

## **CHALLENGES FACED BY PARENTS IN IMPLEMENTING COMPETENCE BASED CURRICULUM IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: KENYAN PERSPECTIVE**

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### **Abstract**

The successful implementation of competency-based curriculum at all education levels will be determined by parental understanding of skills, knowledge and attitudes imparted. Parental engagement in educational activities for their children is very critical in determining their educational achievement. They are key educators of their children irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds. As they engage in school activities, a connection is established between home and school. Additionally, parental engagement is expedient in promoting confidence in children, enhancing their communication skills, motivating them, increasing their interest in education among other benefits. Clearly, several parents in Kenya lack an understanding of the new education system; and this cause mixed reactions an impediment to the successful implementation of competency-based curriculum in primary schools in the country. Although there are many successes associated with the curriculum change, challenges have also been encountered. Base on Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence theory this paper seeks to establish challenges faced by parents in implementing competence based curriculum in primary schools, understanding and skills, reality on the ground, successes and finally recommendations on the implementation of competency-based curriculum in the Kenyan primary schools. This paper relied on secondary data to investigate the main challenges faced by parents in the implementation of competence-based curriculum (CBC) in Kenya. Results show that there are differences in children's academic achievement between the parental involvement profiles, indicating children whose parents have a low involvement have lower academic achievement. Findings are in line with international research evidence, suggesting the need to focus on this variable in Kenya. Further, low levels of education of parents, communication barrier, time challenge and lack of the necessary materials and resources required to implement the curriculum.

**Key Words: Parental engagement, children's academic achievement, family and school relations, CBC, challenges, implementation,**

## INTRODUCTION

The school-family collaboration is embedded as the basis of several educational policies and programmes. This collaboration also known as parental involvement is conceptualized as the abilities of parents to work with schools in a manner that aids the child's holistic development (Antony-Newman, 2019). Empirical findings have proven a positive association between parental involvement in education and academic achievement (Pérez Sánchez, Betancort Montesinos and Cabrera Rodríguez, 2013; Tárraga, García and Reyes 2017), improving children's self-esteem and their academic performance (Garbacz, Herman, Thompson, and Reinke, 2017) as well as school retention and attendance (Ross, 2016). Parents and other primary caregivers are the child's first teachers and this responsibility continues when the child starts school and withstands even in adulthood. Parental engagement in their children's education through a collaborative partnership with schools, research indicates, positively impacts on school related outcomes for children (Epstein, 2000; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Dunst, Johanson, Rounds, Trivet & Hamby, 1992; Kalayci and Oz, 2018; Wong, Ho, Wong, Tung, Chow, Rao and Ip, 2018). In a bid to prepare students for the impending challenges in the rapidly changing world, Kenya like all East African countries and the entire world have realized the need to reform their education systems to competency based curriculum with a common goal of providing quality education to its nationals. Unlike the content-based curriculum, in competency-based curriculum learners are equipped with values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and are also provided with competencies essential for future community service. This is because education serves as a key driver for social and economic development for any nation. Nations with improved education systems are much more advanced in terms of technological and economic aspects. In order for an education system in a country to keep in pace with the dynamics in the economic, social and technological world, curriculum is constantly reviewed ( Momanyi and Rop, 2020). In addition, Parents play a key role in the education of their children as they are supposed to make constant follow ups and assist learners in doing the assigned activities at home. According to (Mwarari, Githui and Mwenje ( 2020 ), the learners' future does not depend on teachers' efforts only but also to a greater extent is determined by parents as co-educators. With the introduction of CBC therefore, the relationship between parents, learners and the teachers has to be strengthened hence easier achievement of goals.

Kenya education system has undergone three fundamental reforms since independence. according to Ominde's commission report of 1963, education was stratified along racial lines i.e., education for Europeans, education for Africans and education for Asians. Immediately after Kenyan attained independence, educational reform that occurred resulted in to a single education system which integrated subjects that could promote national cohesion. This change led to the removal of racial education to the 7-4-2-3 system (Wanjohi, 2011). The second educational reform occurred in 1985 following the recommendation report of Mackay's commission. It arose from the concerns about the inadequacy of the 7-4-2-3 in promoting sustainable employment (Justus and Inyega, 2021). This led to the adoption of the 8.4.4. system whose philosophy was education for self-reliance. Ever since its adoption, the 8.4.4 system experienced infrastructural and resource challenges, lack of enough trained teachers, lack of skills in graduates and increased dropouts. This exemplifies that the 8.4.4 system never accomplished its mandate (Anyona A. 2012).

