



Education Sustainability as a Vehicle to Country Development

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ABSTRACT

According to the constitution of Kenya, 2010 and the Basic Education Act 2012, Education is a right that each child in Kenya must be given. It is on this premise that the government of Kenya spends more than five per cent of her GDP in Education. Every child has a right to free and quality education provided by the government. World bodies like UNESCO, USAid have played a major role in promoting access to quality education at all levels in the society in order to transform the society by reorienting education. Such bodies work with the government to ensure that students through the education system develop knowledge, skills, values and acceptable behaviors that are needed for sustainable development in the world. The Kenya government in her endeavor to give quality education for sustainability has changed the curriculum to ensure that a

holistic student will be the end product. The curriculum known as the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) is premised on different theories that are aimed at identifying the learner's strength and ensuring that learners' talents are identified and nurtured. This paper discusses the links between education and sustainability with an aim of promoting learning that links knowledge that the students learn at school or within the society, their inquisitive skills developed through the education circles and their ability to perform different activities in order to help them build a healthy sustainable future for their communities and the world at large. The Vision 2030 has one of its objective aimed at transforming Kenya into a newly industrialized, middle-income country providing a high quality of life to all its citizens. It is envisaged that education sector will play a major role in the country's endeavour to industrialize by the year 2030.

Key words: Education, sustainability, curriculum, competency, development, Vision 2030

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Several reviews have been done to the Education curriculum in Kenya since the Ominde Commission in 1964. These have been described as curriculum reforms, curriculum change, curriculum review, and curriculum innovation. These reviews have been necessitated by various dynamics experienced in the world.

The education commissions and taskforces were formed and commissioned for a purpose. They were aimed at fulfilling Education for All (EFA) goals, MDG's (Millennium Development Goals), SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) and Vision 2030. Despite various achievements, Kenya's education sector continued to face challenges which led to weak linkages between the education and the labor market. To a large extent, formal education has been focusing almost exclusively on academic specializations without proactively generating technical, vocational and other talents, skills and aptitudes to support the country's development agenda. The realization of these shortcomings led to the need for the change of the curriculum. The competence based Curriculum (CBC) is not only aimed at aligning education sector to the 2010 constitution but also to Vision 2030 which is aimed at turning around the country from being a developing one to a middle income country.

2.1 Government's Initiative: Why the government decided to change to CBC

The 8-4-4 (that is, 8 years in primary school, 4 years in secondary school and 4 years at

university level) system of education which was over 30 years old was found not to be compatible with the labor market needs or employment which prompted the government and education stakeholders to come up with a new curriculum that would hopefully bridge the gap. The CBC (or 2-6-3-3-3) system that encompasses two years at pre-primary level, 6 years at primary and junior secondary level (3 years each), 3 years at senior secondary level and 3 years at university level came up as the identified alternative. The 8-4-4 system also proved to be broad and burdensome to learners.

The 8-4-4 system was criticized as having neglected the sectors which accelerate growth such as agriculture, construction and fishing among others resulting to skills imbalance in the job market causing unemployment among Kenyan youth which was at 40 % by 2020. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) was also included by the government as a key component of achieving Vision 2030. Therefore, the 2-6-3-3-3 system was identified as the ultimate remedy to limitations identified in 8-4-4 system of education as it is entirely skill based. The curriculum was piloted in May 2017 and September 2017 across 470 schools, 10 from each county in Kenya. Though an important exercise, the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) members raised concerns that, it was not the appropriate time for piloting and that the programme was being hurried. A better framework for implementation was required. Teacher's preparedness for the programme was also in question as well as provision of tools and workshops for art and craft.

According to the proposed new curriculum, there would be no examinations. However, children would be subjected to Continuous Assessment Tests (CATS) on skills acquired

as opposed to cramming for examinations. Children with special needs, would be incorporated in the curriculum which would integrate internet communication and technology (ICT) at all levels of education. Subjects in the new curriculum would include Kiswahili, English, Literacy and Mother tongue, Science, Social studies and agricultural activities. The first assessment was conducted in October 2019 to all the grade three learners across the country. The feedback from the assessment was shared by teachers within their respective schools. Grade four roll out started in earnest in January 2020. In Upper primary, children would take subjects including Kiswahili, English, Mathematics, Home Science, Agriculture, Science and Creative Arts, Moral and Life skills, Physical and Health education. Other subjects would be social studies (Citizenship, Geography and History) while there would also be an option of a foreign language such as French German Chinese and Arabic. Digital literacy, financial literacy and pertinent contemporary issues would be integrated across all learning areas. Children would then proceed to Junior secondary (grades 7, 8, 9) and then to Senior secondary which encompass grades 10, 11 and 12. Graduates of the system would later take vocational training or proceed to universities.

