at upper secondary level and beyond. Prepare them to cope with these subjects at upper secondary level. <p>The subjects offered are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English Language Mother Tongue Languages Mathematics Science Character and Citizenship Education Social Studies Computer Applications Design and Technology Food and Consumer Education Physical Education Art Music Project Work
Compulsory subjects at upper secondary	English Language, Mother Tongue Language, Mathematics, Computer Applications and Social Studies



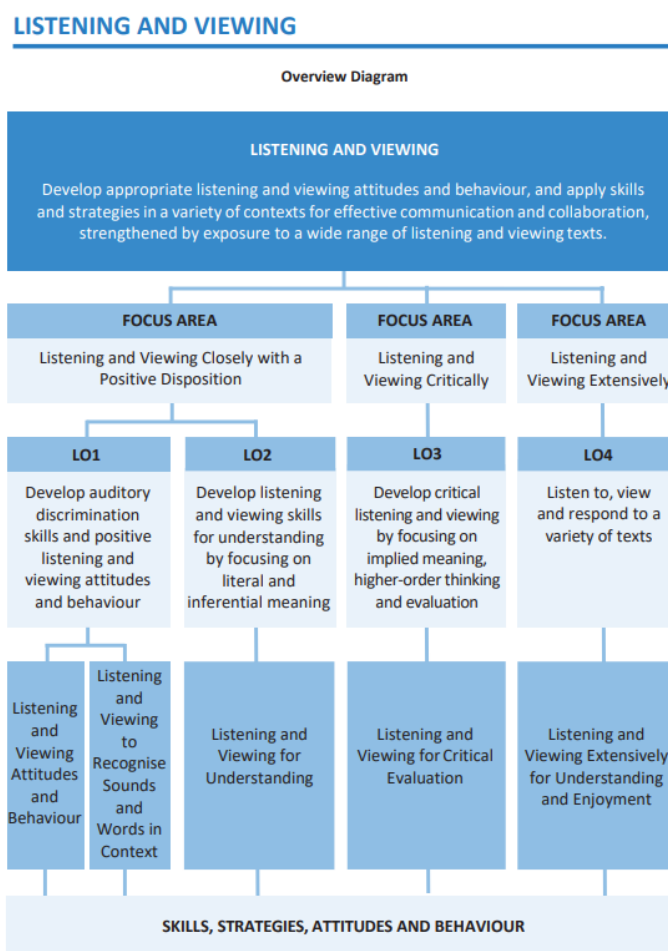
Express course (GCE O-Level Programme) at a glance

Course length	4 years
Course eligibility	PSLE Score of 4 - 20* * PSLE Scores of 21 - 22 are in the Express/Normal (Academic) Option Band
Subjects at lower secondary	<p>Students are exposed to a wide range of subjects at the lower secondary level to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help them make informed choices on their subjects at upper secondary level and beyond. • Prepare them to cope with these subjects at upper secondary level. <p>The subjects offered are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Language • Mother Tongue Languages • Mathematics • Science • Character and Citizenship Education • Humanities, such as Geography, History and Literature in English • Design and Technology • Food and Consumer Education • Physical Education • Art • Music • Project Work
Compulsory subjects at upper secondary	English Language, Mother Tongue Language, Mathematics, Science, Humanities (with Social Studies)

Each subject has a range of Learning Outcomes. For example, the English language and literature curriculum is organised into Areas of Language Learning (e.g. Listening and Viewing) > Focus Area (e.g. Listening and Viewing Skills and Strategies) > Learning Outcomes. Following on from this, there are the 'Components' of each Learning Outcome, which comprise the Skills, Learner Strategies, Attitudes and Behaviour (SSAB)/Items and Structures in an Area of Language Learning. To provide an idea of the extent of these, there are 22 Items and Structures listed under Learning Outcome 2 for Listening and Viewing in the Express/Normal (Academic) pathway, and there are three other Learning Outcomes for Listening and Viewing all with their own Items and Structures. This is all presented in grids. See, for example below⁸²:

⁸² https://www.moe.gov.sg/secondary/courses/express/electives#subjects_course | MOE [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Figure 15: Listening and Viewing



The Ministry of Education has introduced a series of reforms to the education system over the past two decades with the intention of de-emphasising the primacy of academic grades and placing more emphasis on other goals such as character development, the development of 21st century competencies, fostering the joy of learning and encouraging lifelong learning. However, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours are difficult to change. Empirical evidence (Yang & Li, 2021) suggests that the high-stakes assessments effectively dominate the system, leading to teachers focusing on 'teaching to the test'. There is also a highly developed shadow education sector (Teo & Koh, 2022) providing private tutoring.

Singapore's curriculum is both a competency and values-based approach, yet it is also founded on developmental stages and learning outcomes. The policy intention is for the curriculum to progress according to grade levels, but within each level, the aim is for integrated rather than linear progression. For example, the language areas of listening and viewing, reading, speaking and writing and use of

grammar are integrated for each unit of work. Nevertheless, the overall impression is one of linear progression as described in detailed syllabus documents for each subject. Thus, while the Singapore curriculum has a strong scholar academic orientation (narrowly interpreted as traditional approaches to subject disciplines) and uses the language of learner-centredness, it has been highly successful as a social efficiency model supporting the rapid economic development of a small country with very limited natural resources.

Case study 3: Post-competency curriculum - 'Big Ideas', British Columbia

Introduction

British Columbia (BC) in Canada is an example of recent curriculum development which reaches beyond the typical OECD-informed model of competency. The BC curriculum is described as a 'concept-based, competency-driven' model. It has three intertwined dimensions: Content (Know); Curricular Competencies (Do); and Big Ideas (Understand), otherwise known as a Know-Do-Understand model. The top policy line on the official website is that the curriculum is 'learner-centred and flexible and maintain[s] a focus on literacy and numeracy, while supporting deeper learning through concept-based and competency-driven approaches.'⁸³

The BC approach is underpinned by the construct of the 'educated citizen', who is the desired outcome of education. The BC 'Vision' Statement emphasises that the purpose of the education system is to enable students attain the 'knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy'.⁸⁴ This suggests the influence of social reconstruction and social efficiency ideologies. The 'educated citizen' is described as having the following characteristics:

Intellectual Development – to develop the ability of students to analyze critically, reason and think independently, and acquire basic learning skills and bodies of knowledge; to develop in students a lifelong appreciation of learning, a curiosity about the world around them, and a capacity for creative thought and expression.

Human and Social Development – to develop in students a sense of self-worth and personal initiative; to develop an appreciation of the fine arts and an understanding of cultural heritage; to develop an understanding of the importance of physical health and well-being; to develop a sense of social responsibility, acceptance and respect for the ideas and beliefs of others.