In the year 2009 when KIE reviewed the 8-4-4 system of education, it was evident from their report that the 8-4-4 curriculum could not provide practical skills that are crucial for economic development. The country still experienced inadequate skilled workforce to spur it towards the Kenya Vision-2030, yet many youths are still unemployed and therefore, it is only through education reforms that it will achieve its goals. Besides, it has been argued that the 8-4-4 curriculum had many flaws; it had shallow content, was examination based, misallocation of resources; high teacher learner ratios, inadequate teaching-learning resources and poor teacher training hence lack of teacher preparedness and parental engagement (Akala, 2021). These factors among other have compromised the effectiveness and education quality in the country hence the recommendation by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) for a paradigm shift in the curriculum. Competency based curriculum aims at equipping learners with the 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies; communication and collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, self-efficacy, creativity and imagination, digital literacy, self-efficacy and learning to learn.

It was observed that most learners exiting this system of education had inadequate skills and competencies required in the job market. As a result, the adoption of competency-based curriculum (CBC) was proposed. The main aim of this proposal was to align the Kenyan education and training as per the new constitution. This was geared towards meeting education needs so that the Kenya's vision 2030 can be attained (Cheptoo and Ramdas (2020). The CBC curriculum launched by the ministry of education in 2017 marked a major transition from 8-4-4 system of education to the 2-6-3-3-3 education system and parental engagement is key. Therefore, the relationship between parents, learners and the teachers needs to be strengthened for easier achievement of goals. However, most parents have faced challenges in implementing their role in CBC. Hence, the study on challenges faced by parents in the implementing competence-based curriculum in primary schools: Kenyan Perspective.

### **Literature review**

The successful implementation of competency-based curriculum at any level of education will be determined by parental engagement and understanding in the skills, knowledge and attitude imparted to the learners. Parents provide learners who are the beneficiaries of a curriculum. According to Momanyi and Rop (2020), lack of teacher preparedness is one of the impediments to successful curriculum implementation. A study conducted by Silas (2020) further states that several teachers in Kenya lack an understanding of the new education system; and this has complicated successful implementation of competency-based curriculum in most primary schools in the country. Although there are many successes associated with the curriculum change, challenges have also been encountered. This paper therefore seeks to establish challenges facing parents in implementing competence based curriculum in primary schools: Kenyan perspective.

### **Competence based curriculum (CBC)**

Competence based curriculum is intended to develop competence in the learner in seven core competencies namely: self-efficacy, digital learning, communication and collaboration, citizenship, critical thinking and problem solving skills, creativity and imagination and learning to learn (Sifuna and Obonyo, 2019). Competence-based education is based on constructivist approach whereby the student must be actively involved in the process of learning and views the teacher as a guide. Learners are provided with environments that enhance development of competencies (Boahin, 2018).

CBC main emphasis is development of competencies in learners as opposed to knowledge acquisition. Such a system employs learner centered approaches to teaching such as problem solving, role playing, projects, discussions among others. Use of these methods enhances learners' engagement and interaction with the subject material which gives them opportunity to directly explore knowledge that makes them attain the desired experiences. The teacher acts as a guide and or a facilitator and therefore has the responsibility of planning for learning activities that will enable the learner develop the desired specific competencies. CBC Orients itself to acquisition of skill and competences that can be used to solve real life problems as opposed to rote learning. it puts emphases on formative evaluation based on the set competences. Teachers are supposed to do frequent assessment and provide feedback to students to enable them identify their strengths and weaknesses (Cheptoo and Ramdas, 2020).

The government of Kenya through KICD conducted a need assessment which led to the development of competence-based curriculum. The new curriculum was rolled in January 2019 in pre-primary 1, pre- primary 2 and in grades 1,2 and 3. This curriculum emphasizes on the development of skills and competencies that one can apply in real life situations.

