



Curriculum Changes in Kenya Since Independence and School Preparedness in Implementation of Competency Based Curriculum

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Education is an important tool for attaining greater autonomy, empowering people, and closing gender inequities in the allocation of opportunities and resources. This review aims to highlight the curriculum changes in Kenya since independence and school preparedness in implementation of competency based curriculum. Education and training for all Kenyans is critical to the achievement of the government's overall development goal. Kenya has made significant educational progress since independence in terms of adherence to education declarations. Kenyans are critical to the success of the government's overall development strategy.

Keywords: *Curriculum reform; labour productivity; competency based curriculum; community interactions.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Education is fundamental to development of human resource capacities for sustainable economic growth and development. There is a strong belief in the power of education in promotion of economic and social progress. Imparting new skills and knowledge in people through education, expands human capabilities, increases labour productivity and enhances essential participation and partnership in nation building”. (World Development Report, 2000/2001). “Education is also a vital tool in achieving greater autonomy, empowerment of the people and addressing gender gaps in the distribution of opportunities and resources” [1]. This gives the central role that education plays in every country’s development.

“Learning remains one of the most critical assets for any country to promote equitable growth and poverty reduction, and that cannot happen without a solid foundation, said Pedro Cerdan-Infantes, World Bank Senior Economist. However, the Education sector faces treacherous sources of inequality, including uneven quality of school leavers, results and unemployment. These problems are attributed to the education curriculums that Kenya has been having since independence.

The right to education is anchored in two universally accepted declarations, the Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2015, later refocused in Education for All (EFA), as articulated in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 and reaffirmed at the Dakar (Senegal) World Education Forum in April 2000. In September 2000, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Millennium Declaration to achieve universal completion of primary schooling and achieve equity and access to primary and secondary schooling by 2005 and at all levels by 2015. In compliance with education declarations, Kenya declared free primary education (FPE) in 2002.

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

“Provision of education and training of all Kenyans is fundamental to the success of the government’s overall developmental strategy. Development of quality human resource is equated to the education curriculum offered in learning institutions. This is central to the attainment of the national goals and achievement of the millennium development goals in the

country” (EFA Global Monitoring, 2004). This can only be achieved through a thoroughly researched and developed curriculum. Curriculum that provides solutions to problems and develop the self in the learners. Curriculum that is coupled with the necessary teaching and learning resources, adequate teaching personnel, considering the teacher-child ratio and the teaching environment.

The later “Education for All” led to increase in Gross enrolment rate (GER) in primary schools rising from 50% in 1963 to 104% in 2002 after the implementation of Free Primary Education. The country’s GER in pre-school education marked a remarkable 40% in 2001 higher than the median of sub-Saharan Africa (5.8%) and compared with developing countries at 35%. (MOE, 2004).

The share of the government budget on education also increased, reaching 19% in 2020. Education spending per capita is relatively high compared to countries in the region, a factor that the report highlights as key to quality education in terms of adequate resources to achieve sector objectives, allocating resources more equitably particularly development spending, teachers and school capitation grants.

3. CURRICULUM CHANGES IN KENYA SINCE INDEPENDENCE AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

Introduction of Curriculum reforms in education is a worldwide-practiced phenomenon that strives for better educational practices in line with the demands of the twenty-first-century, need for knowledge, economic demands and the ever emerging challenges in the world. The African countries inherited the colonial education system after their independence, education that was discriminative and which demanded realignment to societal and cultural demands of the African nations. Coincidentally, inherited curriculum by the African nations adopted the content or knowledge-based approach which was too academic and dissatisfying to most of the needs of the African countries, Kenya inclusive.

To date, many African countries are still struggling to be at the same level with the international standards in curriculum development and implementation. Kenya and Tanzania for example adopted curriculums with the philosophy of education based on self-reliance, but due to the inadequately trained

teachers and insufficient resources, it ended up being too examinable and losing its goals. Poor implementation of the curriculum was further hindered by lack of skills and knowledge in the applicability of knowledge as required by the economic sector. All this leads to curriculum development without considering the preparedness of the implementers and the necessary resources, Momanyi, Rop P.K [2]. This could lead to unemployment, increased vices, and rampant dropouts, among other factors.

