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Competence Based Curriculum Implementation Since 2018 to 2020 in Kenya: A Review of Current Status

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Abstract

Competence-based education in Kenya has evolved over the recent time and is being implemented in the whole of Kenya and is already in grade 4. It is rooted in the philosophy of education and the need for practical education, competence-based education. The aim of this paper is to review the challenges teachers face in implementing CBC in Kenyan schools. Data and past findings were gathered from several articles by researchers to determine the central idea of the rationality of this paper. As evidence, an empirical result was provided to ensure the information might be beneficial into this significant finding that associated with government's provision towards schools so as to achieve successful implementation of CBC. Thus, this review also highlighted challenges and constraints on teacher preparedness in implementation of the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) in Kenyan schools. This gap is to illustrate how the constraints can be breached in order to influence directly the implementers contribution, benefit and where and when to mitigate the challenges that hinder the smooth implementation of the new curriculum in Kenya. In this review the paper brings a challenge and contribution among stakeholders involved in the implementation process to work diligently to close the gap that clearly evident.

Key words: *CBC, competencies, perceptions, staffing, communication, teacher*

1. Introduction

Competence Based Curriculum was not received whole heartedly by majority of Kenyans especially Kenya Union of teachers. According to a special correspondent of Elephant noted that findings by Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) indicated that Kenya was not ready to implement the competence-based curriculum that was set to replace 8-4-4. The study widely researched on many aspects that touched on teacher preparedness, availability and adequacy of teaching materials, level of engagement between teachers and parents, as well as the challenges faced by head teachers and teaching staff in implementing CBC. KNUT finally concluded that the implementation of CBC has been hurriedly undertaken as majority of teachers had not been sufficiently trained in CBC content and teaching methods (<https://www.theelephant.info/features>, 2019).

Curriculum reform in education has become a worldwide-practiced phenomenon that is engaged in making great effort for the best educational practices, primarily with the demands of the twenty-first-century knowledge economy. African countries immediately after independence had to inherit the colonial education system, which was discriminative and which demanded realignment to societal and cultural demands of the nation. Coincidentally curriculum reforms in most African nations adopted the content or knowledge-based approach. Not long, the Knowledge-based curriculum dissatisfied most countries for its products were too academic, but lacking skills and knowledge in the applicability as required by the demands from the workplace. Kenya and Tanzania adopted curriculum with the philosophy of education for self-reliance, but due to the inadequately trained teachers and insufficient resources, it ended up being too examinable and losing its goal.

Competency based Curriculum (CBC) is a new system of education designed by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) team and launched by the Ministry of Education in 2017 for implementation (Nyakangi, 2010),



and is designed to emphasize the significance of developing skills and knowledge by applying those competencies to real life situations. CBE unlike CBC programs are flexible and designed to meet the needs of mature learners juggling responsibilities like childcare and work. These CBE programs typically have variable starting points throughout the year. Some institutions even operate on a subscription “all-you-can-learn” model, and they recognize prior learning so experienced students can graduate faster (Pichette, 2019).

CBE is about lifelong learning model that prepares students, as Heather McGowan puts it, “to lose their jobs. Often.” Rather than acting as a linear pipeline to a specific job, a modern system of lifelong learning develops transferable skills early, in K-12 and postsecondary, and tops up that foundational schooling with job-specific skills, via short, flexible programs, throughout our working lives (Pichette, 2019).

According to Pichette and Watkins (2018) Competency-based education — a model that focuses on the knowledge and abilities students demonstrate, regardless of the amount of time they spend in a classroom — is gaining attention internationally. Because they hold the potential to graduate students quickly, cost-effectively and with the skills needed to meet employer demands, CBE programs are ideally suited for groups not always well-served by traditional postsecondary education, such as adult learners. By enabling students to master skills at their own pace, competency-based learning systems help to save both time and money. Depending on the strategy pursued, competency-based systems also create multiple pathways to graduation, make better use of technology, support new staffing patterns that utilize teacher skills and interests differently, take advantage of learning opportunities outside of school hours and walls, and help identify opportunities to target interventions to meet the specific learning needs of students. Each of these presents an opportunity to achieve greater efficiency and increase productivity.

