

The experience of teachers on Curriculum Based Education: Strengths, Areas of growth and Recommendations

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Introduction

Competency Based Education (CBE) was introduced in the Kenyan system of education after many gaps were identified in the 8-4-4 system. The gaps came as a result of the dynamic world. There was a need to come up with a system that could address the contemporary issues affecting the society. The technological needs, constitutional needs, scientific and developmental needs of society needed changes in 8-4-4. Article 53(1)b states that basic education is a fundamental right of an individual. Together with Article 55(a), which states the affirmative action programmes to ensure that the youth access relevant education training.

To meet these constitutional needs the government saw the need to align the education system. Another aim of establishing CBE was to remove the notion that education was all about examinations. The challenges that were experienced in the 8-4-4 examinations administered by Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) were enormous. Challenges like examination cheating pushed by the urge to be outstanding in examinations. People who excelled in other fields of life were not seen as successful in society. Competency Based Education was to eliminate the thinking that examination was the only thing that determined 'success' in individuals.

The CBE has had different achievements which include the administration of the formative assessments in different levels from grade 3 to grade 6 (Owala, 2021). The training of teachers was also conducted although may not have met the need of the teachers. The transitioning of the learners from PP1 to grade 9 in 2025 the highest class



and are expected to transition to grade 10 in senior secondary schools. These are some of the achievements experienced in the implementation of the CBE. There are also many challenges experienced in the implementation of CBE.

The Competency of the teachers in implementing the CBE

The idea of using the employer, Teachers Service Commission (TSC), in the process of training teachers was perceived as intimidative (Amunga, Were and Ashioya, 2020). This made a big number of teachers have negative attitude in the whole training process. These were the same teachers who were tasked to implement the CBE. The CBE was trying to meet the 21st Century needs like Digital Literacy. The quality of education is as good as the quality of teachers, this is a common saying that explains why the aspects of Digital Literacy may be a mirage to implement in schools. The teachers were trained for between 4 to 10 days and in these days, they were expected to grasp concepts of Digital Literacy and the other aspects of CBE. Different teachers interpret the content differently. This could have caused the differences in delivery of the content. The training pyramidically cascaded down from the national trainers to master trainers to zonal trainers who later trained teachers. This distorted the information or knowledge and hence a big number of teachers did not capture the intended aspirations.



The assessment administered by Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC)

Multiple choice questions in assessments administered by KNEC may advantage learners who are struggling by just guessing and ending up scoring good ratings. Such learners may be placed in the wrong pathways. Learners can be placed as exceed expectations yet they do not have that capability. The integrity of the assessment can easily be compromised since teachers assess their own learners and place them within the rubrics provided. How can one prove that a particular learner exceed expectations or is below expectations? How can one test the validity or reliability of such scores/ratings? Bearing in mind that the subject teacher is the final bearer of the pen that places the learner on different rubrics. The CBE assumes that teachers in Kenya are all honest and possess a sense of integrity.

Transitioning of the grade 9 to senior day secondary school

With examples of the schools in Arid and Semi-arid Lands (ASAL), they are approximately 10 km from the nearest senior secondary school. This is a reflection of over 80% of the schools in ASAL Counties in Kenya. This is a reflection of many counties in Kenya even those which are not in ASAL areas. Learners in grade 9 are on average 15 years old. For such learners to walk a distance of 20 km daily is next to impossible. This is because of the socio-economic situation of many Kenyans who may not be able to afford fare for motorbikes or vehicles from home to school and back.



The classroom on average accommodate 40 learners. Senior secondary school are neighbours of around 30 schools. Each school has on average 50 learners in grade 9. Therefore 1500 learners are expected to transition to the day secondary school which day school has the capacity to accommodate these number of learners in the country?

Selection of career paths

The selection of career paths in grade 9 poses many questions to answered. Are there adequate senior secondary schools in the proximity that offer all the subject combinations in different pathways? Is interest part of the selection criteria? If yes, where will a learner who performs well in Science related subjects and is struggling in art related subjects yet they have interest in films and theatre be placed? What happens to a learner who is average in all the learning areas and changes his interest in senior secondary? Are the learners in grade 9 well informed of careers keeping in mind of their ages and exposure?