3.1 7-4-2-3 Curriculum

“Kenya has maneuvered through three education curriculums since independence in 1963 all aimed at guiding the education system in Kenya. From 1964 to 1985 the 7-4-2-3 curriculum of education was introduced. The system structure represented 7 years of primary education, 4 years of secondary education, 2 years of high school and 3–5 years of university education. The curriculum lasted for 20 years.

According to analysts, the 7-4-2-3 system of education lacked the capacity and flexibility to respond to the changing aspirations of individual Kenyans and meeting the labor market needs in terms of new skills, new technologies and the attitude to work” [3]. According to Simuyu [4], the 7-4-2-3 policy was criticized as being too academic and unsuitable and lacking orientation to direct employment.

“Gachathi Report [5] raised the issue of unemployment among many school leavers from the enormous expansion of education. Further call for change of educational policy was by the Kenya National Assembly’s Select Committee on unemployment (1970) as cited in Maleche [6] as the medium for social mobility and national economic development as the existing one had failed to deliver. He argued that the call for reforms in the 7-4-2-3 system of education in Kenya was widespread and based on the perceived weakness of such” [3] as cited by Wycliffe, [7]. The change consisted of increasing the technical and vocational aspects of the curriculum. This move towards vocational zing the education system worn support from the World Bank and 8-4-4 Education System was implemented.

The 8-4-4 curriculum of education was introduced in January 1985. The structure of 8-4-4 is divided into eight years of primary schooling,

four years of secondary and four years of university education excluding the pre-school years. This followed the MacKay report of 1982. King and McGrath [8] claims that the 8-4-4 policy arose from concerns that basic academic education lacked the necessary content to promote sustainable self-employment. The assumptions was that 8-4-4 would equip pupils with employable skills for self-employment or secure employment in the informal sector

According to Sifuna [9], three events led to the implementation of 8-4-4 system; the 1996 conference on education at Kericho in Kenya, which stressed the need for integration of rural development, the International Labour Organization mission report entitled “Employed, Incomes and Equality: A strategy for increasing Productive Employment of 1972; “and the recommendation of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies of 1975.

“The 8-4-4 policy has been described as major educational reform in the history of Kenya’s education system but there are views that it is a great devastation. For instance, Amutabi [10] states that 8-4-4 system of education still remain the most radical and perhaps mindless change in education system in Kenya since independence. It has already caused great devastation to Kenyans for many years and this will be felt for many years to come. This system has been criticized for being broad, expensive and burdensome to teachers, pupils and parents. The system has been implicated in the worst strikes covering a number of schools in Kenya during the year 2001 and the general poor quality of education” [10].

There has been several changes since its inception, trying to make it more accommodative. Several commissions have been formed with the view of improving the system. Example, The Wanjigi Report [11]; the Kamunge Report [12]. A majority of these reports were either rejected or partially implemented. For instance [13]: the Kamunge Report [14] on Education and training which recommended the reduction of examination subjects under the 8-4-4. This was implemented in secondary schools but ignored at the primary school’s level; the then president Moi rejected the Koech Report. Reforms in the curriculum were however inevitable. “Existing literature suggests that the current 8-4-4 curriculum is theoretical and does not focus on the development of learners’ competencies and skills” [15] (Njeng’ ere, & Lili, 2017) [16-18]. “The

literature alludes to current pedagogical practices as authoritarian, rigid, and teacher-centered” [15]. “Consequently, learning activities are often limited to rote memorization of facts and reciting them to the teacher or regurgitating the knowledge during examinations In the context of learner assessment practices, the existing literature is critical of the over-emphasis on examinations” [15,19] Due to gaps in the 8-4-4 system and failing in acquisition of skills to meet the ever increasing changes in economic demands, the new educational system, 2-6-3-3-3 might be a solution.

3.2 Competency Based Curriculum (CBC)

Openness of the society, its increased informatization, dynamism and mobility have changed the requests for the educational sector. Moreover, the need of mastering new social roles by learners, has significantly increased the level of expectations can only be justified by education in the field of social restructuring. In such context, implementing a competency-based education is a key issue of modern educational science in general.

Over a short period of time, education and professional competency have taken a leading positions in globalization history, in positioning of manufactures, industries and including those within the educational science. As a strategic area of education or teaching system, the competency-based approach is a method for keeping general and professional education in balance with the needs of the society and labor market. By the early 21th century, economic processes as well as proliferation of new technologies had accelerated the pace of globalizing competitiveness in the educational sector. social expertise, mastering skills and competency as basic cluster ideas of goal-setting of modern educational process has got the highest acuteness over the entire history of curriculum development.