Wikes (2013) on USA competence based curriculum notes that, time variable is valuable, leaning is defined, learning is student centered, academic support is robust, there is Proof of learning, characterized granular competencies achieved and Learning comes to student unlike the former that was time fixed, learning was undefined, learning was faculty centered, had a single faculty expert, High cost/price, Transcript black box, “Big chunk” courses and Learners come to institutions to freely learn.

IBE (2013), collaborative learning as a core competence is a relationship among learners that fosters positive interdependence, individual accountability, and interpersonal skills. For collaborative learning to be effective, teaching must be viewed as a process of developing and enhancing students’ ability to learn. The instructor’s role is not to transmit information, but to serve as a facilitator for learning.

1. Communication and collaboration
2. Critical thinking and problem solving
3. Imagination and creativity
4. Citizenship
5. Learning to learn
6. Self-efficacy
7. Digital literacy

According to Muraraneza & Mtshali (2018) Two categories that emerged were: (i) the need for a paradigm shift to competency-based curriculum; and (ii) the associated issues and challenges, such as a shift from informative to transformative learning, lack or limited of involvement of key stakeholders in curriculum development, focus on hospital-oriented education, lack of preparation of educators, and inappropriate resources while education for development (2018) based in Rwanda on challenges facing implementation of the competency based curriculum cited that “All teachers were trained but some resist changing to the new methodology of teaching as they are very familiar with the old methodology and some feel more comfortable about keeping the same teaching documents from the past years, instead of adapting them to the new methodology”, insufficiency of learning and teaching materials about CBC in schools as another hindrance to the implementation of the new approach. Some of the available materials are still in electronic copies, making it not very practical for every user.

In the Kenyan context, competence-based education is considered as one where emphasis is placed on what a learner is expected to do as opposed to what the learner is expected to know. Competency-based curriculum is therefore learner-centred, with a lot of emphasis on the changing needs of learners, educators, and the society at large. The implication of this is that the curriculum accords learners an opportunity for acquisition and application of knowledge,



skills, attitudes and values to day-to-day problem solving while placing emphasis on 21st century skills Republic of Kenya, 2017).

With the introduction of competency-based curriculum, the country has shifted from an 8-4-4 structure to a 2-6-3-3-3 structure – pre-primary (2 years); primary (6 years); and secondary education (6 years). This newly introduced Competency-Based Curriculum puts emphasis on seven core competences, namely: i) communication and collaboration, ii) creativity and imagination, iii) 944 American Journal of Educational Research critical thinking and problem solving, iv) digital literacy, v) citizenship; vi) learning to learn, and vii) self-efficacy.

The implementation of competency-based curriculum is being done in phases beginning with pre-primary and lower primary classes, which started implementation in January 2018. When a new curriculum is being implemented, there is need for regular evaluations as a process of gathering and using information to detect problems and modify implementation strategies (Oluoch, 2011)Implementation of a new curriculum is expected to be faced with challenges. As pointed out by Shiundu and Omulando (1992) curriculum development is a process that follows a number of stages, including conducting a situational analysis, formulating the objectives, setting up of the curriculum project, building the program, piloting the new programme in selected schools, improving the new programme, implementation, evaluation, and maintenance.

According to Elimu library (2019) the CS for education noted that CBC has several challenges such as appropriate environments for learners to experience results, lack of resources that may not be available in some community and government schools, rushing to implement, lack of enough trained teachers. As those trained to take on the new curriculum are very few while the pupils are so many in the country, inappropriate infrastructure as the new curriculum content requires modern classrooms, smart boards, laboratories, creative centres and technologies at all levels. She noted that the curriculum is already in place now up to grade three yet these infrastructures were never put in place. KNA (2019, July) Kenya news agency on education noted that shortage of teachers, inadequate infrastructure and lack of training for teachers were the main challenges facing implementation of Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) in Makueni. County, Kenya.

