

Competency- Based Curriculum (2-6-3-3-3); Is Kenya ready for its adoption?

Dennis Kinoti Atugi¹, Joydrine Njeri Njeru²

¹Directorate of Tourism, County Government of Meru, Kenya

²Teachers Service Commission, Kenya

Abstract: Education is seen as a powerful tool by which a society is enlightened from their natural state of ignorance, poverty, disease, selfishness, fear, corruption, injustice, enslavement, moral bankruptcy, or some other undesirable conditions. Its only through education that an individual will be formed and becomes a useful member of society and enable them to promote their culture to lead a good life. The main purpose of education hence can be summarized as facilitation of one to develop the potentials and abilities that are already essential. For this to be achieved a country must adopt a curriculum that is coherent with a country's vision. Competency- based curriculum is an approach that allows students to advance based on their ability to master skills rather than master theoretical concepts. This paper highlights on the preparedness of Kenya as a Country to adopt the new system for her to reap the maximum benefits from its implementation, this has been prompted by contradicting sentiments from various key stakeholders in the education sector. Information sought has revealed that Kenyans prefer CBC than 8-4-4 but there is an agreement that we require more preparations to make the roll out flawless, some of the ways of improving its adoption include extensive consultations and provision of resources to the learning institutions.

Keywords: Competency- based, curriculum, stakeholders, Government

Introduction

Education is seen as a powerful tool by which men and women are liberated from their natural state whether that described as ignorance, poverty, disease, selfishness, fear, corruption, injustice, enslavement, moral bankruptcy, or some other undesirable conditions (Kessio and Chang'ach, 2012). Since attaining independence in 1963, Kenya has continued to invest heavily in education with the hope that this would help to transform the country into a modern progressive state. The Government of Kenya invests heavily through its budget to the development of education in the country but education system has not solved major challenges of the nation (Wanyama and Koskey, 2013). The education system of a country is as good as the products of that system, since independence Kenya has had two systems of education (7-4-2-3 and 8-4-4 in that order) till recently when the Government commissioned the competency- based curriculum (2-6-3-3-3).

8-4-4 curriculum in Kenya was introduced in 1985 when we shifted from 7-4-2-3 (East African Community) system, the system was designed to provide eight years in primary education, four of secondary education and four years of university education.

The purpose of the shift was to provide learners with a curriculum that would help them gain practical skills and competences to enable self-reliance amongst graduates. Over the years the 8-4-4 system has received an equal measure of appreciation and criticism.

The strongest argument has been that 8-4-4 has neglected the sectors which accelerate economic growth and instead created an influx of white-collar job trainees resulting to one of the Kenya's biggest challenge of youth unemployment. The curriculum has equally been criticized for being too expensive, broad and a burden to learners leading to frequent school unrests. These issues lead the government to desire for a more skills-oriented curriculum that will instead produce job creators rather than job seekers which lead to the Competency- based curriculum (CBC).

Sullivan (2005) views competency as a set of skills, knowledge and behaviors someone needs to have achieved in order to perform tasks, or activities at school and in the world of work. Kouwenhoven (2003) adds, "... it is the capability to choose and use an integrated combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes with the intention to realize a task in a certain context, while personal characteristics such as motivation, self-confidence, and willpower are part of that context." The Online Dictionary defines competency as a skill, an ability or

technique that has been developed through training or experience. The ability to communicate effectively demonstrates competency in that skill.

Competency- based curriculum (2-6-3-3-3) is an approach that allows students to advance based on their ability to master a skill or competency at their own pace, it is a method tailored to meet different learning abilities and leads to more efficient student outcomes. The new curriculum has been hyped as the ultimate solution to the gaps identified in the previous curriculum since it is entirely skill based. Learners are supposed to spend two years in pre-primary, three years in primary, three years in junior secondary, three years in senior secondary and final three years in either university or vocational training. For this curriculum to achieve its goal, it will require the Government to invest heavily on teacher's recruitment, training & retraining, provision of requisite tools and infrastructure as the curriculum is practical based rather than theoretical.

Competency- based curriculum in Kenya was designed by the lead team from Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) and launched by the ministry of education in 2017, the system was piloted in 2018 in 470 schools between May and September and its being implemented in phases across all public primary schools across the Country.