Sotco et al. [20] observed that “CBC concept moved to European countries due to the economic recession caused by the widespread unemployment among the youth in the United Kingdom. In the USA, the CBC was introduced due to low student achievement and poor quality of teacher training. They lacked specific knowledge, skills, and abilities. This promoted the need to structure the outcome of learning and encourage teachers to express their teaching objectives in terms of observable student

behaviors, improved effectiveness of teachers, teacher educators, and serve to address society’s concern on unsatisfactory performance in the development of programs in teacher education in the USA. However, the CBC is not thoroughly utilized in USA primary schools”.

Kenya like many African countries is faced with the problem of unemployment (GoK, 1976, P 33-34) and CBC could be the answer. In Kenya, the CBC curriculum was launched in 2017. The curriculum is structured in 2-6-3-3-3 replacing 8-4-4 system. It is meant to reshape education in Kenya. CBC is divided into levels as follows; Pre-primary, Lower primary, Upper primary, Junior secondary, Senior school, University and higher learning institutions. The six years in the CBC system are designed to emphasize the significance of developing skills and knowledge and also applying those competencies to real-life situations

Competency based curriculum emphasizes on complex outcomes of a learning process (that is; knowledge, skills and attitudes to be applied by learners) rather than mainly focusing on what learners are expected to learn about in terms of traditionally-defined subject content. According to European Union “Competence is defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. Competence indicates the ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context (education, work, personal or professional development)”. “Competence is not limited to cognitive elements only but also technical skills as well as interpersonal attributes e.g. social or organizational skills and ethical values” [21]. This is included in the fourth category of activity groupings (The affective domain) of learning.

“The CBC in the lower grades should prepare learners for Competency-based Education and Training (CBET). This entails an approach to vocational education and training in which skills, knowledge and attitudes are specified in order to define, steer and help to achieve competency standards, mostly within a kind of national qualifications framework” [22]. The curriculum calls for Child-centred approach where the child is placed in the centre of the learning process in a Child-friendly environment. This calls for a pedagogical change in the training of teachers to adequately prepare them for this type of task [2].

CBC is focused to attain education transformation while ensuring that learning is

profound, enjoyable, and habit formation. It provides a curriculum framework which links practice to the theory, avoids dichotomy between knowing “that” and knowing “how.” The curriculum intends to raise graduates’ capabilities and employability skills which enhance the practical application of knowledge.

CBC has shifted the role of the teacher from being the source of content to education facilitator. They play a leading role in the classroom where they are required to encourage learners to set goals for their learning, support development of critical reflection by supporting learners to retrieve and retain knowledge and use it in practices for lifelong training. This involves a massive mandate of curriculum implementation on teachers especially for young children (The Role of the Teacher in a Personalized, Competency-Based Classroom Published: February 9, 2018)

The curriculum requires high levels of critical thinking and reflection, skills that are learnt best with some form of discovery as the learners construct their knowledge if education will prepare candidates to meet the demands of the current needs of the economy. CBC takes into account employment-related success, such as practical job skills, technical skills, occupation survival skills, job search skills, and entrepreneurial skills. The focus is on improving knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and performance in the labor context. Its evaluation focuses on education, skills, philosophy, and actual performance. Therefore, CBC requires learners to construct their knowledge, moving in their own pace, graduating based on demonstration of competencies. These features suit the needs of the twenty-first-century.

However, CBC emphasize on learning outcomes and skills and not the training of facilitators, equipment’s for teaching and learning plus teachers’ involvement of parents nor the question of numbers in the classrooms. The teaching learning environment has not been addressed to meet the required standards and the issue of economic status of the parents ignored.

Like all other countries, Kenya’s adoption of CBC could be moving to the right direction in training of manpower but the existing reality is that implementation is happening with no regard to available resources and understanding of what is being implemented, how it will be implemented and how to examine the competency. Most

challenging is the diverse political and socio-economic difference in different Kenyan regions. The difference between the private and the public schools and differences in the private schools with high cost and low-cost private schools. The imbalance between different regions was thus pointed out by the mission as one fundamental aspect of the general problem of inequality in Kenya. ILO [23], Mullei [24] carried out “a regional analysis of the status of poverty in Kenya. The regional profile shows that the majority of the poor are in the rural areas and that poverty levels, depth and severity in rural areas are much higher than in urban areas. Poverty has persisted in particular provinces and social groups since the 1970s. His argument is still relevant today and refers to the forces determining the allocation of production factors, in particular capital and labour”. Sifuna DN, Obonyo MM. [25] outlines the challenges encountered during implementation.

