

**Series 2 – Social Pillar: Education and Training**

# System Approach and Implementation of the Education Programme in Kenya

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## Key Messages

*For the fundamental changes introduced in the education system to achieve their desired outcomes, the government needs to adopt a more inclusive and collaborative sectoral plan approach.*

*The Curriculum for teacher education needs to be revised to be in tandem with the new school system.*

*Teachers' training in universities and colleges should focus on equipping teachers with the relevant skills, knowledge and right attitudes for successful implementation of the competence-based curriculum*

*Learning and teaching resources should be incorporated in the sectoral-wide approach to educational plans for effective implementation of the new programme*

## Context

Education is viewed by many as a major catalyst for individual and national development. This is based on the argument that the process of schooling enhances people's capacity to improve their well-being and to more effectively participating in nation building (UNICEF, 2005). Education offered should be current and relevant to the ever-changing people's needs.

Raja in 1991 identified twelve skills that learners need to be equipped with for them to easily adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities at both national and international arenas. These included, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, capacity to communicate, information literacy, technological literacy, flexibility, leadership, social skills productivity and initiative. Countries have, therefore, taken different pathways to ensure the above skills are inculcated in their youth through the schooling process.

Education systems are, therefore, expected to evolve in tandem with the dynamic needs and demands of the societies which they serve to meet the aspirations of existing economies (Ojiambo 2009). Education plays a critical function in influencing sustainable social economic development of any society in the world (UNICEF, 2005). This, however, depends heavily on the quality and relevance of the education, training and lifelong learning offered.

Education policy in Kenya, has been under review through various commissions since independence. Nevertheless, none of these attempts have provided a panacea to issues and challenges facing the education system. Sessional Paper Number 1 of 2005, recommended a Sectoral Wide Approach Planning, focusing on access, equity, quality, retention, and completion rates both at the primary and secondary level of education (MOEST, 2005). Though the approach is referred to as sectoral wide, the policies focused more on two levels of education disregarding early childhood and university-level.

From these commissions and sessional papers, two system of education have been implemented and a third one is on course. These are 7:4:2:3 system that was implemented for 21 years and 8-4-4 system that was implemented for 32 years. Currently the competency-based curriculum (CBC)

2:6:3:3:3 has been introduced to replace 8:4:4 system. The new system emphasizes more on competencies acquired as opposed to the previous systems that focused more on knowledge acquisition.

The 7:4:2:3 system was phased out on account that it was too academic and therefore not appropriate for direct employment, and that it encouraged elitist and individualistic attitudes among school leavers which was seen to be alien to African communities. The 8:4:4 system was therefore adopted to seal the gaps noted in 7:4:2:3 system. But the curriculum soon came under heavy criticism for producing learners suited only for white collar jobs, that it was too expensive, and produced lower quality graduates. These weaknesses are not any different from the earlier weaknesses associated with the first policy of 7:4:2:3.

Despite the justification given for phasing out the initial policy on the basis of introducing a new system that would facilitate production of required skills appropriate for the economy, programme implementors require adequate preparedness. The objective of this policy brief is to establish how the new system of education (2:6:3:3:3) should be implemented differently from the 8:4:4 system with adequate preparedness of the programme implementors for them to actively participate.

## Study Approach and Results

This study was conducted at the University of Nairobi. The researchers applied content analysis and qualitative approaches. Interviews were conducted with five academic staff members who were at the University of Nairobi when the first lot of 8:4:4 students reported to the university in 1990. The University of Nairobi Calendar 1987/88, University of Nairobi Calendar 2005/2006 and Republic of Kenya, National Education Sector strategic Plan 2018-2020 were reviewed.

The new system of education is said to be competency-based and preparing school leavers for an active role in economic development. Though this is a very positive endeavour it is not likely to be achieved if necessary preparation measures and infrastructure are not put in place and at all levels of education. Change of attitude will also be very instrumental for any meaningful outcome of the system.

When the first cohort of 8:4:4 system of education students reported to the universities, not much preparation had been done. The Academic staff and administrative staff were not well orientated on the intended changes. Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development supported this assertion based on the review of primary and secondary curriculum where lack of capacity among curriculum implementors was identified as a major hindrance to successful implementation of the 8:4:4 curriculum. The curriculum implemented, therefore, did not change much on the ground. At the University level changes were basically artificial which could not impact much on the Universities output. The structure of the University of Nairobi, for instance, remained the same with six Colleges. The structure and main areas of coverage by the departments had no fundamental difference. (UON 1987/1988).

The members of academic and non-academic staff remained more or less the same. The answer to the access, quality, equity, retention and completion rates challenges identified with education systems in Kenya does not rest on the magic of distribution of 16 years of education and the additional one year, rather it lies on involvement of stakeholders. Further change of attitudes plays an important role in change management.

Educational stakeholders who all value and base their major decisions on grades obtained as opposed to skills acquired and problem-solving capabilities of school leavers need to be involved in change and reforms management for the change to be successful. Educators in Kenya have been accused of referring to examination outcomes all the time in their course delivery as opposed to skills and competencies acquired. This is equally reflected in the recruitment and selection processes for human resource for both private and private organizations.

If a sectoral wide programme approach is not applied in planning and

implementation of educational system policy mainly at primary level and secondary levels leaving out early childhood education and university education then the outcomes of the current education policy will remain unchanged.

## Policy Recommendations

### Short-Term

- There is a need for all universities to establish committees to guide them in aligning their academic programmes to the CBC.
- Universities should actively get involved in more focused dialogue with the Ministry of Education on CBC education reforms for enhanced access, inclusivity, equity, quality and relevance.
- There should be a task force formed on University education to put up strategies more structurally.
- Education experts' need to be cognizant of the difference in outcome of the education system that they expect and such prepare adequately to avoid subjecting students from different education system to the same learning stimulus and environment and expect different outcome. The fundamental difference between CBC and the previous systems of education implemented in Kenya since it attained her independence in 1963 should be well articulated and provided for, in terms of resources, training and support by all stakeholders, if the effort is to bear fruits.
- The Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education and other semi-Autonomous Government Agencies (SAGAs) that work under the Ministry

need to adapt a more all-inclusive and collaborative sectoral plan approach for the education system to achieve the desired outcomes.

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