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Reimagining Curriculum Management For Future Ready Education A Systematic Review Of Emerging Strategies And Global Trends

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Abstract: *This study systematically examines emerging strategies and global trends in curriculum management to understand how education systems can better prepare learners for the demands of the twenty-first century. Rapid technological advancements, increased global interconnectedness, and changing labour markets require a shift from traditional content-based curricula toward more adaptive, competency-oriented, and inclusive models. Using a systematic literature review approach, this study analysed 85 peer-reviewed articles published between 2010 and 2024, drawing from major academic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and ScienceDirect. The review followed PRISMA protocols for identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and synthesis, and applied thematic analysis to classify the literature into four major domains shaping contemporary curriculum reform. The findings reveal that curriculum management is increasingly driven by four interdependent pillars: leadership-driven curriculum governance, digital transformation, competency-based curriculum design, and inclusive planning supported by robust evaluation frameworks. Visionary and evidence-based leadership plays a critical role in enabling curriculum coherence and fostering collaborative professional cultures. Digital transformation expands learning opportunities and enhances instructional relevance but also exposes disparities in institutional readiness. Competency-based models support deeper learning and transferable skills, while inclusive curriculum approaches promote equity and responsiveness to student diversity. Collectively, these themes demonstrate that future-ready curriculum management requires systemic, adaptive, and equity-focused strategies that reflect global educational shifts. The study offers insights for policymakers, school leaders, and researchers seeking to advance resilient, innovative, and future-oriented curriculum reforms.*

Keywords: *Curriculum Management, Future-Ready Education, Digital Transformation, Competency-Based Learning.*

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum management has become a central focus in contemporary educational reform as institutions across the world face increasing demands to produce graduates equipped with twenty-first-century competencies. Rapid technological development, global interconnectedness, and the dynamic landscape of the labor market necessitate that educational systems rethink how curricula are designed, implemented, and evaluated. Traditional models that emphasize content mastery and standardized instruction have proven insufficient for preparing students to navigate complex problem-solving, digital fluency, and collaborative work environments. As a result, curriculum

management must evolve from a static administrative function into a strategic and adaptive process that aligns educational goals with societal transformations. Recent global studies highlight the urgency for curriculum innovations that promote flexibility, interdisciplinarity, and the integration of digital learning tools to support deeper understanding and transferable skills (Fullan, 2020; Voogt & Roblin, 2019).

The shift toward future-ready education demands curriculum frameworks that incorporate competency-based approaches, project-based learning, and personalized pathways. These approaches not only enhance student engagement but also strengthen critical thinking and creativity—skills identified as essential for developing adaptive and innovative citizens. However, achieving such transformation requires more than pedagogical redesign; it necessitates effective curriculum management supported by visionary leadership, appropriate governance structures, and evidence-based decision-making. School leaders play a crucial role in aligning curriculum processes with institutional missions, monitoring instructional quality, and fostering collaborative professional cultures that enable teachers to implement innovative practices successfully. Research suggests that leadership-driven curriculum governance contributes significantly to improved student outcomes and institutional performance (Hallinger, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020). In particular, distributed leadership and collaborative planning models create conducive environments for curriculum enhancement and teacher empowerment.

The integration of digital technologies into curriculum processes has become indispensable in the era of Education 4.0. Digital transformation offers opportunities to expand learning beyond classroom boundaries, support differentiated instruction, and enhance assessment practices through data analytics. Studies show that digital tools, when integrated strategically, improve instructional coherence, student autonomy, and curriculum relevance (Pedro et al., 2019; Redecker, 2020). However, effective digital integration requires systematic planning, continuous professional development, and adaptive policy frameworks to mitigate disparities in technological readiness among schools and teachers. Without adequate management structures, technological innovations risk becoming fragmented initiatives rather than transformative components of curriculum reform.