The new curriculum would however, require heavy spending to equip teachers with necessary skills and tools. This is because learning would incorporate practical sessions as opposed to oral teaching. Since teachers would be required to have small groups of students, shortage of teachers poses another challenge if quality education is to be maintained a major concern by the government. For example, by the year 2017, teacher deficit was estimated to be 87,000, though the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) had promised to hire 5000 teachers by

June the same year. Further TSC intended to deploy 2205 more teachers to primary schools. On the side of infrastructure development, the government was yet to invest adequately, while the intentions of having 100 % transition from primary to secondary schools by 2018 was yet to be achieved (Henry Wanyama February 1, 2017).

3.0 Challenges faced by African Governments in Education sustainability

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) report (2015) outlined specific areas that constrained development of talents within the education curriculum. The areas mentioned included but not limited to inadequate training facilities and resource materials at all levels; over-emphasis on examinable subjects during delivery of curriculum at the expense of teaching of physical education, performing arts and other creative arts; parental and community attitude that de-emphasize co-curricular activities; low human resource capacity due to inadequate preparation of teacher trainees in co- curricular activities; and inadequate finance to implement, organize and coordinate the physical education , performing arts and creative arts competitions.

To respond to these challenges, the government came up with strategies which were aimed at ensuring that co-curricular activities harnessed learner's potential and developed them into all rounded individuals with requisite skills knowledge, competences, values and attitudes. The strategies included improving coordination of the co-curricular activities at the grass root levels, increase funding to manage and provide adequate facilities and materials for co-curricular activities, identifying and

equipping talent development centers and incorporating more partners to support co-curricular activities among others.

The Government developed the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) 2013-2018 programme for delivering the reforms required by the Basic Education Act of 2013; Sessional Paper No. 14 of 2012; Jubilee Manifesto (2012); Kenya Vision 2030; Medium Term Plan II (2013-2018) and the Constitution of Kenya 2010. Building on the achievements and lessons learnt from Kenya Education Sector Strategic Plan (KESSP) (2005 - 2010), the NESP planning process incorporated the recommendations of the National Education Task Force, 2012. The sector plan as set out in NESP emphasizes a holistic and balanced development of the entire education sector. The Basic Education Act (2013) on the other hand incorporated recommendations of the Taskforce on the realignment of education to the Constitution (2010) and Vision 2030 of 2013 (MOEST, 2015). The task force, curriculum change, sessional papers among others are all geared towards making the education in Kenya more competitive and a vehicle towards sustainable development

After the 7-4-2-3 (7 years at primary school, 4 years at ordinary secondary level (O-level), 2 years at advanced secondary level (A Level and 3 years at university) system of education, 8.4.4 system of education was introduced in 1985 to address the gap of transition from higher institutions of learning to the world of work. Though the system initially had noble intentions, it somehow proved expensive to be sustained, though, the aim was to shift education from being examination-oriented to a practical and technical curriculum which was to be enhanced through TVET. It is therefore

evident that the government of Kenya had positive initiatives aimed at ensuring that children in Kenya have access to quality basic education through Free Primary Education (FPE) and Free Day Secondary School Tuition. Through this, students would access Free Day School Tuition. The FPE and Free Day secondary school education which were introduced by the NARC government in 2003, have come a long way in helping the needy and poor families in their education. The wing to fly initiative pioneered by Equity bank, the KCB and Cooperative banks provide support to the needy students. Other financial institutions provide assistance to those who secure good marks in KCPE. The efforts are all geared towards making the students to continue with their studies uninterrupted.

The new curriculum was aimed at identifying the multi-talents that are exhibited by learners from early age with an aim of nurturing them. The school curriculum therefore recognizes and accommodates a syllabus that includes the discovery of gifts and talents among the learners. The new curriculum ensures that the talented and gifted students are identified regardless of where they are schooling (public or private schools). The notion that the well-known talent schools are private and costly has been addressed of by the new curriculum.

Vision 2030 may not be fully accomplished without focusing and enhancing creativity and innovations that the young and energetic children and the youth display in a variety of disciplines. The Ministry of Education and all stakeholders have endeavoured to bring a new curriculum that is holistic and all-inclusive and has even accommodated all the groups in the society including the gifted and the talented. Efforts have been extended

further by the government by bringing to focus the recommendations made in MGDGs, SDGs, Vision 2030 and the Medium Term Plan II (2013-2018) strategies. According to African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC), (2017), the changes proposed in the new curriculum (2013-2018) that the government of Kenya started to implement in 2018 are aligned to the vision of the new curriculum reform which aims at enabling every Kenyan to become an engaged, empowered and ethical citizen. This will be achieved by providing every Kenyan learner with world class standards in the skills and knowledge that they deserve, and which they need in order to thrive in the 21st century. However, with constrained resource provision in many public primary schools, the implementation process and sustainability of the new curriculum may find hindrances.

Another change in the new curriculum (CBC) is elimination of summative evaluation. This refers to examinations that are done at the end of 8 years of primary school, four years of secondary school, in the 8-4-4 system of education. Instead, it spreads out the evaluation throughout the duration of the child's stay in school. Children will be assessed based on their competencies, meaning their ability to apply knowledge and skills in performing various tasks within specific settings. This will help to determine the individual strengths and weaknesses of the learners. This initiative may probably raise hopes among the talented and gifted children though the preparation of assessment mechanisms of the same may prove to be a daunting challenge. Even though recommendations were made to train teachers on the identification of talents among children, fears have been raised that trainers/teachers may be unavailable ((UNICEF).