⁸³ <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/overview> [Accessed: 23 April 2023]

⁸⁴ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/program-management/vision-for-student-success> [Accessed: 23 April 2023]

Career Development – to prepare students to attain their career and occupational objectives; to assist in the development of effective work habits and the flexibility to deal with change in the workplace.

Curricular Competencies (Do)

In the BC model, competencies are defined as students' ability to 'do things', yet they are also about the type of person students should be, or should aim to become. The competencies are largely concerned with values, principles, and dispositions/personality traits (see fig.16 for more details on how this is expressed). There are three Core Competencies⁸⁵, each of which has at least two 'sub-competencies'. In turn, the sub-competencies have a number of 'facets'. These are explained and exemplified through 'profiles' and 'illustrations'. The profiles are similar to learning outcomes in other curricular models, since they involve a list of things that students should be able to do or demonstrate to evidence their achievement of the sub-competence.

Figure 16: Core Competencies

Core Competencies

The Core Competencies are sets of intellectual, personal, and social and emotional proficiencies that all students need in order to engage in deep, lifelong learning. Along with literacy and numeracy foundations, they are central to British Columbia's K-12 curriculum and assessment system and directly support students in their growth as educated citizens.

On this page:

- [Unpacking the three Core Competencies](#)
- [Cross-curricular](#)

Students develop Core Competencies when they are engaged in the “doing” – the Curricular Competencies – within a learning area. As such, they are an integral part of the curriculum. While they manifest themselves uniquely in each area of learning, the Core Competencies are often interconnected and are foundational to all learning.

Before students enter school, development of Core Competencies begins at home and then continues throughout their life. Students encounter opportunities to develop their competence in formal and informal settings. They move from demonstrating competence in relatively simple and highly supported situations, to demonstrating independence in more complex and varied contexts. Competency development does not end with school graduation but continues in personal, social, educational, and workplace contexts.



⁸⁵ <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/competencies> [Accessed: 23 April 2023]

The Core Competencies are:

1. Communication (sub-competences: communication; collaborating);
2. Thinking (sub-competences: creative thinking; critical and reflective thinking);
3. and Personal and Social (sub-competences: personal awareness and responsibility; positive personal and cultural identity; and social awareness and responsibility).

As an example, these are the facets for Personal awareness and responsibility, which is a Sub-competence of the third Core Competence, Personal and Social:

Figure 17: Personal awareness and responsibility

The image shows a digital interface with a navigation bar at the top containing four tabs: 'Facets', 'Profiles', 'Connections', and 'Illustrations'. The 'Facets' tab is currently selected. To the right of the tabs, there is a small icon of a person with a checkmark and the text 'Self-advocating'. Below the navigation bar, the main content area is divided into three sections, each with a title and a description:

- Self-advocating**
Students who are personally aware and responsible have a sense of self-worth and a growing confidence in a variety of situations. They value themselves, their ideas, and their accomplishments. They are able to express their needs and seek help when needed, find purpose and motivation, act on decisions, and advocate for themselves.
- Self-regulating**
Students who are personally aware and responsible take ownership of their choices and actions. They set goals, monitor progress, and understand their emotions, using that understanding to regulate actions and reactions. They are aware that learning involves patience and time. They can persevere in difficult situations, and to understand how their actions affect themselves and others.
- Well-being**
Students who are personally aware and responsible recognize the factors that affect their holistic wellness and take increasing responsibility for caring for themselves. They keep themselves healthy and stay active, manage stress, and express a sense of personal well-being. They make choices that contribute to their safety in their communities, including their online communities and use of social media. They recognize their personal responsibility for their happiness and have strategies that help them find peace in challenging situations.

The following outlines the Profiles for this Sub-competence, presented in 'I can' statements. In addition, there are also 'Connections', which highlight links between Core Competencies and Sub-competencies), and 'Illustrations' (examples of teaching and learning activities).

Figure 18: Profiles

Facets	Profiles	Connections	Illustrations
	<p>Profile 1 I can show a sense of accomplishment and joy, and express some wants, needs, and preferences. I can sometimes recognize my emotions.</p> <p>Profile 2 I can initiate actions that bring me joy and satisfaction and recognize that I play a role in my well-being.</p> <p>I can seek out experiences that make me feel happy and proud. I can express my wants and needs and celebrate my efforts and accomplishments. I have some strategies that help me recognize and manage my feelings and emotions. I recognize and can explain my role in learning activities and explorations, and I can give some evidence of my learning. I can describe how some specific choices can affect my well-being and participate in activities that support my well-being.</p> <p>Profile 3 I can make choices that help me meet my wants and needs and increase my feelings of well-being. I take responsibility for my actions.</p> <p>I can take action toward meeting my own wants and needs and finding joy and satisfaction, and work toward a goal or solving a problem. I can use strategies that increase my feeling of well-being and help me manage my feelings and emotions. I can connect my actions with both positive and negative consequences and try to make adjustments; I accept feedback. I make decisions about my activities and take some responsibility for my physical and emotional well-being.</p> <p>Profile 4 I can recognize my strengths and take responsibility for using strategies to focus, manage stress, and accomplish my goals.</p> <p>I advocate for myself and my ideas; I accept myself. I am willing to engage with ideas or information that is challenging for me. I can be focused and determined. I can set realistic goals, use strategies to accomplish them, and persevere with challenging tasks. I can tell when I am becoming angry, upset, or frustrated, and I have strategies to calm myself. I can make choices that benefit my well-being and keep me safe in the communities I belong to.</p> <p>Profile 5 I recognize my value and advocate for my rights. I take responsibility for my choices, my actions, and my achievements.</p> <p>I have valuable ideas to share. I am willing to explore controversial issues, and I can imagine and work toward change in myself and in the world. I can set priorities; implement, monitor, and adjust a plan; and assess the results. I take responsibility for my learning, seeking help as I need it. I use strategies for working toward a healthy and balanced lifestyle, for dealing with emotional challenges, and for finding peace in stressful times. I know how to find the social support I need.</p> <p>Profile 6 I can identify my strengths and limits, find internal motivation, and act on opportunities for self-growth. I take responsibility for making ethical decisions.</p>		

Content (Know)

The BC curriculum features the following subjects: Applied Design, Skills and Technologies; Arts Education; Career Education; English Language Arts; French as a first language; French Immersion Language Arts (as a second language); Mathematics; Physical and Health Education; Science; Social Studies and Languages (American Sign Language, Core French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Punjabi, Spanish).

Big Ideas (Understand)

The cross-cutting 'Big Ideas' are described as 'generalizations and principles and the key concepts important in an area of learning. They reflect the 'understand' component of the know-do-understand

model of learning... The Big Ideas represent what students will understand at the completion of the curriculum for their grade.' The Big Ideas for the subject areas are essentially 'lists of experiences, knowledge and skills numbers' (Sinnema, Nieveen and Priestley 2020, pp.190-1).

