

# Challenges Facing the Pioneer Candidate Class Transiting to Junior Secondary School Under the Competency-Based Curriculum in Nakuru North Sub-County of Nakuru County, Kenya

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## Abstract

Kenya is in the process of transitioning from a content-based to a competency-based educational system. Teachers are likely to face challenges when preparing grade six learners to transition from primary to junior secondary in accordance with the CBC curriculum, particularly in relation to the schools offering junior secondary classes, whether in primary or secondary schools, and the selection of junior secondary schools, the underlying assumptions, the security of grade six learners in secondary schools, and the emotional effects it may have on the young boys and girls being away from their parents. In this regard, this study was conducted to investigate the challenges likely to be encountered with the transition of the grade six learners from primary to junior secondary under the competency based curriculum in Nakuru North Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive case study design targeting all the 120 head teachers in all the 120 public and private primary schools in Nakuru North sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya. Purposive sampling was used to select the 120 head teachers based on the fact that they are the key HOIs and implementers of CBC. As data collecting techniques, a questionnaire and an observation checklist were utilized. The study found that the government was unclear on where the junior secondary schools were not fully prepared for the evaluation that will inform stakeholders on the preparedness of candidates in grade six to transit to junior secondary of new curriculum; infrastructures available in schools were insufficient for successful evaluation of competency-based curriculum; and the government hurriedly implemented CBC in schools without first addressing challenges. Inadequate teaching and learning materials, as well as an unfavorable teaching and learning atmosphere. The research suggests that the Ministry of Education, through TSC, spend more in teachers and their training, as well as include teachers in the curriculum reform process, in order to foster a positive attitude among teachers and ensure the effective implementation of Competency Based Curriculum..

**Keywords:** competency-based curriculum, teacher training, transition to from primary to junior secondary

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## I. Introduction

Curriculum is the medium through which nations around the world empower the general public with the values, knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary for them to be economically and socially engaged, in order to attain national and personal development. Curriculum development is usually necessitated by the desire to respond to changes, and as such any quality curriculum development is a continuous and on-going process (Sanchez, and Romero, 2019). A good curriculum needs to align itself with global trends of rapid expansion of knowledge, broadening information and communication technologies, and the result is the constant change in the skills needed by learners to fit in the job market (UNESCO, 2021).

Many countries have shifted from content based curricula to competency based teaching learning approaches. According to Fein (2020) competency based teaching-learning approaches were implemented first in teacher education in the United States of America in the 1970s. Since then, competency based learning approaches have been developed and implemented in a range of professional areas and learning institutions in various countries (Sanchez & Romero, 2019).

According to UNESCO (2019) Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) is a vehicle through which a country can empower its citizens with skills, knowledge and values that will help them fit in the global village which is characterized by advancing technology. Further, IBE-UNESCO (2017) highlighted that CBC enables learners to perform practically and measurably, using the skills acquired through learner-centered pedagogy. As

a result, many countries have carried out reforms in curricula in connection with the concepts of key competences and learning outcomes (OECD, 2020).

According to Sitenei (2020), a major curriculum change occurred in Kenya in 1985, when the 8-4-4 educational system was implemented in response to suggestions of the Presidential Working Party on the Establishment of the Second University in Kenya. The 8-4-4 method was primarily influenced by a self-reliance concept. Since then, other formative and summative evaluations, as well as task-force findings, have resulted in national curriculum reviews in 1992, 1995, and 2002. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) adopted a competence-based curriculum approach in the reforms as the end of this curriculum review process (Wambua and Waweru, 2019).

In the Kenyan setting, competence-based education is defined as emphasizing what a learner is expected to accomplish rather than what the learner is required to know. As a result, competency-based education is learner-centered, with a strong emphasis on the changing needs of learners, educators, and society at large. This means that the curriculum provides learners with opportunities to acquire and apply information, skills, attitudes, and values to day-to-day problem solving while emphasizing 21st century abilities (Sifuna&Obonyo, 2019).

According to Kusaka (2021), the country is changing from an 8-4-4 structure to a 2-6-3-3-3 structure with the introduction of competency-based curriculum - pre-primary (2 years), primary (6 years), and secondary education (6 years). This new Competency-Based Curriculum focuses on seven fundamental competencies: i) communication and cooperation, ii) creativity and imagination, iii) critical thinking and problem solving, iv) digital literacy, v) citizenship, vi) learning to learn, and vii) self-efficacy. The adoption of competency-based curriculum is being done in stages, commencing with pre-primary and lower primary courses in January 2018.