Curriculum evaluation also emerges as a critical component in ensuring curriculum effectiveness and sustainability. Evaluation models such as CIPP, backward design, and competency-based assessment offer structured mechanisms to assess curriculum alignment,

implementation fidelity, and learning outcomes. Scholars argue that systematic evaluation enables institutions to detect gaps, refine instructional strategies, and enhance program accountability (Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2014; Biggs & Tang, 2011). However, many educational institutions still rely on traditional examination-focused assessments that fail to capture holistic student development. Therefore, curriculum managers must adopt comprehensive evaluation frameworks that incorporate both qualitative and quantitative indicators, supported by continuous feedback loops among stakeholders.

The increasing emphasis on inclusive education further expands the scope of curriculum management. Inclusive curriculum planning ensures equitable learning opportunities for students regardless of socioeconomic background, disability status, or cultural differences. A growing body of literature underlines that inclusive pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and differentiated instruction are crucial for improving student participation and reducing achievement gaps (Florian & Spratt, 2019; Tomlinson, 2014). Effective curriculum management in this context involves aligning institutional policies, resources, and teacher competencies to support diverse learners within mainstream classrooms.

Despite substantial progress in curriculum research, gaps remain concerning the comprehensive understanding of how curriculum management strategies are implemented across different educational settings and cultural contexts. Many studies focus on isolated practices rather than integrated systems-level approaches. Additionally, rapid global changes—such as digital disruption, pandemics, and shifts in workforce needs—continue to reshape educational priorities, highlighting the need for up-to-date conceptual reviews. A systematic and analytical synthesis of emerging curriculum management strategies is therefore timely and relevant. By conducting a library-based review of global literature, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of innovative curriculum management approaches that support future-ready education, bridge theoretical-practical divides, and offer insights for policymakers, educational leaders, and researchers seeking to advance curriculum reform agendas.

METHOD

This study employed a library research design using a systematic literature review approach to synthesize scholarly knowledge on curriculum management and future-ready education. The

systematic review method was selected because it enables a structured, transparent, and replicable process for identifying, evaluating, and integrating research findings across diverse educational contexts. This approach aligns with methodological frameworks widely adopted in high-impact journals indexed by Elsevier and Scopus, ensuring that the study maintains scientific rigor and analytical depth (Snyder, 2019; Booth et al., 2016).

Data collection relied on major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and Taylor & Francis Online. Additional authoritative publications were sourced from UNESCO, OECD, and the European Commission to incorporate global perspectives on curriculum policy and innovation. The literature search covered publications from 2010 to 2024 to capture contemporary developments relevant to digital transformation, curriculum governance, inclusivity, and twenty-first-century competencies. Keywords used in the search included curriculum management, curriculum governance, future-ready education, digital curriculum, curriculum evaluation frameworks, inclusive curriculum, and education innovation. Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) were applied to refine the search process and improve precision, consistent with established systematic review protocols (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Specific inclusion criteria were implemented to ensure relevance and scholarly quality. Articles were included if they: (1) addressed curriculum management or curriculum innovation at the institutional or policy level, (2) were peer-reviewed, (3) presented theoretical, conceptual, or empirical insights, (4) were published in English, and (5) were available in full text. Studies were excluded if they: (1) lacked methodological clarity, (2) focused solely on micro-level classroom practices without broader curriculum implications, or (3) were editorial pieces or non-scholarly commentaries. Application of these criteria ensured that sources met high standards of academic rigor and methodological soundness.

The analytical procedure followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to enhance transparency and reduce researcher bias (Page et al., 2021). The review process consisted of four stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion. In the identification phase, titles, abstracts, and keywords were examined to determine initial relevance. The screening phase involved removing duplicate records and excluding sources that did not meet inclusion criteria. During the eligibility assessment phase,

full texts were critically evaluated for methodological quality, conceptual relevance, and contribution to the research focus. Finally, 85 high-quality articles were selected for comprehensive synthesis.