An example of how the Big Ideas are conceptualised and applied in the BC curriculum is given here. In the Social Studies for Kindergarten-year 10 (K-10) curriculum, the curriculum structure features three strands or dimensions: Introduction; Goals and Rationale; and Continuous Views. Within the latter pillar, there are a further three strands: Big Ideas; Curricular Competencies; and Content.

The Big Ideas are broken down into years K-10 as illustrated below⁸⁶:

Figure 19: Big Ideas

Social Studies K-10 – Big Ideas

Grade				
K	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our communities are diverse and made up of individuals who have a lot in common. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stories and traditions about ourselves and our families reflect who we are and where we are from. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rights, roles, and responsibilities shape our identity and help us build healthy relationships with others. 	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy communities recognize and respect the diversity of individuals and care for the local environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We shape the local environment, and the local environment shapes who we are and how we live. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our rights, roles, and responsibilities are important for building strong communities. 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada is made up of many diverse regions and communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local actions have global consequences, and global actions have local consequences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals have rights and responsibilities as global citizens. 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning about indigenous peoples nurtures multicultural awareness and respect for diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous knowledge is passed down through oral history, traditions, and collective memory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous societies throughout the world value the well-being of the self, the land, spirits, and ancestors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People from diverse cultures and societies share some common experiences and aspects of life.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactions between First Peoples and Europeans led to conflict and co-operation, which continue to shape Canada's identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pursuit of valuable natural resources has played a key role in changing the land, people, and communities of Canada. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demographic changes in North America created shifts in economic and political power. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British Columbia followed a unique path in becoming a part of Canada.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immigration and multi-culturalism continue to shape Canadian society and identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural resources continue to shape the economy and identity of different regions of Canada. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada's policies for and treatment of minority peoples have negative and positive legacies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canadian institutions and government reflect the challenge of our regional diversity.

⁸⁶ https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/curriculum/continuous-views/en_social_studies_k-10_big_ideas.pdf [Accessed: 23 April 2023]

Social Studies K-10 – Big Ideas – *continued*

Grade				
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media sources can both positively and negatively affect our understanding of important events and issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic self-interest can be a significant cause of conflict among peoples and governments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systems of government vary in their respect for human rights and freedoms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complex global problems require international co-operation to make difficult choices for the future.
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Religious and cultural practices that emerged during this period have endured and continue to influence people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geographic conditions shaped the emergence of civilizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasingly complex societies required new systems of laws and government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic specialization and trade networks can lead to conflict and co-operation between societies.
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploration, expansion, and colonization had varying consequences for different groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human and environmental factors shape changes in population and living standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing ideas about the world created tension between people wanting to adopt new ideas and those wanting to preserve established traditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact and conflict between peoples stimulated significant cultural, social, and political change.
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collective identity is constructed and can change over time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The physical environment influences the nature of political, social, and economic change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emerging ideas and ideologies profoundly influence societies and events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disparities in power alter the balance of relationships between individuals and between societies.
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical and contemporary injustices challenge the narrative and identity of Canada as an inclusive, multicultural society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development of political institutions is influenced by economic, social, ideological, and geographic factors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worldviews lead to different perspectives and ideas about developments in Canadian society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global and regional conflicts have been a powerful force in shaping our contemporary world and identities.

Social Studies K-10 Big Ideas (gov.bc.ca)

Future directions

It is interesting to note that the 'understand' or Big Ideas approach is emerging in a few other recent curriculum reforms, and may be a way forward for future curriculum policy making, particularly to frame progression in knowledge/conceptual development. Wales's new approach is described as being about '(bigger) Big Ideas' (Sinnema, Nieveen and Priestley 2020). These are referred to as 'What Matters' statements⁸⁷. Similarly, the 2007 New Zealand Curriculum features brief essence statements for each learning area, which outline what the learning area is about, why it is important to study this area, and how it is structured. These are accompanied by statements about the different strands of learning, which are similar to the Big Ideas (Sinnema, Nieveen and Priestley 2020).

The BC model arguably reflects all of Schiro's curriculum ideologies (scholar academic; learner-centred; social efficiency and social reconstruction) to a greater or lesser extent. Again, the BC approach to social reconstruction bears similarities emerging approaches elsewhere, for example, to Australia and Singapore, where curriculum reform now recognises indigenous culture, history and language (although it should be noted that the previous version of the BC curriculum (2005) also incorporated indigenous

⁸⁷ <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/principles-for-designing-your-curriculum/#statements-of-what-matters> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

(First Peoples) perspectives). However, this is sometimes constructed as a distinct curricular strand. For instance, Australia's national curriculum (the Australian Curriculum) is tripartite, presenting subject disciplines first, followed by General Capabilities and then Cross-curriculum priorities⁸⁸. The latter represents a post-colonial realignment towards Asia and away from Europe, in addition to emphasising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture. However, these Cross-curricular themes are then interpreted by the state jurisdictions in various ways, reflecting local priorities. This can lead to the Cross-curricular strand being de-emphasised, as for example in South Australia⁸⁹ and Western Australia⁹⁰, where in both cases it is difficult to locate the Cross-curriculum priorities.

In the BC curriculum, however, the Big Ideas can be used to integrate indigenous (First Peoples) perspectives throughout all aspects of learning, as in the example of the Big Ideas for the Social Studies K-10 curriculum. New Zealand is currently in the process of developing and implementing a new curriculum which reaches further beyond these approaches by interweaving indigenous (Māori) and European-origin epistemologies and pedagogies by integrating Marauranga Māori (Māori knowledges) (see case study 5). This is evidenced through the use of concepts and language from both traditions across all curriculum documents and materials.⁹¹

⁸⁸ <https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/f-10-curriculum-overview#3> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁸⁹ <https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/education-and-learning/curriculum-and-learning/south-australian-curriculum> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁹⁰ <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/western-australian-curriculum> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁹¹ <https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Case study 4: Post-competency curriculum – Knowledge-based, England

Introduction

England's National Curriculum is a rare example of a knowledge-based curriculum, which does not align to the 21st century competencies discourse. Concepts such as transversal skills or capabilities/capacities are completely absent from England's curriculum. Nor does it use the language of learner-centeredness, or social efficiency (understood in terms of workplace skills). Instead, it is underpinned by a liberal education perspective: that is, it is founded on the belief that there is a body of knowledge ('essential knowledge') that all people should learn in order to become educated, good, rational members of society:

The national curriculum provides pupils with an introduction to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens. It introduces pupils to the best that has been thought and said; and helps engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement⁹².

Although the National Curriculum is compulsory in state-funded schools in England, it is intended to form just part of what schools should be teaching, as individual 'school curriculum' must also encompass the following:

Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based and which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and
- prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life⁹³.