Inadequate or lack of key resource teacher for CBE in senior schools

There are Inadequate or lack of CBE key resource teachers in senior schools. Teachers were not trained specifically for this role. Such teachers are an authority or point of reference in different learning areas in CBE. They also act as casultants for various learning areas.

Consideration of late enrolled and school dropouts



Learners who join school as late as 10 years of age are enrolled in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) at PP1. This is due to the requirement on age by the CBE system requiring 4 year old learners to join ECDE (Ondiamu,2018). There age may be a hinderance to learning especially considering their classmates who are relatively younger. The CBE programmes did not anticipate this.

Dropouts from the schools need to be placed with their previous classmates at a later time. For example if a learner drops in grade 3 and stays out of school for two years. When such learners are re-enrolled to school they will find their classmates in grade 5. It would be difficult to place these learners in grade 3 or even more diffult to place them in grade 5. The CBE system does not provide structures for the dropouts and those who are enrolled late in school. Learnes who are enrolled late and dropouts have many challenges that need to be addressed at policy making level and at school level. The assistance of such learners is both professional and material. The teachers take a big responsibility in taking care of the dropouts and late enrolled.

Intensive nature of the content in relation to the time allocated by the curriculum and ability of the learners

The content taught to the learners in different grades is intensive and may not be realistic to be grasped by the learners. For examples the grade 5 and 6 are expected to use spreadsheet in Science and Technology. The time to learn such an entensive and difficult information is not enough. The ability of the learner to grasp such content may be questioned.



Expensive nature of the system

The system advocates for parental or guardian involvement but it overstretch to the extent of requiring the parents or guardians to pay or buy materials in every single day. This is an expensive affair having in mind that Kenya is a third world country.

Recommendations

1. Continue retaining Junior secondary in primary school. Improve resources to accommodate the learners.
2. The teachers with PHDs, masters, degrees and diplomas to be deployed to handle junior secondary in the primary school. The teacher-pupil ratio will improve since two classes will exit in the primary school. So deploying the teachers with higher qualifications will not create a big gap on the staffing.
3. Employ more teachers to handle the junior secondary domicile at primary schools and deploy senior secondary school teachers to schools offering careers of their subject combinations.
4. 'A special administrator' to be the head of the junior secondary to be appointed amongst the teachers. The specific roles to be outlined to avoid conflict and duplication of duties with the headteachers of the primary schools.
5. Re-train teachers on CBE and ICT integration in teaching and learning.
6. Identify instructional coaches from each school to guide others on aspects of



CBE ,ICT integration in teaching and learning.

7. Learners from junior schools in grade 9 can transition to the neighbouring senior secondary schools (Distance between the junior school and senior secondary school should be a maximum of 1 km) by establishing new schools in the proximity.
8. 'Catch up centres' to be established in every primary and secondary school.This will be used to accelerate learning for dropouts and those who enrolled late in school.
9. Establish professional learning community in every school with the aim of sharing challenges encountered in implementing CBE.The instructional coaches (special trained teachers) to chair the meetings of the professional learning community.
10. Provide digital devices and internet (WI-FI) in schools for ICT integration lessons.This can be done by the government through the partnership with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).
11. Reduce the burden of documentation in teachers and allow Digital scheming and lesson planning.This will reduce the the burden of writing complete new documents rather than simple editing the previous ones.
12. Learners should be given an opportunity to swap careers at grade 10 and 11 in case they change interest.



Conclusion

The CBE is a brilliant idea which could transform the education system of a country (Amutabi,2019).The government should establish enough structures at different level to accommodate the dynamics that come with the CBE.Human resource should be employed and existing ones empowered to meet the changes that come with CBE.Resources should be provided adequately to each institution. Teachers training colleges and universities should align their programmes to meet the needs of CBE.Teachers who graduate from these institutions should be equipped with skills knowledge and attitude to handle the CBE.

References

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