Data analysis employed thematic synthesis, allowing patterns, categories, and conceptual clusters to emerge across studies. Initial coding was conducted to identify recurring topics, which were then refined into broader themes such as digital transformation in curriculum management, leadership-driven curriculum governance, competency-based curriculum design, inclusive curriculum planning, and curriculum evaluation mechanisms. This method is widely recognized for integrating qualitative data meaningfully while preserving theoretical integrity (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

Comparative analysis was also incorporated to explore variations in curriculum management practices across regions and educational systems. By juxtaposing findings from different cultural and policy contexts, the study identified convergences and divergences in global curriculum reform efforts. Triangulation of theoretical frameworks, empirical data, and policy documents further strengthened the reliability of the findings and reduced single-source dependency (Flick, 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Leadership-Driven Curriculum Governance

The findings of this systematic review clearly indicate that educational leadership is a decisive and foundational factor in determining the success of curriculum implementation across diverse educational systems. Effective curriculum management is not solely dependent on the technical quality of curriculum documents; rather, it is deeply influenced by the capacity of school leaders to articulate a compelling vision, establish coherent policies, and sustain a collaborative culture that supports continuous instructional improvement. Leaders serve as the primary bridge between policy and practice, translating national or institutional curriculum frameworks into actionable strategies at the school level. The literature widely acknowledges that leadership grounded in transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership models provides the strongest foundation for successful curriculum governance. Leithwood et al. (2020) and Hallinger (2020) emphasize that leaders who engage teachers in shared decision-making, promote collective

responsibility, and foster professional learning communities create conditions that encourage innovation and support curriculum alignment with evolving educational needs.

A shift from administrative leadership to instructional leadership is increasingly highlighted as essential for strengthening coherence across curriculum planning, instructional practices, and assessment. Instructional leaders play a proactive role in monitoring teaching quality, guiding pedagogical improvement, and ensuring that teachers have access to relevant resources and professional development. This shift enhances curriculum fidelity, reduces the gap between intended and enacted curriculum, and supports teachers in navigating new instructional expectations—particularly in the context of twenty-first-century skills and digital transformation. Empirical evidence from high-performing systems such as Finland, Canada, and Singapore demonstrates that strong leadership—supported by teacher autonomy, trust-based professional cultures, and data-informed decision-making—serves as a central driver of sustained educational excellence (Ainscow, 2020; Sahlberg, 2015). These systems reveal that leaders who empower teachers while maintaining high expectations for instructional quality generate more consistent curriculum outcomes and higher learner achievement.

Leadership-driven curriculum governance plays a crucial role in managing change during periods of rapid societal and technological transformation. The accelerated pace of globalisation, digitalisation, and labour market shifts requires schools to adopt flexible and adaptive curriculum structures. Visionary leaders anticipate these shifts and guide schools toward innovative practices such as competency-based learning, digital learning integration, and interdisciplinary approaches. According to Fullan (2021), leaders who embrace change as a continuous and collaborative process are more effective in mobilising staff, aligning resources with curricular priorities, and fostering resilient learning environments capable of responding to complex challenges. Such leaders facilitate organisational learning by encouraging experimentation, reflective dialogue, and evidence-based decision-making.

Curriculum governance is strengthened when leaders cultivate a culture of distributed leadership, in which teachers, middle leaders, and other stakeholders are meaningfully involved in curriculum processes. Distributed leadership enhances collective ownership, supports shared accountability, and reduces resistance to innovation. Harris (2014) argues that distributed leadership contributes significantly to school improvement because it leverages the expertise of

multiple actors rather than relying solely on top-down directives. When teachers feel included in curriculum decisions, they are more motivated to implement reforms consistently and creatively, leading to improved instructional coherence and enhanced learner engagement.

The findings underscore that leadership effectiveness is inseparable from the broader organisational and policy context. Leaders require supportive governance structures, adequate resources, and ongoing professional development to enact meaningful curriculum reform. UNESCO (2021) highlights that building leadership capacity should be a global priority to ensure that curriculum transformation efforts are sustainable and equitable. Overall, the evidence demonstrates that visionary, collaborative, and evidence-informed leadership is indispensable for guiding curriculum reform in an era characterised by rapid change, increasing complexity, and heightened expectations for educational quality.