The architecture of the curriculum comprises 'core subjects', namely, English, mathematics and science, which are compulsory at every 'key stage' (covering ages 5-16, in total). These are then supported by the 'foundation subjects': art and design; citizenship; computing; design and technology; languages;

⁹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4/the-national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4/the-national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

geography; history; music; and physical education. Not all of these are compulsory at all key stages. All schools must also teach religious education.

The National Curriculum contains guiding Purposes and Aims. These are not depicted in colourful visual representations of the types illustrated above (Section B). Instead, the curriculum website and policy documents are entirely text-based and organised by subject. There are no obvious cross-curricular themes or interdisciplinary approaches. To explore this curriculum model, then, it is necessary to look at a specific subject area.

Example: History

The architecture of the National Curriculum involves discrete subjects which feature an overarching Purpose of Study, followed by Aims, then the Attainment targets/Subject content by key stage. Content marked as 'non-statutory' or presented in square brackets is optional and not legally mandated. In the case of History, the Purpose and Aims are expressed as follows⁹⁴:

Figure 20: Purposes and Aims

Purpose of study

A high-quality history education will help pupils gain a coherent knowledge and understanding of Britain's past and that of the wider world. It should inspire pupils' curiosity to know more about the past. Teaching should equip pupils to ask perceptive questions, think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, and develop perspective and judgement. History helps pupils to understand the complexity of people's lives, the process of change, the diversity of societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity and the challenges of their time.

⁹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-history-programmes-of-study> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Aims

The national curriculum for history aims to ensure that all pupils:

- know and understand the history of these islands as a coherent, chronological narrative, from the earliest times to the present day: how people's lives have shaped this nation and how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world
- know and understand significant aspects of the history of the wider world: the nature of ancient civilisations; the expansion and dissolution of empires; characteristic features of past non-European societies; achievements and follies of mankind
- gain and deploy a historically grounded understanding of abstract terms such as 'empire', 'civilisation', 'parliament' and 'peasantry'
- understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference and significance, and use them to make connections, draw contrasts, analyse trends, frame historically valid questions and create their own structured accounts, including written narratives and analyses
- understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed
- gain historical perspective by placing their growing knowledge into different contexts: understanding the connections between local, regional, national and international history; between cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social history; and between short- and long-term timescales

As can be seen from the above, issues of diversity, context, interpretation and different perspectives are all reflected to some extent in the Purpose and the Aims, as are the concepts of 'know and understand'.

The compulsory content for Key Stage 1 (ages 5-7, or years 1-2) is very broad, covering:

- changes within living memory – where appropriate, these should be used to reveal aspects of change in national life;
- events beyond living memory that are significant nationally or globally;
- the lives of significant individuals in the past who have contributed to national and international achievements, some should be used to compare aspects of life in different periods;
- significant historical events, people and places in their own locality

Examples of what might be taught within these compulsory elements are briefly suggested, but these are not mandatory.

For Key Stage 2 (ages 7-11, or years 3-6), the curriculum addresses British, local and world history. Students must be taught the following (the examples of what might be taught under these headings are non-statutory, and thus are the responsibility of individual schools and teachers):

- changes in Britain from the Stone Age to the Iron Age;
- the Roman Empire and its impact on Britain;
- Britain's settlement by Anglo-Saxons and Scots;

- the Viking and Anglo-Saxon struggle for the Kingdom of England to the time of Edward the Confessor;
- a local history study;
- a study of an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066;
- the achievements of the earliest civilizations – an overview of where and when the first civilizations appeared and a depth study of one of the following: Ancient Sumer, The Indus Valley, Ancient Egypt, The Shang Dynasty of Ancient China;
- Ancient Greece – a study of Greek life and achievements and their influence on the western world;
- a non-European society that provides contrasts with British history – one study chosen from: early Islamic civilization, including a study of Baghdad c. AD 900; Mayan civilization c. AD 900; Benin (West Africa) c. AD 900-1300

The approach is linear, rather than teaching by themes or topics. This continues with Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14; years 7-9):

- the development of Church, state and society in Medieval Britain 1066-1509;
- the development of Church, state and society in Britain 1509-1745;
- ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745-1901
- challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day (the Holocaust must be included).

Future directions

A key criticism of England's framework is that the emphasis on content leads to over-prescription, which can limit teacher agency and restrict the possibility for school-based curriculum making (Leat, Livingston and Priestley, 2013). This criticism relates to notions of 'input regulation' and 'output regulation' and the balance between these, and the impact of central control over the curriculum (ibid.). As can be seen from the example given above, the approach to content would seem to vary by subject and key stage: the topics that must be covered in the key stage 2 History curriculum are extensive, yet the key stage 1 content is framed in a broad and open way that allows for different interpretations by schools and teachers. Further, the National Curriculum has been critiqued for its 'silences' on issues of race and decolonialism, although this relates to Geography specifically (Puttick and Murrey, 2020). The argument here is that a focus on British geography alone facilitates structural racism through an omission of alternative perspectives

(Morgan, 2017). The wider point is that a lack of powerful knowledge (Young, 2013) or cultural literacy (Hirsch, 1983) in a curriculum risks creating areas of 'ignorance' (Puttick and Murrey, 2020). Essentially, England's National Curriculum, although oriented towards a scholar academic ideology, focuses more on the narrow teaching of canonical knowledge rather than on the rich disciplinary traditions espoused in the scholar academic ideology articulated by Schiro (2012). The picture is complex, however, since notions of understanding, diversity and perspective do feature within the curriculum documents.

England is regarded as an outlier in terms of global trends in education. Other countries have also been cited as similarly divergent, knowledge-based cases. Sweden is sometimes regarded as one such divergent example, in that its curriculum appears to be knowledge-based and does not embrace the OECD's language of competencies. However, the differences may be largely superficial, since Sweden's curriculum is founded on the principle of 'practical knowledge' (Tahirsylaj and Wahlström, 2019 p.498) and uses the term 'abilities' when discussing knowledge. This construction of knowledge is not significantly different from the OECD and EU competency approach, according to the Swedish National Agency for Education (NAE) (NAE Report 2010, p.15). It could be argued, then, that 'abilities' is merely the global competencies approach in the vernacular (Tahirsylaj and Wahlström, 2019).

Case study 5: Post-competency curriculum (social reconstruction emphasis) –New Zealand

Introduction

As discussed above, New Zealand was an early adopter of the competency-based new curriculum model (Directional Typology 1).

The current curriculum model

The National Curriculum is composed of The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa. These are described as originating 'from different perspectives'⁹⁵; however, 'each start with a vision of young people developing the competencies they need for study, work, and lifelong learning, so they may go on to realise their potential'.

The curriculum website presents the vision, learning areas (subjects), principles, values and key competencies. This is what Hughson (2022) refers to as the 'front end' of the curriculum. This is then supported by the less-visible 'back end' (Hughson 2022) which features achievement objectives for the learning areas.