2. Methodology

The study was shaped by a qualitative design that employed document analysis by reviewing several articles that touch on Competency Based Curriculum in Kenya since 2018 to the present day. The review was based on four sub-themes namely – Core competencies on implementation of CBC in Kenya, resources on implementation of CBC in Kenya, teacher preparedness for CBC in Kenya, staffing on implementation of CBC in Kenya, perceptions on implementation of CBC in Kenya. To augment document analysis, interviews were carried to confirm the information from the current stand view reflection. The data was corroborated under the sub- themes and added to that of the document analysis then conclusions were done.

3. Analysis of Results

The review was conducted by analyzing the findings of different researchers on Competency Based Curriculum under the following areas:

- i. Core competencies on implementation of CBC in Kenya
- ii. Resources on implementation of CBC in Kenya
- iii. Teacher preparedness for CBC in Kenya
- iv. Staffing on implementation of CBC in Kenya
- v. Perceptions on implementation of CBC in Kenya

i. Core competencies on implementation of CBC

The Competence Based Curriculum generally entails extensive and effective training of teachers, but at time of the roll out very few teachers had been trained, and many who had undergone the training, seemed to claim that they still did not know how to implement the Competence Based Curriculum (Sifuna and Obonyo, 2019) They observed that the Competence Based Curriculum generally entails extensive effective training of teachers, but at time of the roll out very few teachers had been trained, and many who had undergone the training, seemed to claim that they still did not know how to implement the Competence Based Curriculum. Furthermore, this type of curriculum generally requires small classes for teachers to give personal attention to each learner which is not the case while Muraya (2019) notes that the Competency-Based Curriculum for early years education was rolled out in pre-primary 1 and 2, and grades



1,2 and 3 across the country early January 2019 yet it has been a bumpy journey as government lays the foundation that will see the country transit from the 8-4-4 to the 2-6-3-3-3 education system.

There was a general lack of shareholders involvement in CBC roll out. For example, the lack of sensitization of parents and public participation limited effective implementation. Most parents generally do not understand what CBC is all about, their expectations, learners' assessment, grading, and others. Momanyi and Rop (2019) from their survey noted that 100% of the Curriculum Support Officers (CSO's) said that teachers have challenges in implementing CBC. They indicated that teachers still employing teacher centered approaches as opposed to the discovery methods that allow learners to utilize their interest and talents to acquire skills and competencies through personalized learning. 75% of CSO's opined that in-service training for teachers' impact on the lesson delivery.

Sifuna and Obonyo (2019) on core competencies of teachers found that there was ineffectiveness in the training sessions and the training duration which meant that teachers were not equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills about Competency-Based Curriculum. This implies that teachers generally have limited or lack knowledge and skills for the successful implementation of CBC.

Finally an article on "Constraints Facing Successful Implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum in Kenya" by Muasya and Waweru (2019) on core competencies the study found that implementation of CBC had constraints as there were no established channels of communication in schools to aid in the implementation of the new curriculum and the study established that majority (86%) of the teacher respondents in this study did not have a proper understanding of the Competency-Based Curriculum nor were they knowledgeable about the objectives of the program.

ii. Resources on implementation of CBC

On resources for implementation of CBC, Momanyi and Rop (2019) in their paper with the title "Teacher Preparedness for the Implementation of Competency Based Curriculum in Kenya carried a Survey of Early Grade Primary School Teachers' in Bomet East Sub-County to find the impact of resources as causing a challenge in implementing CBC. Out of all CSO's interviewed (100%) said that they had faith in the books prepared by KICD as they were rich in content and are sequentially ordered to facilitate building up from what the learners had learnt to new discoveries. Learning activities that enhance developing competencies are well laid out. This contradicts reports from teachers who found the books to be confusing and full of errors. Teachers felt that instructional materials were hurriedly produced to meet the government's curriculum implementation schedule. TUSOME and PRIDE programs haven't impacted much since no effort has been made but Sifuna and Obonyo (2019) in their study of teachers found out that during the roll out of CBC, the government distribution and delivery of textbooks had been delayed with schools starting the year without the necessary textbooks. Buying of texts books was difficult since they were not available in the market or bookshops. This included; teachers handbook on the CBC implementation; approved pupil course books for areas such as literary activity books, Kenya sign language books, creative activities books, approved hygiene and nutrition activity books, play materials and lack of permanent classrooms for lower classes as this involved movement to and fro. In some areas learning in these levels is done under a tree/shade which is cumbersome. The study found some schools completely lacking learning and teaching material.