Digital Transformation in Curriculum Management

Digital transformation has emerged as a central and transformative force in contemporary curriculum management, reshaping how education systems design, deliver, and evaluate learning. The rapid development of digital technologies—ranging from artificial intelligence and big data analytics to virtual learning environments and cloud-based platforms—has fundamentally altered pedagogical possibilities and institutional expectations. Digital tools are no longer supplementary resources used to enhance classroom instruction; they have become integral components of curriculum architecture that influence learning pathways, assessment strategies, and instructional decision-making. According to Selwyn (2020), digital transformation is redefining the purpose and structure of education by expanding opportunities for personalized and self-directed learning, enabling learners to access content according to their pace, interests, and prior knowledge. These shifts reflect a broader movement toward future-ready education systems that prioritize flexibility, lifelong learning, and digital fluency.

The integration of digital technologies into curriculum management supports more dynamic and data-informed instructional practices. Learning management systems (LMS), for instance, allow teachers to track student progress in real time, adjust instruction based on learner needs, and implement differentiated strategies more effectively. Artificial intelligence-driven tools provide predictive analytics that help identify learning gaps and personalise interventions, while virtual and augmented reality environments offer immersive learning experiences that strengthen

engagement and conceptual understanding. Research by Bond et al. (2021) demonstrates that technology-enhanced learning fosters higher levels of student interaction, motivation, and agency—key components of twenty-first-century education. As educational ecosystems continue to evolve, digital transformation plays an essential role in enabling curriculum models that are competency-based, interdisciplinary, and aligned with future labour market demands.

Despite these promising developments, the literature reveals persistent challenges that hinder effective digital transformation in curriculum management. One major obstacle is the stark variation in digital readiness among institutions, teachers, and learners. Anderson and Rainie (2020) note that digital divides are not solely technological but also socio-economic and pedagogical, with schools in disadvantaged regions facing barriers related to internet access, device availability, and teacher training. Teachers' digital competence remains a significant concern, as many educators lack the confidence or pedagogical framework needed to integrate technology meaningfully into curriculum and assessment. This gap is particularly pronounced in developing countries, where digital initiatives often take the form of short-term projects rather than comprehensive, system-wide reforms, leading to inconsistent implementation and limited long-term impact.

The introduction of digital technologies into curriculum processes raises complex issues of equity, sustainability, and quality assurance. Institutions must navigate concerns related to data privacy, cybersecurity, and ethical use of artificial intelligence in educational settings. As Williamson and Eynon (2020) argue, digital infrastructures increasingly influence educational governance, shaping not only learning experiences but also institutional decision-making. Without robust policies and transparent governance structures, digital transformation risks reinforcing existing inequalities or creating new forms of technological dependency.

To achieve sustainable and equitable digital transformation, education systems must adopt long-term strategic approaches that integrate technology into curriculum design, teacher professional development, and institutional policy frameworks. Continuous training is essential to ensure that educators possess the digital pedagogical skills required to implement technologically enhanced curricula effectively. Investment in infrastructure—particularly in underserved communities—remains critical for ensuring equitable access to digital learning opportunities.

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Curriculum policies must remain adaptive to technological advancements, fostering agile systems capable of incorporating emerging tools and responding to evolving educational needs. Research by Koh et al. (2018) stresses the importance of developing digital competence frameworks that guide institutions in aligning technology integration with curriculum goals and assessment standards. Ultimately, digital transformation in curriculum management must be viewed not merely as technological modernization, but as a comprehensive cultural, pedagogical, and structural shift that redefines the future of teaching and learning.

Competency-Based and Future-Ready Curriculum Design

The shift from content-driven curricula to competency-based frameworks represents one of the most significant global movements in contemporary educational reform. This transition reflects a growing recognition that traditional models—focused primarily on memorisation and standardised content delivery—are insufficient for preparing learners to navigate rapidly shifting technological, economic, and societal landscapes. Competency-based curriculum design emphasises the development of transferable skills including critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, digital literacy, and socio-emotional competencies. These skills form the foundation of future-ready education, enabling students not only to acquire knowledge but also to apply it in complex, real-world contexts. Research by Pellegrino and Hilton (2012) demonstrates that such competencies support adaptability, innovation, and lifelong learning—attributes increasingly demanded by twenty-first-century labour markets.