Regular assessments are required when a new curriculum is being implemented as a process of obtaining and using information to discover issues and adjust implementation tactics. The implementation of a new curriculum is predicted to be difficult. According to Shiundu and Omulando (1992), as cited in Oluoch (2020), curriculum development is a multi-stage process that includes conducting a situational analysis, formulating objectives, establishing the curriculum project, constructing the program, piloting the new program in selected schools, improving the new program, implementation, evaluation, and maintenance. However, investigations have revealed inadequate curriculum implementation in schools and a lack of usage of CBC teaching-learning methodologies in pre-primary schools (Ondimu, 2018). CEMASTE (2022) continue to confirm that one of the critical milestones of implementing CBC is the transition of the learners currently in grade six to grade seven at Junior Secondary School (JSS) based on the fact that a number of challenges have been raised including inadequate infrastructure, lack of enough teachers, poorly trained teachers to handle CBC etc. Based on such revelations, this study sought to establish the constraints likely to be experienced during the transition of grade 6 learners to junior secondary and the general challenges facing the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum in Kenya, with specific focus on Nakuru North Sub-County, Nakuru County.

The objectives of the study were to:

- i. Establish the challenges affecting the teachers dealing with the pioneer grade six candidates of the competency based curriculum in Kenya;
- ii. Determine the emotional effects of age and security of the young boys and girls in grade six of the competency based curriculum in Kenya;
- iii. Find out the effects of government policy on the junior secondary of the competency based curriculum in Kenya.

The research was prompted by a rising concern among education stakeholders in the country over the government's misunderstanding around the transfer of the pioneer grade six class to junior secondary of the competency-based curriculum. The government initially stated that junior secondary would be hosted in primary schools, a move that was welcomed to facilitate a smooth transition to secondary school, but there was a drastic change in policy that has caused both panic and anxiety on the security and emotional adjustment of grade six learners. The curriculum is based on national educational goals and is intended to give chances for the identification of skills and potential brought to schools by students, as well as to foster such abilities and potential through paths and specified courses.

## **II. Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive case study research design. There are many schools in Nakuru County that have learners expected to transit from grade six to junior secondary but only the case of learners in Nakuru North sub county was used to generalize the findings to other parts of the county and the country at large. The research design was considered relevant to this study since the researcher only reported the situation facing the challenges encountered by the teachers preparing the grade six learners for transition from primary to junior secondary schools of the competency-based curriculum in Nakuru North Sub-County, Nakuru County without active manipulation of study variables. The target population for the study was all the 120 head-teachers in all

the 60 public and 60 private primary schools in Nakuru North Sub- County, Nakuru County. Purposively, the school heads were considered since they are the people who feel the most heat brought along with CBC challenges and deficiencies. Data was collected by a structured likert rated questionnaire in order to obtain quantitative data that was analysed by use of SPSS version 25.0.

### III. Results and Discussion

**Table 1: Challenges Facing the Teachers**

| Statement  | 1 | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | Mean | SD    |
|--|---|----|----|----|----|------|-------|
| Lack of adequate school infrastructure             | 9 | 9  | 21 | 36 | 24 | 3.58 | 1.213 |
| Inadequate training of teachers on CBC             | 2 | 5  | 37 | 32 | 23 | 3.70 | .952  |
| Lack of adequate teaching and learning materials   | 7 | 11 | 19 | 40 | 22 | 3.60 | 1.160 |
| Large class size and inadequate number of teachers | 7 | 12 | 12 | 42 | 26 | 3.69 | 1.192 |

In relation to the challenges faced by teachers, majority of the respondents agreed that: lack of adequate school infrastructure (m=3.58, sd=1.213); inadequate training of teachers on cbc (m=3.7, sd=0.952); lack of adequate teaching and learning materials (m=3.60, sd=1.160); and, large class size and inadequate number of teachers (m=3.69, sd=1.192) are challenges that are facing the current CBC implementation and expected to manifest themselves in junior secondary.

**Table 2: Security and the Emotional Effect to Change of Environment to Junior Secondary**

| Statement  | 1 | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | Mean | SD    |
|--|---|----|----|----|----|------|-------|
| Fear of adverse effects by the environment change due to underage                      | 2 | 7  | 13 | 25 | 52 | 4.19 | 1.047 |
| Natural fear of their seniors in senior secondary schools (inferiority complex)        | 4 | 7  | 19 | 36 | 33 | 3.88 | 1.081 |
| Fear of bullying, harassment and abuse by the senior secondary learners                | 0 | 3  | 15 | 14 | 67 | 4.46 | .861  |
| Lack of designated toilets and sanitation facilities for the junior secondary learners | 5 | 10 | 12 | 21 | 51 | 4.04 | 1.228 |

Majority of the respondents strongly agreed that fear of bullying, harassment and abuse by the senior secondary learners (m=4.46, sd=.861) is a key challenge to the junior secondary learners transiting from grade 6. In relation to other security and the emotional effect due to change of the environment by the junior secondary learners, majority of the respondents agreed that: there is the fear of adverse effects by the environment change due to underage (m=4.19, sd=1.047); there is natural fear of their seniors in senior secondary schools (inferiority complex) (m=3.88, sd=1.081); and, lack of designated toilets and sanitation facilities for the junior secondary learners (m=4.04, sd=1.228) form part of the challenges junior secondary school learners are likely to face in their new environs.