### **Parental engagement**

On an international scale, parental involvement in school has long been heralded as an important and positive variable on children's academic and socioemotional development. From an ecological framework, reciprocal positive interactions between these two key socializing spheres, families and schools contribute positively to a child's socioemotional and cognitive development (Bronfenbrenner, 1987). Empirical findings have proven a positive association between parental involvement in education and academic achievement (Pérez Sánchez et al., 2013; Tárraga et al., 2017), improving children's self-esteem and their academic performance (Garbacz et al., 2017) as well as school retention and attendance (Ross, 2016). Family involvement has also been found to be associated with positive school attachment on the part of children (Alcalay et al., 2005) as well as positive school climates (Cowan et al., 2012). Active involvement of parents in child's education is crucial in determining success of outcomes of education. Parents work in collaboration with the school in a manner that enhances holistic development of the child. Researches indicate that parental involvement in child's education brings about positive impacts as far educational outcome is concerned (Mwarari, Githui and Mwenje, 2020). Apart from enhancing educational outcome of the children, other benefits associated with collaborative aspect between the family and the school include; self-growth among parents as they develop leadership skills, satisfaction in parenting, families get connected, school climate and programs get improved and more involvement in adult education (Hindin, and Mueller, 2016). According to Waterford. Org, (2018), parent engagement not only provides support to children academic achievement but also enhances development of lifelong love of learning.

Ministry of education (2019), notes that Parental empowerment and engagement are very important in holistic development of the learner. Cristiana Levinthal de Oliveira Lima and Elina Kuusisto (2019), Refers holistic growth as development of individual child in cognitive, social, spiritual and emotional dimensions and therefore emphasizes on the importance of collaborative role played by the teacher and the parent Holistic development of child. In order to ensure parents are engaged in

their children's education, KICD has developed guidelines that provide strategies on how learning institutions can engage and empower parents. KICD has clearly stipulated the roles of various stakeholders such as teachers, head teachers, learners, parents, county government, and universities among others in the implementation of CBC. Roles of the parent have been highlighted as provision of basic needs for learners, engagement in school activities, serving as a role model to their children, and provision of a conducive learning environment for their children (KICD, 2019). Despite these roles being very straightforward and clear, there has been a lot of complaints by parents in engaging supporting their children in school work.

## **Methodology**

This paper relied on both secondary and primary data to identify challenges faced by parents in implementing competence based curriculum: Kenyan perspective. Relevant desk top literature reviews were done. In addition, the research used both community and school walkabouts to determine challenges and conclusion drawn.

## **Challenges faced by parents in Implementing CBC**

### **1. Communication barrier**

According to daily nation of September 19, 2021, KICD chief executive professor Charles Ong'ondo says that CBC is made to develop key competencies in learners which teachers should assess through homework and assignments. In completion of these assignments' parents are supposed to facilitate and guide the learners by providing them with the necessary support and conducive learning environment. Lack of sufficient information about parental role has resulted to parents doing assignments for their children instead of facilitating and guiding them. Most parents do not understand what should be their role when it comes to assisting children in this new curriculum. In Kenya news agency (2019), a parent reported of being not conversant with the CBC system and therefore unable to assist his child.

According to Mwarari et al., (2020) most parents felt that their engagement in their children's learning activities was not communicated in good time this being escalated by the negative attitude that the school management and teachers have toward parents' engagement.

### **2. Level of education**

The level of education of parents is vital to the child's schooling. Research by Mwenje et al., (2020) on "Assessment of Parental Involvement in Home-Based Learning Activities in Public Primary Schools" indicate increased parental involvement in their children's school activities for educated parents as compared to those with low levels education. This could be attributed to low level of competence in academic activities. This is in agreement with media report on a parent who could not understand the assignments of his child and therefore not in a position to assist the child (People's daily, 2021). Mutea, (2021) also noted that parental involvement as a challenge to illiterate parents. Children with illiterate parents or with no parents at all don't complete their assignments because either the task is difficult for the parent to comprehend or they don't have a guardian to help them (Okalla, 2021).

### **3. Low Income / lack of the necessary resources**

Media report from people's daily of September 20th, 2021 cited cost burden as one of the challenges faced by parents in CBC implementation in sampled areas. Parents interviewed cited cost of printing school assignments as being a burden to them especially those have low income. For example, in these interviews one parent said that CBC is very good but the expenditure he is incurring is much more compared to previous years and thus difficult to manage since he has low income. Others indicated that children are being given expensive projects that require the parent to buy for them the necessary materials to complete the projects. This is the same problem, reported by Okello, (2021), Who also has reported of cases of children being given assignment requiring them to use materials that are very hard to get.

Mutea (2021), points out that parental engagement in CBC is crucial in academic achievement of the learner. The curriculum has been designed with provision of opportunities for parent participation in the implementation process. However, she notes that participation of parents in CBC has been a great challenge especially to the poor and those from disadvantaged communities. Parents from these areas find it difficult to engage in their children's education as their major priority is to cater for basic needs. parents who educate children in private schools are also experiencing high charges on the fee they are required to pay for their children.