Sifuna and Obonyo (2019) reported that learning print and digital materials had not been distributed to schools and in addition to poor quality learner's books in the bookshops, most schools lacked teacher guides and handbooks. The assessments Rubrics that were available had unclear guidelines which made giving learners assignment difficult. Poorly printed books owing to hurried implementation of the curriculum which overstretched the writers and publishing houses resulted in unedited books, or poorly printed books the study noted.

An evaluation by Sakwa (2019) in the standard digital found that implementing CBC required that the government provide material but they were not enough and there most of the additional teaching materials are to be provided by parents, most of whom cannot afford thus posing a great challenge to learners whose parents are not able to provide. Muasya and Waweru (2019) in their study on teachers and resources for successful implementation found that majority and of the teachers lowly agreed that "amount of money disbursed by government to schools is enough to facilitate effective implementation of CBC. Based on the analysis of the findings of their study, it emerged that the money disbursed in the schools by the government was not enough for the implementation of CBC, the programme was hurriedly implemented, infrastructure available in schools were not adequate for successful implementation of



Competency Based Curriculum. Teaching and learning materials available in the schools were not adequate as compared to the number of pupils and there were no laboratories, among others.

iii. Teacher preparedness for CBC

Momanyi and Rop (2019) paper with the title “Teacher Preparedness for the Implementation of Competency Based Curriculum in Kenya: A Survey of Early Grade Primary School Teachers’ in Bomet East Sub-County found that teachers tend to teach content as opposed to building competencies. It was also found that Instructional materials were not clear on the skills. Integration of the core competencies they were supposed to have and reported challenges in preparing schemes of work that conforms to the CBC. 60% of the surveyed respondents affirmed that they understand what CBC entails. 35% had slight understanding while 5% had no clue what CBC was. A majority of the respondents (90%) felt that they couldn’t adequately prepare a lesson plan, they reported challenge in deciding on learner’s activities and teacher’s activities that would enable learners acquire competencies in line with Momanyi and Rop and chemagosi 2020 whose title “Teachers Preparedness on Implementation of Competence Based Curriculum in Lower Public Primary Schools in Kilifi and Nandi counties, Kenya found that the results shows that the overall model is significant ($F=6.006$, $p<0.05$) and the coefficient also shows that teacher preparedness contributes significantly on implementation of competency based curriculum ($\beta=0.342$, $t=7.985$, $p>0.05$). This implies that teacher preparedness significantly influence implementation of competency based curriculum and therefore the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between teachers’ preparedness and implementation of competency based curriculum was rejected.

The article by Standard Digital by Sakwa (2019) with the title “Curriculum’s challenges in the eyes of teachers who toil day and night to make it work” concur with an article by Sifuna and Obonyo (2019) with the title “Competency Based Curriculum in Primary Schools in Kenya: Prospects and Challenges of Implementation” concurred in part thus; At the time of rolling-out Competence Based Curriculum for Pre-primary, Standards One to Three; there was no Sessional Paper to guide the process, hence the roll out tended to be unprocedural, the needs assessment was not properly conducted and the summative evaluation which was conducted in 2009 could not be the basis for reforming the curriculum in 2018. Apparently, there was no research to support the argument that Competence Based Curriculum framework is more effective than the current learning outcomes-based curriculum framework as stakeholder involvement lacked. The Competence Based Curriculum generally entails extensive and effective training of teachers, but at time of the roll out very few teachers had been trained, and many who had undergone the training, seemed to claim that they still did not know how to implement the Competence Based Curriculum. This type of curriculum generally requires small classes for teachers to give personal attention to each learner (Sifuna & Obonyo, 2019).

