

CURRICULUM REFORMS IN KENYA
IMPERATIVES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

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1. 0 Introduction

Education and training have been identified in the Kenya Vision 2030 as a key social pillar and a medium that will drive Kenya into becoming a middle-income economy. Constitution 2010 also supported free and compulsory basic education as a human right to every Kenyan child aged 4-18 years (Basic Education Act 2013). According to National Education Sector Plan (2013-2018), access, equity, quality, relevance, governance and cross cutting are the key themes in education and therefore they are fundamentally issues of great concern to education and training in Kenya. It is important that all stakeholders in education pay special attention to these four issues particularly access, equity, quality and relevance, as they design and implement education reforms and training in Kenya. These issues influence curriculum development, implementation and any reforms. In this regard, it is not only important to have the relevant curriculum that guarantees these characteristics are considered but also effective implementation that will make this vision a reality and ensure that the curriculum responds to the current needs of Kenyan society .

2.0 Curriculum development in Kenya

Any Education system, if well planned, should help learners acquire and develop the desired knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary for life in the society; however, desired knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, change as the social and technological needs change. This is the basis for any relevant curriculum reform as it aims at meeting the emerging needs, issues and trends in the society as well as fulfilling contemporary needs of the society.

In Kenya, Curriculum development and reviews have had a long history and had been influenced by recommendations of various commissions and task forces. Beecher report (1949)

recommended a small group of African children should be allowed to access secondary education; the Ominde report (1964) recommended establishment of harambee schools, establishment of day secondary schools, appointment of teachers by BOGs, establishment of Government assisted schools that would be under BOGs; Kenyanization of secondary schools; uniform secondary fee guidelines and change of structure of education system; the Gachathi report (1976) recommended integration of non-formal sector to secondary education in order to take care of school dropouts and development and rationalization of education for those not selected to government secondary schools through extra mural, correspondence courses, radio and TV; the Koech report (1999) recommended Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training (TIQET), expansion of compulsory primary education from eight years to 12 years, and a comprehensive legal framework that addressed previously omitted aspects of education such as the early childhood care, development and education (ECDE), special education and technical education and which creates new agencies charged with the delivery and coordination of education services; the Kamunge report (1988) that recommended that students in public schools pay full cost of boarding and feeding but needy students be assisted through bursaries, establishment of day secondary schools as a more cost effective way of expanding accessibility, expansion of single and double stream secondary schools to three streams; abolition of categorization of schools as high and low cost and re-designation of secondary schools in order to do away with harambee and government stream students in the same school; the Mackay report (1981) that recommended establishment of a second university in the country and restructuring of the entire education system to the current model, of eight years of primary schooling, four years of secondary and a minimum of four years at the university. The report recommended scrapping of A-levels and simultaneously added an extra year each to primary and

university education, respectively; and the Odhiambo and Keiyoro report (2012) that recommends re-structuring of the current education system to accommodate careers paths and an emphasis on competence based curriculum. This is the most recent report that addresses the challenges of the current education system and its inability to adequately address the desired attitudes, skills, values and attitudes in line with vision 2030 and constitution 2010. Based on these recommendations and needs assessments by Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development (KICD), an effective curriculum reform should be designed and implemented to meet the goals of education in Kenya. The following are some of the key requirements for effective curriculum reforms and implementation:

3.0 Imperatives for effective curriculum implementation in Kenya

One of the recommendations of Kenya's priority for Post 2015 agenda was a review of the curriculum to make it competency based to generate skills for work and for life. Such a curriculum is aimed at equipping learners with competencies to perform and function independently in the society. It also ensures integration and application of learned facts, skills and knowledge and advocates for a shift from teacher centred to learner centred learning.

Any curriculum reform or changes cannot achieve its intended goals without effective implementation. Curriculum implementation comes after curriculum designing, planning and development. It is a major process without which all other processes would not be useful. Curriculum implementation makes real what has been designed and planned. It is the process that makes a curriculum real by taking to the intended audience, the learners, otherwise it remains with the designers. For effective curriculum implementation in Kenya the following factors should be considered and critically addressed:

3.1 Philosophy and goals of education

For any system of education to be effective the philosophy guiding it must be in line with the value system of the people of Kenya. Certain ideals and values need to be considered as ingredients for an appropriate philosophy of education for Kenya upon which curriculum planning, reforms and implementation could be based. These include: social cohesion, moral integrity, happiness, national identity, national development, democracy, freedom, self-reliance, a sense of mutual social responsibility, good citizenship and the promotion of good life both for individuals and for the society (Murira 2013). Philosophical foundations should form basis of any curriculum reform and effective implementation of the Kenyan education system. Kenyan philosophy of education should embrace free access to relevant and quality education by all. The education system and curriculum must therefore create an environment that help create knowledge and skills that enhance realization of the goals of education in Kenya. This could be guided by philosophy of constructivism and post modernism. The education system should be of value to country and individual development of the recipients . the following questions need to be answered: Is basic education meant to lead one to university education as the ultimate goal? What is the value of education to Kenyan society and individuals? What are the social, economic issues should our education solve or enhance? What competences should education help to develop in individuals and society? Teaching and learning materials or content should be influenced by philosophy and goals of education in Kenya

3.2 Teaching and learning materials

In his concept note on reforms in the education sector in Kenya Kaimenyi (2015) noted quality teaching and learning required teacher development programmes, capacity building, use of ICT in teaching and learning and monitoring and evaluation of curriculum implementation. These requirements call for development of relevant materials. This should be in line with the proposed curriculum reforms and should address the issues of content, relevance and quality. The materials must be competency based, learner centred, outcome based and with differentiation. Authors, publishers must come together to review the existing teaching and learning materials and in writing and publishing new materials in line with the curriculum. The materials could be books, magazines, well equipped library, review of current books to align to reformed curriculum, science and computer laboratories, ICT or digital inclusion and integration. Identification of individual talents should be core to the curriculum reform. The curriculum should enable the learner to enter or take his or her career path depending on talents and performance in the differentiated areas of the curriculum at different levels of the structure.