**Table 3: Government Based Challenges on the Implementation of CBC**

| Statement   | 1 | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | Mean | SD    |
|---|---|----|----|----|----|------|-------|
| Lack of clear guidelines on transition based on poor understanding of policy implementers | 8 | 11 | 18 | 39 | 23 | 3.59 | 1.195 |
| Poor standardization and transition policies  | 5 | 11 | 27 | 31 | 25 | 3.61 | 1.132 |
| Poor stakeholders involvement leading to conflicts  | 2 | 7  | 17 | 30 | 43 | 4.06 | 1.038 |
| Inadequacy of resources (financial and human resources providence)                        | 6 | 11 | 12 | 33 | 37 | 3.85 | 1.215 |

In relation to the government based challenges affecting the transition from grade six to junior secondary, majority of the respondents agreed that: lack of clear guidelines on transition based on poor understanding of policy implementers (m=3.59, sd=1.195); poor standardization and transition policies (m=3.61, sd=1.132); poor stakeholders involvement leading to conflicts (m=4.06, sd=1.038); and, inadequacy of resources (financial and human resources providence) (m=3.85, sd=1.215) are the major challenges affecting the implementation of junior secondary as catalyzed by the government. In another nominal rated question, 96.97% of the respondents who translated to 95 head teachers out of the 99 who respondent argued that the money disbursed in the schools by the government was not enough for the implementation of CBC, the programme was being hurriedly implemented, there were no enough teachers in schools to ensure successful implementation

of CBC and there were no established channels of communication in school to aid in the implementation of new curriculum.

#### **IV. Conclusions**

This study sought to establish the challenges the grade six pupils and teachers have been experiencing as they prepare for the transition of the pioneer grade six pupils to junior secondary of the Competency-Based Curriculum in Kenya. Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made:

Teachers, as important curriculum implementers, were unprepared for the shift of grade six students to the junior secondary curriculum. Some teachers thought that adapting their teaching method to a child's specific learning type was still challenging. This meant that some teachers were adamant about switching from a content-based to a competency-based curriculum. This difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that only a limited number of instructors were taught or attended seminars on how to deal with the grade six students who would be transitioning to junior secondary school the following year.

The infrastructure provided in contemporary secondary schools was insufficient to facilitate grade six students shifting to junior of competency-based curriculum. Despite having a huge number of pupils in the current form one to four courses, most schools struggled with understaffing. The teaching and learning materials provided in the schools were insufficient for the amount of students; there were no laboratories or dorms.

The government rushed CBC into schools without first addressing issues such as understaffing, lack of teaching and learning materials, infrastructure; classrooms and laboratories, and an unpleasant teaching and learning atmosphere. Furthermore, the administration did not first develop efficient communication and consultation mechanisms. These have had a severe influence on the pioneer grade six students who are transferring to junior secondary schools in Nakuru North sub-county, Nakuru County.

#### **V. Recommendations**

From the conclusions presented above, the following recommendations were made:

Teachers should be fully prepared for the transition i.e how to handle the grade six pupils transiting to junior secondary of competency based curriculum through in-service training, seminars and workshops. The Kenya Institute for the Curriculum Development should highly involve teachers in curriculum change process to create a positive attitude among them for smooth transition of the grade six pupils of Competency Based Curriculum to junior secondary.

The government through ministry of education should ensure timely disbursement of the funds in the schools. Urgently address the issue of where the grade six pupils will be domiciled since in secondary schools they may face the challenge of bullying from their seniors in form one to four meaning their security and psychological welfare could be compromised.

The government through ministry of education should ensure that the education officers are frequently reviewing and monitoring progress of CBC in all schools.

Further, the government through the ministry of education should ensure that all schools have adequate infrastructures, that is employ more teachers, provide adequate teaching and learning materials, support schools in construction of more classrooms, laboratories; among others.

Finally, The Ministry of Education should organize campaigns to sensitize parents, teachers and other stakeholders on their roles in ensuring proper and successful transition of the grade six pupils to junior secondary of CBC.

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