Life skills refer to both psychosocial and interpersonal skills that can assist people to make informed decisions, communicate effectively and develop coping and self-management skills that would lead to a healthy and productive life. Accordingly, children would also be exposed to life skills from pre-primary in addition to all the other subjects that they would be taught. This would ensure that from an early age, children would have the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills to help them navigate life's challenges as they progress with their education. African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC) has documented that the school is just one place where the teaching of life skills occurs. In the home and family setting, parents shape the attitudes, skills, and values that young people acquire. The new curriculum therefore offers parents the opportunity to be involved in their children's education. These empowered parents will take the initiative to participate in school, at home and within the community. More importantly, the curriculum will help ensure the holistic development of children within a friendly learning environment.

There are eight learning areas for lower primary. They include literacy; Kiswahili/sign language, English, indigenous language; mathematics; environment (science, social and agriculture); hygiene and nutrition; religious moral; and life skills activities; movement and creative activities (art, craft, music, and physical education). ICT will be a learning tool. Upper primary grades 4, 5 and 6 have similar subjects; only that home science, physical education and agriculture appear as independent subjects.

4.0 Areas of development accruing from education

The education system in Kenya should strive to prepare the learners with global viewpoints. Students graduating from local universities should be globally competitive. Their job markets should cross the borders of Kenya. Global education opens the eyes and minds to the realities of the globalized world. It creates mobility of manpower from one region to the other. According to the Kenya Bureau of Statistics (KBS), 2019, the amount of remittance by Kenyans who work outside the country has now exceeded the amount earned from tourism, agriculture and all the other major sectors. Education offered in Kenya should awaken the graduates to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all. To Kenya, higher education should be seen as a catalyst that promotes economic growth, reduced poverty and ensures sustainable development. The heart of globalized education is enabling young people to participate in shaping a better, shared future for the world. Global education emphasizes the unity and interdependence of human society, develops a sense of self, and appreciation of cultural diversity affirms social justice and human rights, and builds peace and actions for a sustainable future in different times and places. Global education promotes positive values and assists students to take responsibility for their actions and to see themselves as global citizens who can contribute to a more peaceful, just and sustainable world.

Global education raises the awareness of global challenges like poverty, unfair distribution of opportunities and resources, environmental degradation and climate change, violent conflicts and non-respect of human rights. It creates a deeper understanding of the complex underlying issues. It aims at changing people's attitudes

and encourages them to reflect on their own role in the world. It motivates and empowers people to become active as responsible global citizens.

Education for sustainability requires innovation in the education sector.

4.1 Basic education content

The basic education content was designed with a view of equipping the learners with the relevant knowledge that emphasizes on technology, innovation and entrepreneurship (Vision 2030). It incorporates the development of the full capacities, living and working in dignity, enhancing the quality of lives, making informed decisions and continuing with learning as a life-long engagement. The New curriculum (CBC) would ensure that learners are not graded as failures in their assessments as they have inherent strengths that should be identified. Learners will be allowed to move to the next level based on their competency in skills and knowledge gained. This model is in line with most African countries specifically South Africa. Students can choose STEM (Sciences, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects or move to Arts and Music among others. The content of the CBC emphasizes on the need for acquisition of skills, attitudes and knowledge and applying them in real life situations. Learners who show competency in Art subjects would move along that line. The curriculum is in line with the government vision 2030 initiatives of transforming Kenya into a "newly industrializing, middle-income country providing a high quality of life to all its citizens in a clean and secure environment.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Education in Kenya has gone through many changes. To sustain these changes, there is need for consistence in funding the sector. Sustaining curriculum for the country's development will involve working closely with development partners, NGOs, Private sector among others. There is need to assess the CBC as it progresses in order to mitigate any shortcomings

Kenya has continued to use a big proportion of her GDP on education. Curriculum change, task force, sessional papers and various commissions that were formed since independence tried to look into ways in which education in Kenya can be a tool of National development. This has remained to be the main pillar of various changes in the Education sector in Kenya.

Vision 2030 is a government initiative that would transform the country into a middle income country. Education sector has been considered as one of the vehicles through which the required transformation would be achieved. The need to change the curriculum

to CBC was as result of the Vision 2030 initiative.

Being part of the global village, Kenya should not lag behind in her thirst to embrace the new world advancements. Some of the initiatives taken by the government include:

Recruitment of more teachers: However, the teacher student ratio in Kenya primary schools stands at 1: 60. This makes it difficult for learners to achieve the instructions as envisioned in CBC. Quality education will ensure better output. The large number of students is not commensurate with the number of classrooms or other facilities in schools.

Provision of bursaries to the needy, FPF and Free Day Secondary Education to improve access to education: This would ensure the disadvantaged members of our society have access to quality education. Other initiatives undertaken by the government include: working closely with international agencies and institutions like UNESCO, USAid among others.

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