3.3 Teacher training and re-training

The Odhiambo report (2012) recommended introduction and strengthening of technical subjects and nurturing of talents from the formation stage. This will require training and retraining of teachers to be able to handle the new areas such as digital inclusion or ICT integration in teaching and learning. It will be mandatory to in-

service all current teachers and possibly introduce regular assessment for all educators and teachers that could be used for promotion and grading.

3.4 ECDE

ECDE has not been given much attention in the current system. One of the areas of concern in the proposed curriculum reform was inadequate inculcation of national values and character leading to low moral values; inadequate integration of positive values, attitudes and patriotism in curriculum; and low numeracy and literacy levels. ECDE should be integrated in the national education system this will ensure inculcation of national values and other issues are introduced from the formation stage. This requires that the teachers be trained or re-trained to handle the developed curriculum. This can further be enhanced by recruiting, remunerating and deploying teachers.

3.5 Establish Open and Distance Learning/ e-learning institutions

Issues of access and equity have been key consideration in the proposed curriculum reform. Establishment of open and distance learning/ e-learning institutions help in dealing with the two issues among other benefits. This will increase access and ensure education for all; diversify modes of curriculum delivery; and assist in training and in-servicing the tutors and teachers who will deliver curriculum as they continue to work in the schools/ colleges as a measure to address the low teacher-pupil ratio.

There will be need for reaching marginalized communities through distance and e-learning modes of delivery. This will ensure access of education by the marginalized communities, the nomads, the vulnerable groups and hard to reach populations who cannot access formal schools. Their curriculum should also be tailor made to meet the needs of these groups.

3.6 Infrastructural development and improvement

The proposed curriculum reform requires infrastructural development and improvement for quality teaching and learning. For effective curriculum implementation there should be adequate classrooms , libraries or learning resource centres, ICT rooms , administration blocks, staffrooms, adequate playgrounds, talents development facilities and equipment that will aid in curriculum implementation. This will help to deal with the issues of mismatch between skills acquired and labour market demands; address the proposed paths of academic, talent and technical/vocational; and ICT integration in teaching and learning at all levels.

3.7 Structure of the education system

The Odhiambo task force (2012) established that Kenya's education system has the longest stay at the elementary level (8yrs) among selected countries (average 6yrs) and as a result it recommended structuring of the education system. The curriculum should be re-structured and differentiated at various levels with aim identifying talents and harmonizing human development stages with these levels of education. Thus at age five (toddler stage) there is a transition from ECDE to primary

education, onset of adolescence years coincides with junior secondary school while teenage years coincides with senior secondary school / college and university education for the young adults who have already identified their career paths . A High school diploma should be offered at end senior school. Therefore there will be need to shift from the current structure.

3.8 Stakeholders' support

Stakeholders' support and attitude are key consideration in effective curriculum implementation. Stakeholders are individuals or institutions interested in the curriculum. Stakeholders include learners who are the centre of the curriculum; teachers are the curriculum implementers and they are also involved in the development of curriculum; parents are financiers and they also provide children who attend schools; the community and professional organizations that absorb the graduates. Stakeholders' support will be achieved through creation of awareness and their involvement in the entire curriculum process. There is need for a well co-ordinated publicity on the need for curriculum reforms.

3.9 Legal framework to boost participation by stakeholders the education act 2013 need to be enhanced and amended to conforms with demands of the curriculum reforms and constitution 2010.

3.10 Management and governance – this should ensure curriculum implementation is effected and the necessary facilities, learning and teaching materials and human resources are available. Hence the need for school managers (board of management) who are literate to the level of basic principles of education management. . This

may call for retraining of the school managers, BOM s and development of training materials at KEMI.

3.11 Research and innovation – we should endeavor to carry out research to ensure that all the actions taken in the reforms conform with research findings. Therefore, there is need for establishment of a National Education Research Institute, an equivalent of KEMRI, KARI among others, to continually research on the curriculum and make necessary recommendations in time

3.12 Capitation and Funding

Curriculum implementation requires finances. For effective implementation it is important to determine sources of funding. Is it from the government, parents, donors, other stakeholders or a combination of various financiers? The government should take full responsibility of curriculum development, teacher training, registration and certification of teachers, public exams and quality assurance services to ensure quality and relevance is maintained.

3.13 Assessment methods

National qualification framework need to be established and provision of differentiated assessments that measure competencies. This is in contrary to the current situation where learners are assessed in the same manner. The assessment methods that need to be developed should appreciate that learners have different competencies. The proposed curriculum is competency based curriculum and

therefore assessment methods should measure what the learners have learned and not what the teacher or instructor thinks he has taught.

4.0 Conclusion

In view of the on-going discussion on curriculum reforms in Kenya, one requires to see if there is need for any reforms by looking at the society and its current needs against the curriculum in place and ask the following questions: How is our current curriculum? Does it address educational issues raised in vision 2030, constitution 2010 and our national educational goals? Is it objective based or competency based? What are the issues and the needs of our society today? Are they met by the curriculum that is in place? Are the reforms necessary and what needs to be done to ensure the needs are met by the curriculum? Are we ready for implementation of reforms, if any?

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