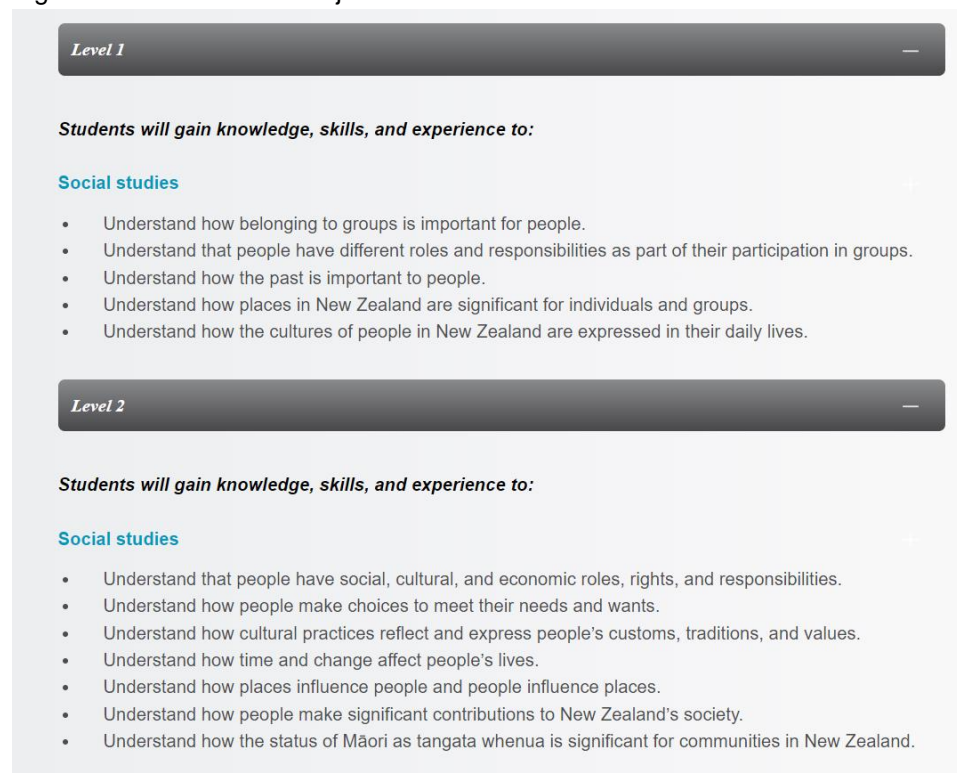
It should be noted that a five-year programme to refresh the curriculum is currently underway, and this aims to dispense with notions of strands and achievement objectives (Curriculum, Progress and Achievement Ministerial Advisory Group, 2019). However, the analysis presented here is based on the information available on the dedicated NZC website at the time of writing (April 2023), and the structure that is described and illustrated there still contains strands and achievement objectives. The curriculum refresh is an ongoing process that is subject to an ongoing national discussion and has yet to be fully implemented.

Currently, the learning areas in the NZC are: English, the arts; health and physical education; learning languages; mathematics and statistics; science; social sciences; and technology. Each of these has a learning area structure which sets out conceptual strands. For social sciences, as an example, the concepts are: Identity, culture and organisation; place and environment; continuity and change; and the economic world. Achievement objectives must include concepts from one or more of these strands.

⁹⁵ <https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

The achievement objectives are not overly prescriptive or detailed, as can be seen from the social sciences example below⁹⁶.

Figure 21: Achievement Objectives



The curriculum is supported by eight principles, described as packages. These are: High expectations; Treaty of Waitangi; Cultural diversity; Inclusion; Learning to learn; Community engagement; Coherence; Future focus⁹⁷.

The NZC is based on key competencies, which were explicitly developed to reflect the OECD's 'DeSeCo' (Definition and Selection Competencies) project. The NZC competencies are: Thinking; Relating to others; Using language, symbols, and texts; Managing self; and Participating and contributing⁹⁸.

These were developed by translating the four DeSeCo competencies to better reflect local priorities. The table below contrasts one of the NZC competencies with the DeSeCo equivalents⁹⁹. The curriculum

⁹⁶ <https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum/Social-sciences/Achievement-objectives#collapsible4> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁹⁷ <https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Principles> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁹⁸ <https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Key-competencies> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

⁹⁹ https://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/Paper%201%20Evidence%20base_final.pdf [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

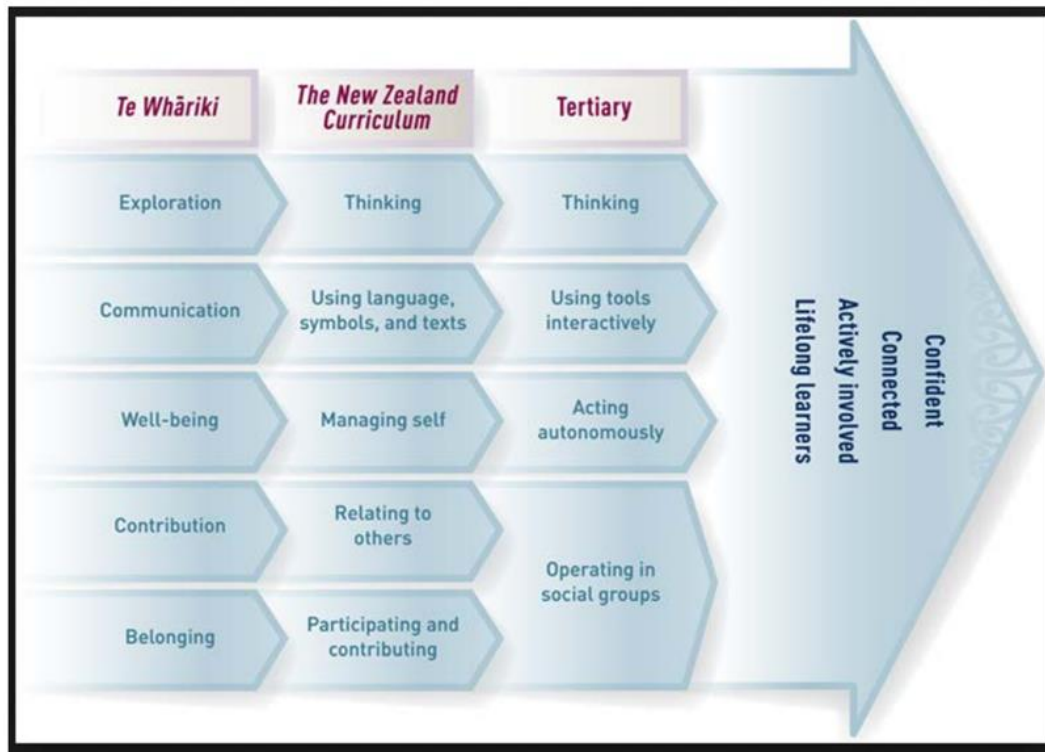
designers note that these are closest matches and not exact equivalents. One key difference is that in the NZC, thinking is a competency in its own right, whereas the OECD constructs thinking as a 'cross-cutting' ability.