Sifuna & Obonyo (2019) noted that Pilot testing of the curriculum seemed to have been hurriedly done without an appropriate syllabus, pupils’ books and teachers’ guides. Two articles agree that piloting was done for a couple of months and there was limited involvement of teachers, university and other local expertise and that the whole process seemed to be dominated by foreign consultants who had limited experience in curriculum reform in the country. Standard Digital (2019) Many are unaware that the focus of the curriculum is to ensure the child has time to play and carry out activities,” by roll out of the curriculum the government hadn’t delivered some learning material such as charts and play materials.

iv. Staffing on implementation of CBC

On staffing Momanyi and Rop (2019) paper with the title “Teacher Preparedness for the Implementation of Competency Based Curriculum in Kenya: A Survey of Early Grade Primary School Teachers’ in Bomet East Sub-County did deal with the impact of teacher staffing as a challenge to CBC implementation like Sifuna and Obonyo (2019) who found out that with increased enrolment to meet the 100 percent transition, the classrooms were overflowing with large numbers of pupils posing an acute shortage of teachers, with some schools, having only a few teachers hence a major challenge in successful implementation of the new curriculum. Muasya and Waweru (2019) in their study found that there were not enough teachers in schools to ensure successful implementation of CBC, and most schools had a problem of understaffing despite having classes of too many pupils. Majority of the teacher respondents in their study confirmed that they were not well prepared for the implementation of new the curriculum. A significant number of them noted that they were still confused by the new terminologies of CBE and CBC. They felt that it was still difficult to adapt their teaching styles to a child's individual learning style, and that the training they had received, knowledge on CBE, and assessment techniques was inadequate. Standard Digital 2019 evaluation



concluded with the other studies that there is a problem in staffing as only a few teachers are trained in this programme for efficient handling.

v. Perceptions on implementation of CBC

on perceptions of implementation of CBC Sifuna and Obonyo (2019) noted in their article that at the time of rolling-out Competence Based Curriculum for Pre-primary, Standards One to Three; there was no Sessional Paper to guide the process, hence the roll out tended to be unprocedural, needs assessment was not properly conducted and even the summative evaluation which was conducted in 2009 could not be the basis for reforming the curriculum in 2018. Apparently, the study reported that there was no research to support the argument that Competence Based Curriculum framework is more effective than the current learning outcomes-based curriculum framework. Pilot testing of the curriculum seemed to be hurriedly done without an appropriate syllabus, pupils' books and teachers' guides and the Piloting was done for a couple of months which had limited involvement of teachers, universities and other local expertise. The whole process seemed to be dominated by foreign consultants who have limited experience in curriculum reform in the country.

Momanyi and Rop (2019) observed that there wasn't sufficient stakeholders' engagement especially in training the implementers before piloting the curriculum. In their study majority of the respondents (90%) felt that they couldn't adequately prepare a lesson plan, they reported a challenge in deciding on learner's activities and teacher's activities that would enable learners acquire competencies. Teachers tend to teach content as opposed to building competencies. Instructional materials were cited by 20% of the respondents as not clear on the skills. Integration of the core competencies is another challenge reported.

Muasya and Waweru (2019) reported that teachers were rigid to change from content-based curriculum to competency-based curriculum, and the teachers also felt that the government hurriedly implemented CBC in schools without first addressing challenges such as understaffing, inadequacy of teaching and learning material and unfriendly teaching and learning environment, failure to first establish effective channels of communication. Muasya and Waweru (2019) reported that teachers felt that lack of a curriculum implementation monitoring strategy, government failure to offer training to teachers on curriculum implementation strategies, learners craving for success in examinations at all costs even without working hard, lack of motivation among tutors, and failure by tutors to focus on teaching responsibilities as the greatest constraint to CBC implementation. Momanyi and Rop (2019) reported that 100% of the Curriculum Support Officers (CSO's) felt that teachers have challenges in implementing CBC, and that teachers are still employing teacher centered approaches as opposed to the discovery methods that allow learners to utilize their interest and talents to acquire skills and competencies through personalized learning. 75% of CSO's opined that in-service training for teachers' impact on the lesson delivery. All CSO's interviewed (100%) have faith in the books prepared by KICD as they are rich in content and are sequentially ordered to facilitate building up from what the learners have learnt to new discoveries. Learning activities that enhance developing competencies are well laid out. This contradicts reports from teachers who found the books to be confusing and full of errors. Teachers felt that instructional materials were hurriedly produced to meet the government's curriculum implementation schedule.