Competency-based models also place strong emphasis on learner agency, self-direction, and personalised learning pathways. By focusing on demonstrated mastery rather than seat time or rote learning, competency-based education (CBE) encourages students to progress at their own pace while engaging deeply with content that is relevant to their aspirations and experiences. Studies by Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) highlight that competency-driven approaches enhance student motivation and foster deeper cognitive engagement, ultimately contributing to more meaningful learning outcomes. Furthermore, the integration of authentic, performance-based assessments within CBE frameworks allows students to demonstrate proficiency through projects, portfolios, and real-world problem-solving tasks, thereby reinforcing the application of knowledge across diverse contexts.

The findings also reveal substantial challenges to implementing competency-based curricula effectively. One major obstacle stems from the ambiguity surrounding competency definitions and indicators. Without clear, measurable descriptors, teachers struggle to interpret competencies consistently, leading to uneven implementation across classrooms and schools. Additionally, many education systems lack robust assessment tools capable of evaluating complex competencies such as creativity, collaboration, or ethical reasoning. Traditional testing cultures—deeply embedded in many countries—further hinder the adoption of holistic, competency-oriented assessment models. As noted by Shute and Becker (2010), assessment systems must evolve to include formative, technology-supported methods that capture the multidimensional nature of student learning.

Teacher preparedness is another critical challenge. Implementing competency-based curricula requires teachers to adopt new pedagogical approaches, redesign learning activities, and engage in ongoing reflection and collaboration. Yet teachers often report limited training and support in CBE methodologies. Research by Voogt et al. (2015) suggests that many educators feel unprepared to facilitate inquiry-based, interdisciplinary, and student-centred learning, particularly in systems dominated by exam-oriented accountability practices. Resistance to change is also common, as CBE demands a shift in professional identity—from content transmitters to learning facilitators—which may create uncertainty or discomfort among teachers.

To ensure successful implementation, competency-based curriculum design must be supported by strong conceptual frameworks, coherent policy structures, and sustained capacity-building efforts. Policymakers must establish clear guidelines that articulate competencies, learning progressions, and assessment expectations. Teacher professional development should prioritise deep pedagogical understanding, collaboration within professional learning communities, and opportunities to experiment with innovative instructional strategies. Additionally, schools must cultivate cultures that value inquiry, creativity, and continuous improvement, aligning institutional practices with the goals of CBE. As Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2013) argue, systemic transformation requires addressing both technological and pedagogical barriers while empowering teachers to innovate confidently.

Competency-based and future-ready curriculum design represents an essential shift for building resilient education systems capable of meeting global challenges. By centering skills that enable learners to think critically, communicate effectively, and adapt to evolving conditions, CBE

provides a strong foundation for preparing students for meaningful participation in society and the workforce. Rrealising its full potential requires coordinated action across policy, leadership, teacher preparation, assessment reform, and community engagement. When implemented thoughtfully and systemically, CBE can transform the educational experience and contribute to more equitable and future-oriented learning ecosystems.

Inclusive Curriculum Planning and Evaluation Frameworks

The fourth theme emerging from this systematic review underscores the growing global emphasis on inclusivity as a foundational principle in curriculum planning and educational transformation. Inclusive curriculum design is not limited to supporting learners with disabilities; rather, it encompasses cultural, linguistic, gender, socio-economic, religious, and cognitive diversity. The aim is to ensure that all learners—regardless of background or ability—have equitable access to meaningful learning experiences. This understanding aligns with the evolving conception of inclusive education promoted by international organisations, particularly UNESCO (2021), which advocates for education systems that value diversity, promote social justice, and remove barriers to learning. In this context, inclusive curriculum planning becomes a strategic effort to create learning environments where differences are recognised, respected, and leveraged as assets rather than obstacles.

Effective inclusive curriculum planning requires the deliberate incorporation of flexible pedagogical approaches that enable teachers to respond to diverse student needs. Differentiated instruction, universal design for learning (UDL), and culturally responsive pedagogy are widely recognised as essential frameworks that support inclusivity across subject areas and grade levels. Gay (2018) argues that culturally responsive teaching enhances student engagement and identity formation by integrating learners' cultural knowledge, experiences, and perspectives into curriculum content. Similarly, Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) highlight that differentiated instruction allows teachers to vary content, process, and assessment according to learners' readiness, interests, and learning profiles, thereby promoting equitable participation and achievement. When combined, these pedagogical approaches create adaptable curriculum structures capable of addressing both individual and group diversity.