Figure 22: OECD and NZ competencies compared

Thinking (cross-cutting)	Name given to competency by OECD	New Zealand Curriculum version
	Acting autonomously	Managing self
	Functioning in socially heterogenous groups	Relating to others Participating and contributing
	Using tools interactively	Using language, symbols and texts
		Thinking (not identified as cross-cutting)

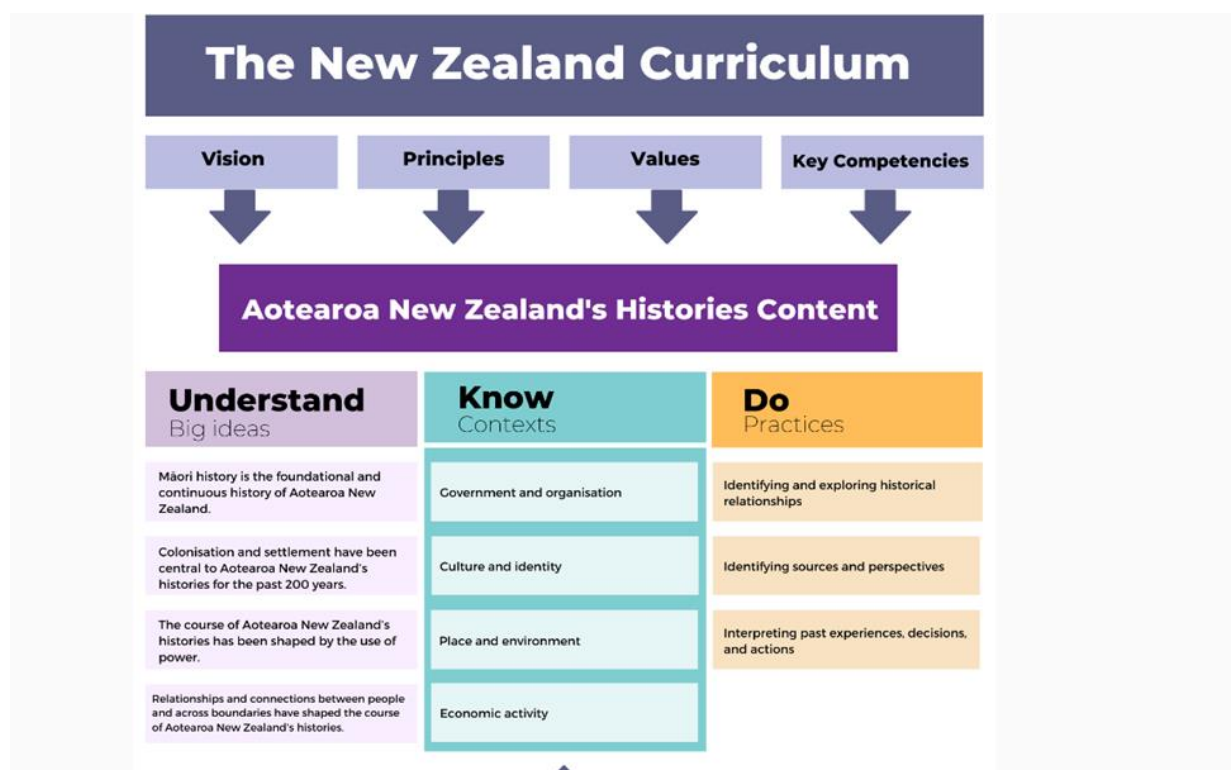
Moreover, the competencies are phrased differently according to which stage of education is being discussed. In Te Whāriki, the early years curriculum, 'belonging' is a competency. This changes to 'participating and contributing' in the 5-19 curriculum. This suggests something akin to a progression from a learner-centred to a social efficiency ideology as children move through the education system.

Figure 23: progression framework



The NZC is an Understand-Know-Do model, and bears similarities to the British Columbia approach (case study 3). The Understand-Know-Do approach is illustrated here in the new curriculum materials for Histories. Note the use of the plural, indicating that this construction of history is underpinned by dual (Māori and European-origin) epistemologies¹⁰⁰:

Figure 24: Framework for Histories



The above illustrates the refreshed NZC's post-colonial reimagining of history, using 'Big Ideas' and underpinned by both indigenous and non-indigenous epistemologies. The policy intention is that all students will learn both Aotearoa New Zealand's histories and Te Takanga o Te Wā (the Māori perspective on history).

Indigenous ontology informs many other aspects of the curriculum, with the 'front end' documents featuring terms such as rohe (districts), ākonga (learners) and 'Shared Kaupapa' (policy or in this context,

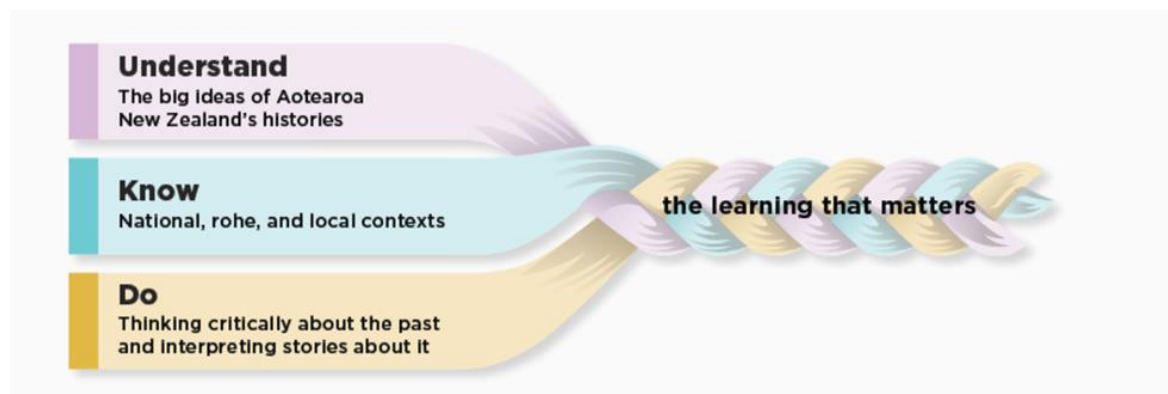
¹⁰⁰ <https://aotearoahistories.education.govt.nz/> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

curriculum), A new visualisation of the curriculum presents it as a 'three-strand whenu (cord). This korowai will be layered with huruhuru (feathers)¹⁰¹. The rationale is that:

Change is needed to ensure The New Zealand Curriculum:

- honours our obligations to Te Tiriti o Waitangi [Treaty of Waitangi]
- is inclusive,
- clear about the learning that matters for our ākonga,
- is easy to use.

Figure 25: Understand, Know, Do



Arguably, the bicultural curriculum is a more balanced and integrated model than the approaches taken in other post-colonial curriculum reframing projects such as that seen in Canada and in Australia.