Statement of the Problem

Adoption of a new curriculum requires a multisectoral approach with all stakeholders embracing the change for smooth transition. On the other hand, the Government together with all the education agencies need to direct their synergies towards the success of the curriculum, this can be achieved through assessing the reliability of the existing infrastructure, the teaching aids, sufficiency of the teaching staff, readiness of support stakeholders like publishers and booksellers as well as teaching institutions.

Currently, despite the ministry of education claiming success of the roll over, critical stakeholders have come out to oppose CBC implementation claiming insufficiency in preparation. Kenya Nation Union of Teacher (Teachers representatives) have categorically stated that the teachers are not well equipped with skills to deliver this curriculum, the union has well claimed that most of the public schools are ill equipped and that there is severe shortage of teachers in schools for the flawless implementation of CBC. There has been disquiet from publishers on losses incurred due to abrupt shift to the new curriculum. It is not clear on whether the curriculum is concurrently being implemented in private schools and whether the parents really appreciate the new curriculum. This paper therefore is intended to critique on whether the Country is fully prepared for the adoption of CBC or it will be hurriedly adopted to the detriment of our learners.

Literature Review

Curriculum is the vehicle through which a country empowers its citizens with the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that enable them to be socially and economically engaged and empowered, for personal and national development. Curriculum should, therefore, meet the needs of the individual citizens and the nation. Education curriculum articulates educational domains to give effect to lifelong learning. Therefore, curriculum development and change should be guided by a holistic and systemic approach, which is critical to ensuring effectiveness and sustainability, instead of a piecemeal approach. Such change processes should be based on broad consultations, in order to ensure relevance, common understanding, ownership, commitment, and support (IBE-UNESCO 2015).

Whenever the idea of curriculum reform is mentioned in any country, people are bound to ask '*What will change?*'. This is an important question because curriculum planners have to be quite clear and communicate not only what they plan to change, but also other unintended, areas that will change as a consequence of the planned curriculum changes. Many people are apprehensive about change, especially when they are not sure of what is changing and how this will affect them.

Havelock and Hubberman (1978) argue that a major challenge in planning and implementing reforms in education is a tendency to formulate ambitious transformations without adequate plans on implementation. They also observe that in many countries curriculum change follows a heavy top-down approach. However, each stakeholder holds his own perspective to educational issues. Therefore, before pursuing curriculum changes, it is crucial for policy-makers and other stakeholders to have a thorough understanding of the roles, expectations and interests of the various actors, groups and institutions that are involved in, or affected by the change process (IBE-UNESCO, 2013).

In practice, a competency is the ability to apply learning resources: skills, knowledge, ethics and attitudes adequately in various defined real- life contexts educational, work, personal or professional

development (Jeng'ere, 2017). Learners are thus expected to be presented with resources which they interact with and construct meaning out of them in the Competency-Based approach (Barman, 2011).

For effective curriculum implementation, quality physical and human resources are required. Indeed, it is difficult to envisage learning without resources. Education resources include both book and non-book materials, and any other learning environment that provides a learning experience to a learner. Educational resources are critically important for ensuring wide access to quality education and are therefore selected and used to stimulate interest and motivate learning.

The resources required to implement a competency-based curriculum include laboratories both for sciences and languages, print materials, quality teachers, ICT infrastructure, enough classrooms, play materials and play fields (KICD, 2016), KICD report further recommends that ECDE centres should be provided with diverse resources.

These materials should be sourced within the locality to ensure relevance, and meaningful learning. ECDE teachers should be capacity built to be able to improvise and develop low cost materials and as well more qualified teachers should be employed to reduce the teacher pupil ratio.

KNUT (2019) in their study, Teacher preparedness for the implementation of the competency-based curriculum in preprimary and lower primary grades in Kenya concluded that CBC should be suspended until all stakeholders are ready and the necessary infrastructure has been put in place to support flawless rollover.

Ondimu (2018) in his study found out that majority of private pre-school teachers in Dagoreti had attended trainings organized by their schools on CBC and were prepared with skills, however they indicated that CBC lacked facilities and was expensive to implement.

According to Ambaa (2015) the form of knowledge in the curriculum should be revised so that the focus is not just on theory but on what is practical, she adds that pedagogical procedures employed by educators in the learning institutions should be revised so that the learning process will result to self-reliant individuals. This can be done through continual in-service courses for teachers so that they are updated on current issues on self-reliance and how to lead the learners to it.