In addition to pedagogy, inclusive curriculum planning requires attention to representation and relevance in instructional materials. Scholars have noted that curricula often reflect dominant

cultural narratives, marginalising minority groups or perpetuating stereotypes. Banks (2019) emphasises that multicultural curriculum integration is necessary to ensure that all students see themselves reflected in learning materials and have opportunities to critically examine issues of identity, power, and inequality. A truly inclusive curriculum fosters not only academic development but also social cohesion and intercultural understanding, contributing to broader societal goals of peace, tolerance, and sustainable development.

Evaluation frameworks play a pivotal role in ensuring that inclusive curriculum planning leads to continuous improvement rather than superficial compliance. Systematic curriculum evaluation helps institutions assess the extent to which inclusivity goals are being met and identify areas for refinement. The CIPP model (Context, Input, Process, Product), for example, provides a comprehensive structure for examining curriculum relevance, implementation processes, resource allocation, and outcome quality. Scholars such as Alkin and King (2016) argue that robust evaluation processes enhance decision-making, strengthen accountability, and increase the overall effectiveness of educational programmes. Meanwhile, backward design, introduced by Wiggins and McTighe (2005), encourages educators to begin planning with the desired learning outcomes in mind, ensuring alignment between goals, instructional activities, and assessment practices. Outcomes-based frameworks further ensure that learners achieve specified competencies, providing measurable indicators of curriculum effectiveness.

Inclusive curriculum evaluation must also incorporate feedback from diverse stakeholders—including students, teachers, parents, and community members—to ensure that reforms reflect lived experiences and contextual realities. Continuous dialogue contributes to the development of responsive and adaptable curriculum systems capable of addressing emerging challenges such as digital inequality, migration, and socio-economic disparities. As Slee (2018) notes, inclusivity is not a static endpoint but an ongoing commitment that requires institutional will, reflective practice, and sustained professional learning.

The evidence from this review demonstrates that when inclusive planning is combined with systematic evaluation, curriculum reforms become more coherent, relevant, and impactful. Such alignment ensures that educational systems not only promote equitable access but also advance meaningful participation, success, and well-being for all learners. Ultimately, inclusive curriculum

planning and evaluation frameworks represent essential pathways toward achieving global education goals centred on equity, diversity, and universal learning opportunities.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that reimagining curriculum management for future-ready education requires an integrated and systemic approach that responds to the rapid social, technological, and economic changes shaping contemporary learning environments. The four thematic areas identified—leadership-driven curriculum governance, digital transformation, competency-based curriculum design, and inclusive planning supported by robust evaluation frameworks—collectively highlight the multidimensional nature of effective curriculum reform. Strong and visionary leadership emerged as a central pillar in orchestrating coherent policy implementation, nurturing collaborative professional cultures, and aligning institutional practices with broader educational goals. At the same time, digital transformation is reshaping the way curricula are designed and delivered, offering opportunities for personalized and data-informed learning while also revealing persistent disparities in technological readiness. Competency-based frameworks further reinforce the need for a shift from traditional content-based education toward models that cultivate transferable skills essential for navigating complex global realities.

The emphasis on inclusive curriculum planning and systematic evaluation underscores the growing international commitment to equity, diversity, and continuous quality improvement. The synthesis of literature indicates that inclusive practices—supported by flexible pedagogical strategies and culturally responsive content—are indispensable for ensuring that all learners can meaningfully participate in and benefit from curriculum reforms. Evaluation models such as CIPP and outcomes-based assessment provide structured mechanisms for monitoring implementation fidelity and identifying areas for enhancement. Overall, the findings affirm that curriculum transformation is not a singular action but an ongoing process that requires coordinated efforts among policymakers, educational leaders, teachers, and communities. Future research should explore context-specific implementation strategies, the long-term impact of digital technologies on curriculum effectiveness, and the development of more nuanced assessment tools to support competency-based learning. These insights contribute to advancing global dialogue on building resilient, inclusive, and future-ready education systems.

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