Future directions

New Zealand, in common with many national curricula, is committed to a cycle of regular review, or a 'continuous and cyclical' refresh¹⁰². The latest version of the curriculum is being implemented in stages over the next four years. This makes it difficult to analyse what has already changed and what is still in progress.

¹⁰¹ https://curriculumrefresh-live-assetstorages3bucket-l5w0dsj7zmbm.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2022-09/MOE0038_Refresh_Booklet_v09_DIGITAL.pdf?VersionId=D8srztkEV2B1HPdOSaON94wC9CVUtV.M [Accessed: 23 April 2023]

¹⁰² <https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum#collapsible11> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Arguably, the NZ curriculum is a hybrid of social efficiency, social reconstruction, learner-centred and scholar academic ideologies. The 'refresh' follows in the wake of demands that the curriculum should have a greater focus on content (Hughson, 2022). It combines 21st century skill or knowledge economy priorities with ideas about child-centredness which derive from progressive education theories. While the previous iteration attempted to address biculturalism, the new version is a response to demands for a more active response to the colonial legacy (Hughson, 2022). The focus on knowledge reflects criticism mainly from business and academia that the curriculum has been 'hollowed out'. In this trajectory, competency-based curricula are reformed to reflect ideas about deep learning, while at the same time reprioritising knowledge. However, competency is not abandoned, as curricula retain the language of 21st century skills and 'Third Way' beliefs about the sort of people who should be produced through education systems. This trajectory can be identified elsewhere. For example, Alberta (Canada) is also undergoing a curriculum 'renewal' for K-6 which emphasises knowledge along with the skills deemed necessary for contemporary life:

K to 6 curriculum is founded on 4 key themes that span all grades: literacy, numeracy, citizenship and practical skills.

It will equip students with foundational reading, writing, and math skills, while introducing substantive studies on Albertan, Canadian, and world history.

There is an increased focus on the development of work ethic, civic participation and citizenship, financial literacy, digital training, public speaking, critical thinking, and respect for different views.

Students will have the essential knowledge, civic virtues and outcomes to succeed in school and throughout life¹⁰³.

¹⁰³ <https://www.alberta.ca/curriculum-key-themes.aspx> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Case study 6: Transnational curriculum the International Baccalaureate

Introduction

The International Baccalaureate¹⁰⁴ is a suite of four curriculum programmes for learners aged 3 to 19 which may only be taught within schools that have been authorised by the organisation. There are over 5,000 IB world schools and just under two million students in 160 countries following the programmes which are intended to:

encourage both personal development and academic achievement challenging students to think critically, to ask the right questions and think across disciplines. An IB education also fosters diversity, curiosity and a healthy appetite for learning.

<https://www.ibo.org/programmes/>

Historical context

The IB, founded in 1968 in Geneva, began as a diploma programme for higher secondary students with an emphasis on interdisciplinarity and multilingual education. It has since extended to cover the full breadth of schooling from primary to secondary. A core value of the IB is that students are required to learn at least two languages until mid-secondary and they must graduate with a second language (English or the language of instruction, plus another language). In 2012 a vocational programme was added for the higher secondary students which includes career related studies delivered in collaboration with an external provider. The mission statement aligns with those of political jurisdictions in its belief in the transformative power of education in a plural world:

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.¹⁰⁵

Current curriculum

This is a hybrid curriculum and strong claims are made for students' likely futures in higher education and the world of work. The emphasis on personal development which is achieved through significant self-directed learning and a wide range of assessment models means it aligns strongly with Schirpo's learner-centred ideology. The independent project requirement was perhaps the inspiration behind the introduction of an extended personal qualification in the English secondary curriculum. All the programmes are intended to be built around connected, conceptual knowledge and understanding.

At the primary phase the programme is taught as six interdisciplinary modules. In the middle years programme, the curriculum is divided into eight subject groups but there is also collaborative interdisciplinary learning and a significant individual interdisciplinary project. The diploma programme has six subject groups and three core elements for which perhaps the IB is most well-known: 1. theory of knowledge; 2. The extended essay; and 3. creativity, activity, service.¹⁰⁶ The vocational career related programme has academic and career related sections which are connected by core elements intended to provide a theory to practice bridge.

Throughout the curriculum there is an emphasis on intellectual rigour, international understanding and community connection through service learning. Unlike many national curricula there is minimal technical architecture of vision, aims, or pillars. In common with many national curricula, however, it also defines who the learner is, in this case through the ten attributes of the IB learner profile: inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective. Although the term 'competencies' is not used, the IB does articulate the need for skills through its 'Approaches to

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.ibo.org/globalassets/new-structure/about-the-ib/pdfs/what-is-an-ib-education-en.pdf> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/curriculum/> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

Learning' and 'Approaches to Teaching'¹⁰⁷. These run throughout the IB programme, and include concepts such as communication, collaboration, self-management skills, media literacy skills, thinking skills and transfer skills. These can be understood as underpinning all the subjects, and all teachers are expected to implement these skills in their classes. Arguably, the Approaches are compatible or synonymous with the idea of competencies, albeit using a different framing. For example, thinking skills are included as competencies in the curricula of South Korea, Iceland, Singapore, Alberta (Canada) and British Columbia (Canada), as outlined above.

Future directions

There are four contexts in which the IB seems likely to grow. Bunnell (2022) argues that the provision of international schools (many of which offer the IB) is currently expanding in two significant ways. First, in jurisdictions where the state is moving towards stronger control of the ideological basis of the curriculum, then international schools offer a more pluralist ethos. Second, while international schools used to predominantly serve an international elite and therefore educate mainly expatriates, there is a growing demand from local parents. The third site of growth is within state systems, where schools are given the autonomy to choose their curricula (e.g., academies in England). Finally, in 2022 a pilot online version of the Diploma Programme was launched and, if this is expanded, it will open up access to the IB for a range of students who are unable to attend schools.

As a not-for-profit independent organisation, the IB has no need to engage in international comparisons through PISA or TIMSS. It is an accepted and often sought-after entry qualification for higher education and has garnered considerable respect through the achievements of its alumni.

¹⁰⁷ <https://ibo.org/globalassets/new-structure/research/pdfs/approachestolearningeng.pdf> [Accessed: 20 April 2023]

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Appendix A: Methodology

The first stage in the research process was to issue a call to experts. UNESCO representatives across the world were emailed with a request for local documentation and recommendations for which jurisdictions might be appropriate to focus on. Members of the board of The Curriculum Journal were also approached for their views.

The next step involved searching for similar studies and meta reviews from transnational organisations, as well as academic sources. This process was supported by team discussions about early findings, and this led to the identification of a number of countries for further focus.

Countries in the same region and jurisdictions within the same country were then reviewed as comparators. If it was identified that some areas of the world were under-represented, countries from this area were then added in.