While appearing before the senate committee on education on 11th December 2018, the then Cabinet secretary for education, Ambassador Amina Mohammed said the Country was ill prepared to roll out the new curriculum (CBC), Mohammed stated that lack of necessary infrastructure, inadequate trained teachers and instructional resources were hampering the rolling out of the curriculum.

While addressing delegates during the 44th annual national conference for secondary school heads, the Chairman said that the association was in support of the new curriculum but secondary school teachers needed to be well trained before roll out at their level. The school's heads reiterated that the Ministry of education should put programmes in place to guarantee effective implementation.

Methodology

The paper used review of secondary data and a random sampling for a small target population used to reflect the perception of key stake holders of this curriculum by asking them three simple questions. Firstly, between 8-4-4 and CBC which one do you think is the best and why? secondly, is Kenya well prepared for roll over to 2-6-3-3-3, why? And finally, what does the Government need to do to make the rollover to 2-6-3-3-3 flawless and more successful?

Results and Discussions

From the simple questionnaire administered all the respondents agreed that CBC was better than 8-4-4 because it was biased towards enhancing students/pupils' skills and talents, the respondents as well indicated that Kenya was not sufficiently prepared since the program was rushed and most schools lacked the necessary infrastructure and resources to effectively implement CBC. Some of the proposed recommendations they offered to improve the process include, extensive consultations and participation of key stakeholders, phased implementation, improved school infrastructure and sufficient training of teachers.

According to a paper done by Anne Syomwene (2013) on factors affecting implementation of curriculum in Kenya, she identified poor economic growth, politics, lack of facilities, school leadership, ability and inability to evaluate, lack of proper social amenities and infrastructure, ignorance and illiteracy as the key factors.

Mosha (2012) in his case study of materials used to deliver CBC in Tanzania stated that, CBC is not a self-implementing paradigm but it requires the effective interplay of 5 key factors which are:- a well-designed

package that clearly calculates the basic skills and expected outcomes; a well-coordinated management team of various players knit together to ensure a holistic approach from curriculum development to implementation evaluation, feedback and application; well-trained teachers with sufficient academic knowledge and skills, graduating from college and those in schools receiving sufficient induction and inset to give them confidence to teach the new curriculum effectively;

sufficient funds need to be injected into most schools to increase classroom and other necessary resources and finally there is a need to develop an effective system of quality assurance and quality control that provides regular feedback to teachers and learners, the Ministry and the various agencies responsible for curriculum development and evaluation.

Key stakeholders in Kenya's education sector have been sending mixed signals on the status of implementation of CBC, as well there has been worries on the quality of teaching materials (books) provided in schools and the infrastructural incapacity of our schools (insufficient classrooms, laboratories, workshops and libraries). The student-teacher ratio has been on the rise for years after the implementation of free education (Education for all) and 100% transition to the next level of education, all these combined translate to strained learning environment due to insufficient allocation of funds to stimulate the necessary curriculum implementation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Kenya like any other developing country has had several education reforms and policies with the aim of achieving its national agenda. However, despite the efforts by the Government, the reforms encounter many challenges in the implementation. It is these challenges that have been responsible for inadequacy in implementation of these reforms.

Following the high rates of unemployment amongst our youth, half-baked graduates from our learning institutions and severe shortage of key technical skills, it's clear that the adoption of CBC in Kenya is a necessity and Kenyans have embraced it, however it seems there is insufficient preparations in its roll out and the reforms are faced with the same challenges that have perennially affected implementation of previous reforms. For this reason, this paper suggests the following recommendations to ensure a flawless adoption:

- i. For this curriculum to achieve its goal, it will require the Government to invest heavily on teacher's recruitment, training & retraining, provision of requisite tools and infrastructure as the curriculum is practical based rather than theoretical,
- ii. There is need for extensive stakeholder involvement to ensure synergy and congruence during design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation at all levels,
- iii. The curriculum needs to be implemented in phases and not in a hurry with keen monitoring at each stage, to be identify challenges that need to be addressed before moving to the next level,
- iv. A neutral body to do a research on the level of preparedness of all stakeholders (pupils/students, teachers, school managers, parents, publishers, ministry of education officials) and availability of learning facilities/amenities/teaching aids.

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