### **4. Lack of time to engage with the children**

M'mboga (2021) notes that in implementation of CBC on Kenya, parents have been faced with the challenge of time. This is to imply that majority are not able to create time to help their children with school work. This is common in those families where both parents are working.

### **Salient Features learnt**

Parent-school partnership allows for the conceptualization of roles and relationships and the impact on the development of children in a broader way (Christenson and Reschly, 2010). From this approach, families and schools are the main actors in the construction of their roles and forms of involvement, generating new and varied actions to relate to each other according to the specific educational context

In enhancing parental involvement in CBC implementation, the government should devise ways of sensitizing parents through media campaigns and community forums about their roles in the implementation of CBC. This will enhance collaboration between them and the teachers and they will embrace the aspect of becoming co-educator in ensuring their children benefit from then new curriculum (Owala, 2021). Individual schools can also take up the responsibility of communicating to the parents through Parents' Day meetings. by doing this, parents will be informed about the benefits of CBC and what role they need to play to ensure success of their children education.

The issue of increased cost in educating children is a challenge that has been weighing down most parents. This is due to the demands by schools provide their children with expensive learning materials. This challenge can be addressed by encouraging teachers to use the readily available materials for learning (Business daily, 2021). Instead of demanding a lot of from parents for

assignments, teachers should be encouraged to project the subject content in class room. School management should also engage with parents and teachers in best ways to manage situations such as giving reasonable amounts of homework, improvising teaching and learning materials, providing guidance on the extend to which a parent can help their children with homework among others. By doing all this, the CBC curriculum will not be perceived as a burden by parents and they will be able to embrace it for the betterment of the life of their children.

Parents are coming to terms with the high cost of the new Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) after schools opened this week with the first lot of pupils transitioning to Grade Four.

A spot check revealed that most parents in low-income brackets were not fully prepared to meet the full financial cost of keeping their children in Grade Four under the new education system that emphasises on practical skills rather than theory.

A parent at Moi Forces Academy in Nairobi, who asked not to be named, said he had spent Sh4,000 on books and learning materials for the term already.

“We hear that the government has delivered textbooks to the school, but we have been told to buy certain books so we are lost,” he says, noting that parents are directed to purchase the items from specific outlets.

Irene Chepkoech Ndima, a parent in Uasin Gishu, said enrolling her child for CBC had left a ‘serious’ dent on her family’s finances.

She said aside from buying an assessment book at Sh300, parents were required to buy pupil’s files at around Sh80, a luminous paper that costs around Sh100 a piece and moulding clay, which costs about Sh300.

At Westlands Primary School, parents whose children are proceeding to Grade Four are required to buy 17 exercise books, Kiswahili dictionary (Kamusi), a Bible, an English dictionary, hymn book, geometrical set, ruler, pencil, pen, and three rolls of tissue.

Gladys Osuru, a small-scale maize farmer in Kitale, said her child who was supposed to join Grade Four had not reported to school by yesterday because she has not bought the extra learning materials.

“The school won’t allow my child in class until he is equipped with the materials, including manilla paper, luminous paper and the likes,” said the mother of four.

Yesterday, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) maintained that it was not aware of the extra materials being demanded by the learning institutions.

“In the curriculum design and handbooks distributed to schools, the learning institutions were not told to ask parents to buy anything for implementation of CBC,” said chief executive Julius Jwan. He said the plan under the CBC is that teachers use what is readily available in the environment to enhance learning. Dr. Jwan said the government provides capitation to public schools to buy

stationery, which should cater for the additional learning materials. “We thus do not understand who is telling parents to buy these things,” he said. (Business Daily, 2020)

### **Conclusion**

This paper focused on reviewing published literature and primary data from both community and school walkabouts to determine challenges faced by parents in the implementation of competence-based curriculum; a Kenyan perspective. The main challenges identified include the differences in children’s academic achievement between the parental involvement profiles, indicating children whose parents have a low involvement have lower academic achievement. Further, low levels of education of parents, communication barrier, time challenge and lack of the necessary materials and resources required to implement the curriculum. In order to ensure smooth running of the CBC system, the government through the Ministry of Education should consider addressing these challenges for the system to attain the main objectives of this curriculum as CBC is a national agenda.



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