In total, 64 curricula were reviewed. Around 30 countries or jurisdictions are mentioned in the report. A list of curricula and links to documents is provided below.

To explore and develop the typologies in greater depth, some brief case studies were constructed. These comprise three countries, two jurisdictions within federalised countries, and one transnational organisation.

The report and the case studies underwent peer-review from the experts mentioned above, and curriculum specialists in the relevant countries and jurisdictions were approached for feedback. We are grateful for input from academics and regional experts to help us address any inaccuracies.

There are some important caveats which need to be acknowledged. Due to time and budget constraints, the research was limited to documents available in English. This led to significant problems in accessing documentation from some areas of the world, particularly central and southern America, where curricula documents are not typically made available in English. The research was highly dependent on the information made available by education ministries and published on their websites; some of this online material changed during the course of the study, resulting in documentation no longer being available. Further, the information on these websites is not always fully updated to reflect very recent changes to curricula. In some contexts changes were being planned while we were compiling this report. We were not able to present such proposals because they were not available in official documentation at the time of writing.

Another issue is the amount of variation between countries with regards to the information that is available at the macro level. Some countries make all curriculum documents publicly accessible and have

dedicated websites to host and present this information, whereas other countries and jurisdictions only make high-level documents available. While these set out the policy vision and aims, they often lack detail about the technical architecture of the curriculum. The selection of case studies was informed by the availability of specific information about the workings of the curricula at different levels of school education.

Local experts (Pers. Comm.) have cautioned that the implementation of curricula, and of routes through the different stages of education, are often more complex than the information and diagrams on official websites suggest. It is important to note that curricula are subject to ongoing review and amendment. The case of Singapore, for example, supports our view (see pp.5-6) that high level policy is not necessarily a good guide to what is happening in schools. Empirical research is needed if we are to know more about how policy is enacted at the meso and nano levels.

List of countries and jurisdictions

Country or jurisdiction	Links to documents
Alberta	https://curriculum.learnalberta.ca/home/en
Australia	https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/about-the-australian-curriculum/
Belize	https://www.moe.gov.bz/resources/education-curriculum/
Brazil	http://basenacionalcomum.mec.gov.br/a-base
British Columbia	https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/resources-for-teachers/curriculum
Canada	https://libguides.msvu.ca/c.php?g=114528&p=745441
Cambodia	http://moeys.gov.kh/en/
China	www.moe.gov.cn
Denmark	https://eng.uvm.dk/primary-and-lower-secondary-education/the-folkeskole/subjects-and-curriculum
Egypt	https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-3-030-93951-9_3.pdf https://www.egypteducation.info/k-12/egypt-k-12-education-system.html#:~:text=The%20Egyptian%20education%20system%20follows,awarded%20a%20Basic%20Education%20Certificate.
Estonia	https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/524092014014/consolide

Estonia	https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/haridusvaldkonna_arengukava_2035_kinnitaud_vv_eng.pdf https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/524092014009/consolide
Finland	https://www.oph.fi/en/education-and-qualifications/national-core-curriculum-basic-education
Ghana	https://nacca.gov.gh
Germany	https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=DEU
Hong Kong	https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/renewal/framework.html
Hungary	https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=HUN#
Iceland	https://www.government.is/topics/education/curriculum/
India	https://dsel.education.gov.in/ https://www.education.gov.in/shikshakparv/docs/background_note_NCF.pdf
Iran	http://en.oerp.ir/sites/en.oerp.ir/files/sandtahavol.pdf http://en.oerp.ir/sites/en.oerp.ir/files/sanadbarnamedarsi.pdf
Ireland	https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Home/
Italy	https://www.miur.gov.it/
Jamaica	https://moey.gov.jm/curriculum/
Japan	https://www.mext.go.jp/en/policy/education/elsec/title02/detail02/1373859.htm https://www.mext.go.jp/en/policy/education/brochure/title01/detail01/___icsFiles/afieldfile/2018/10/09/1409899-01.pdf https://www.mext.go.jp/en/policy/education/lawandplan/title01/detail01/1373799.html
Jordan	https://www.qrf.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/curriculum_and_student_assessment_brief_en_condensed.pdf
Kazakhstan	https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/edu?lang=en
Kosovo	https://masht.rks-gov.net/en/ministry/education/
Laos	http://www.moes.edu.la/
Latvia	School2030 initiative developed "transversal competences"
Libya	http://www.ibe.unesco.org/sites/default/files/Libyan_Arab_Jamahiriya.pdf https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/country_plan_libya.pdf
Lithuania	https://www.mokykla2030.lt/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Guidelines-for-updating-the-general-curriculum-framework.pdf
Malaysia	https://www.moe.gov.my/en/education
Malawi	https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2008-Malawi-Education-Sector-Plans-2008-2017.pdf
Manitoba	https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/index.html
Mexico	https://www.sep.gob.mx/

Netherlands	https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-education-culture-and-science
New Brunswick	https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/education.html
New South Wales	https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum
New Zealand	https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum
Norway	https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/education/id930/
Nunavut	https://www.gov.nu.ca/education/curriculum/database
Ontario	https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/
Philippines	https://www.deped.gov.ph/k-to-12/about/k-to-12-basic-education-curriculum/
Poland	https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=POL# https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka
Portugal	https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=PRT
Prince Edward Island	https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/education-and-lifelong-learning
Quebec	http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/enseignants/programmes-detudes/
Queensland	https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/p-10/aciq
Rwanda	https://stir.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/UNESCOproject/Shared%20Documents/General/Curriculum%20documents/Rwanda/Rwanda%20-%20NCF/CURRICULUM_FRAMEWORK_FINAL.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=3poRsE
Saskatchewan	https://www.edonline.sk.ca/ultra/institution-page
Saudi Arabia	https://etec.gov.sa/ar/productsandservices/NCSEE/Cevaluation/Documents/English%20Book.pdf
Singapore	https://www.moe.gov.sg/education-in-sg
Slovenia	https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MIZS/Dokumenti/ENIC-NARIC-center/The-Education-System-in-the-Republic-of-Slovenia-2018-19.pdf
South Australia	https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/education-and-learning/curriculum-and-learning/south-australian-curriculum
South Korea	http://english.moe.go.kr/sub/infoRenewal.do?m=0301&page=0301&s=english
Sweden	https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.31c292d516e7445866a218f/1576654682907/pdf3984.pdf
Tanzania	https://www.tie.go.tz/

Thailand	https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-in-thailand/thailand-s-education-curriculum_9789264259119-7-en and https://www.moe.go.th/
UAE	https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/education
USA	http://www.corestandards.org/
Victoria	https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/
Western Australia	https://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/
Yukon	https://yukon.ca/en/education-and-schools/curriculum
Zimbabwe	http://mopse.co.zw/sites/default/files/public/downloads/Zim_Curriculum_Framework.pdf