The study interviewed a director of Education, Kisii County on his opinions on core competencies contained in the CBC and how they were implemented. The director noted that *"the government was prepared to implement the CBC as the laptop project had started way back before the actual implementation of the curriculum"*. He continued to note that *"some of the teachers implementing the CBC have no idea what digital literacy is, even handling a laptop they do not have knowledge"*.

A deputy head-teacher of a private primary school on core competencies noted that *"competencies are individual based and that a teacher is expected to assess each individual learner on each core competency of which many of the teacher were not familiar with and yet still seven core competencies on each learner was too much work for a teacher"*. *"lesson planning for the core competencies was hectic as each activity is planned for"*

Core competencies on implementation of CBC

The review implies that teachers were not prepared fully for the implementation of the new CBC as it required core skills which majority of the teachers did not possess. Efforts to induct teachers in preparation were not so much effective as in some areas the training sessions were short and that some of the trainers were not well equipped with the core skills entailed in the CBC that they were training.

This review only reveals low view stakeholder involvement in measuring competence-based curriculum effectiveness for public utilization, for example lack of sensitization of parents and public participation limit effective



implementation. Most parents generally do not understand what CBC is all about, their expectations, learners' assessment, grading, and others. This review demonstrates that the government machinery concerned with education needed to recognize all the instruments in their efforts to manage the implementation of CBC much better. Consequently, this review will be beneficial for the top education management, as well useful to practitioners to recognize the importance of corporate involvement so as achieve CBC intended outcomes.

This review evidently showed that the government required to be responsible for engaging stakeholders and address teacher's issues as the end user implementers by use assessments and evaluation of desired needs.

Resources on implementation of CBC

Momanyi and Rop (2019) in their paper found out on that teachers had faith in the books prepared by KICD as they were rich in content and are sequentially ordered to facilitate building up from what the learners had learnt to new discoveries. Learning activities that enhance developing competencies are well laid out. This contradicts reports from teachers who found the books to be confusing and full of errors. Teachers felt that instructional materials were hurriedly produced to meet the government's curriculum implementation schedule. TUSOME and PRIDE programs haven't impacted much since no effort has been mad but Sifuna and Obonyo (2019) in their study of teachers found out that during the roll out of CBC, the government distribution and delivery of textbooks had been delayed with schools starting the year without the necessary textbooks. Buying of texts books was difficult since they were not available in the market or bookshops. This included; teachers handbook on the CBC implementation; approved pupil course books for areas such as literary activity books, Kenya sign language books, creative activities books, approved hygiene and nutrition activity books, play materials and lack of permanent classrooms for lower classes as this involved movement to and fro. In some areas learning in these levels is done under a tree/shade which is cumbersome. The study found some schools completely lacking learning and teaching material.

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4. Conclusion

The study concludes that CBC was hurriedly implemented as there was low stakeholder engagement and involvement in measuring effectiveness for public utilization and lack of sensitization of parents and public participation which limited effective implementation. Even as at the current state most parents generally do not understand what CBC is all about, their expectations, learners' assessment, grading, and others. This review demonstrates that the government machinery concerned with education needed to recognize all the instruments in their efforts to manage the implementation of CBC in a much better/on resources, teaching and learning materials available in the schools are not adequate as compared to the number of pupils. On awareness and perception, it can be concluded that there wasn't sufficient teacher involvement especially in training of the implementers before piloting of the curriculum.

5. Recommendations

- There is need to continue empowering teachers on core competencies even when the curriculum implementation of CBC in Kenya is ongoing so as to bring everybody on board.



- There is cognizance that the government is working round the clock to supply resources to schools for effective implementation of CBC in Kenya. The study recommends that the resources be supplied equitably to all schools
- There is need to for the government to reduce the number of learners per class from 40 to a smaller number so as to give personalized attention to each learner
- The government needs to balance Staffing of teachers so that each school has teachers that have been inducted on CBC implementation
- The ministry of education may need to hold many capacity workshops to impart skills to teachers which on will help in changing perceptions on implementation of CBC in Kenya

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