Other factors affecting the curriculum reform relate to both academic and the context in which the innovation is practiced. Restrictions include teacher training, availability of teaching and learning materials, time allocation, innovative classroom practices and integration of other subjects, parental expectations, public views, unavailability of required instructional materials, lack of clarity about the curriculum reform, lack of skills and knowledge, organizational arrangements such as overload in classrooms, rigid scheduling of time, overcrowded reporting systems, and failure of the administration to recognize and understand its role in the change and the ICT context and the networking context.

Kenya needs to look into the learning environment of the CBC, the financial ability of the government against the requirement of the curriculum, human resource’s ability, philosophy, job market needs, and vision. Successful implementation of this curriculum requires the concerted efforts of teachers and parents [26]. CBC is not limited to teachers alone. Parents have a major role to play according to Kenya institute of curriculum development - series six. They include Role model as the first educator, trainer and a source of authority to learners, provide basic needs for learners, involved in school activities, Provide conducive learning environment for CBC. They are expected to help in assignments, prepare materials, sign books, download materials from internet, take children out for excursions and much more. None of the Curriculums or Education polices clearly outlines

the direct role of parents in academics. the general roles of the parent as outlined in competency-based curriculum do not have any direct academic work but most importantly direction on how to play their roles. This makes the curriculum very demanding in terms of time and finances. Parents have to meet teachers demands in helping children cover the curriculum, but parents were not involved in curriculum development, they were not sensitized on their roles and how to perform them not to say, not all are literate to a level of handling CBC curriculum. To satisfy the child, they opt to pay for others to help, adding to financial burden of parents.

All these challenges need to be discussed in the context of the government's ability to implement the CBC curriculum. The reforms and core competencies in primary education are expected to transcend into both Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and university education levels. The initiation of Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) 2024, whose mission is to "Accelerate Africa's transition to an innovation led, competency-based economy in most African countries will need to find a nexus between primary education and TVET which could be achieved through appropriate adoption and implementation of CBC within the African context. shan lax international journal of education # SINCE 1990 50 <http://www.shanlaxjournals.in> Kenya's education falls in this category, putting CBC into context to make it effective.

Questions still not answered continue; do the adopting countries consider their "own" existing challenges? Are the countries ready to face the challenges that might come with the new curriculum? Do the countries involve the curriculum implementors in the initial stages of curriculum reforms decisions? Do we have child friendly classrooms? Are teachers using child centred approach? Are the rooms adequate to give children choices for different activities? (Working space and corners of interest). Most primary schools have a teacher student ratio of 1: 55 on average. In Kenya, the entire curriculum development lies with the Kenya institute of education (KICED). The main drivers of any curriculum are the trainers but they are not brought on board by the curriculum's developers. Teacher training curriculum based on CBC should have been developed and rolled out first before the curriculum for learners. What of the

numerous resources required? Classrooms without necessary and adequate teaching learning materials will not transform the quality of education.

"CBC is very demanding in terms of technology, this is the main challenge to learners, parents and teachers which is still favoring the able parents and schools, disadvantaging poor pupils and schools. Efforts to provide remote learning revealed a significant digital divide, with over 50% of the students being left out, mainly due to lack of appropriate electronic devices, access to electricity and internet connectivity to aid in blended learning. This refers to a combination of face-to-face teaching and technologies. Technology in learning involves changing traditional schooling methods and organization by taking advantage of the new technologies" [27-34].

4. CONCLUSION

The adoption of the world/global class education model (CBC), places Kenya into the continental agenda of achieving continental Agenda goals 2063, which aims to address youth employment through quality and relevant education that will result in revolution of skills. This curriculum could have massive benefits and the future for human development, employment and self-reliance but only if the many challenges outlined in the curriculum implementation are addressed. Stakeholders are prepared and equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and curriculum requirements and the government has the finances to fund the curriculum adequately. The question on training and equipping the implementors of the curriculum with appropriate skills to facilitate affective implementation of the CBC. Several scholars have argued that teachers in African countries are ill-trained in CBC while the policy developers have no clear understanding of CBC (KNUT, 2019).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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