

Disrupting Kenya's Education System: Advancing towards a Learner-Centered Paradigm from Traditional Time-Based Structures

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ABSTRACT

Kenya's educational system is experiencing a radical shift from its old time-based models to the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), which represents a learner-centred paradigm. This change, characterized by more adaptability, student involvement, and a concentration on 21st-century skills, offers promising benefits and considerable problems. The research methodology adopted a multifaceted approach to pursue this transformation, involving a thorough literature review, the triangulation of data sources, and content analysis of pertinent documents, policy papers, curriculum materials, and educational reports associated with Kenya's academic transition. The study's research topics examine the potential benefits and difficulties of Kenya's transition to a learner-centred paradigm, implementation techniques, and insights' role in policy and practice. This study attempts, using a rigorous methodology, to illuminate the complex processes of Kenya's educational transformation and to provide a basis for conversations on how education might best prepare Kenyan youth for the challenges and opportunities of the modern period. An in-depth analysis of Kenya's educational transition is provided in this research paper, which also emphasizes the critical need for ongoing professional development for teachers, strategic resource allocation, international collaboration and benchmarking, a strong policy for research and evaluation, extensive stakeholder involvement, and the development of flexible, adaptable curricula. These suggestions are the cornerstone of an educational reformation that strengthens educators and students, promotes critical thinking, and equips young people for the exciting opportunities and difficult problems of the twenty-first century, establishing Kenya as a leader in the worldwide evolution of education.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, Kenya's educational system has seen substantial changes that reflect the country's challenges and aspirations. Kenya's academic environment has continuously changed, starting with the racially separated education system of the colonial era and ending with the enduring 8-4-4 system (Von Möllendorff, 2022). However, in 2017, the country began a revolutionary journey with the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) under the 2-6-3-3 system, which marks the end of an era marked by rigorous ranking, fierce competition and a one-size-fits-all approach to education (Cheptoo & Ramdas, 2018; Amutabi, 2019). The stress of high-stakes exams and a ranking culture that made parents and students apprehensive plagued Kenya's educational system for many years. The old 8-4-4 system's severe flaws were exposed as the race for coveted national school spots resulted in previously unheard-of behaviours, including fraud, multiple registrations, and even the selling of admission letters. Rankings spread like a plague, and public and private institutions started using unscrupulous tactics to rise to the top (Amutabi, 2019). The results were disastrous, with the chase of high exam scores frequently obscuring the importance of real learning.

Despite these difficulties, Kenya can change how it approaches education by implementing the 2-6-3-3 system, particularly the CBC (Okeyo & Kanake, 2021). It asks why such a change is required and how the new system can correct the past's flaws. The CBC emphasizes individual student requirements, self-directed

learning, and a break from set schedules while concentrating on holistic development, according to Cheptoo and Ramdas (2018). It attempts to provide students with knowledge and abilities outside of the realm of traditional academics in order to prepare them for the twenty-first century.

This study investigates the challenging transition from Kenya's time-based traditional educational systems to the promising learner-centred Paradigm symbolized by the CBC. It examines this transformation's causes, responses, and effects while considering the viewpoints and goals of important constituencies like legislators, educators, and students. The study also evaluates the possible advantages and difficulties connected with this educational revolution using examples worldwide. Moving toward a learner-centred paradigm demonstrates Kenya's dedication to offering a flexible, adaptable, and inclusive educational system that caters to the many requirements of its pupils in a world characterized by rapid change (Metto & Makewa, 2014). In order to further the conversation about how education may better equip Kenyan young for the opportunities and challenges of the modern period, this research project aims to shed light on the intricacies, opportunities, and challenges of this transition.

Research Questions and Significance

1. What are Kenya's potential advantages and difficulties in moving its educational system from traditional time-based systems to a learner-centred paradigm, and why should Kenya do so?
2. What tactics and techniques can help Kenya's educational system shift from conventional time-based structures to a learner-centred paradigm successfully, ensuring that pupils are fully engaged and receive the best possible education?
3. How may these insights be used to inform policy and implementation strategies? What are the perceived advantages and difficulties faced by important stakeholders, such as educators, students, parents, and policymakers, while converting Kenya's educational system to a learner-centred model?

This study has broad implications for Kenya's educational system and beyond. In addition to being crucial for meeting the different requirements of Kenyan students, the shift from a traditional time-based educational structure to a learner-centred paradigm will also help them succeed in a world that is changing quickly. This study will offer insightful information that can influence educational policy and practice by examining the reasons behind the transition and its ramifications and methods. Policymakers and educators who want to create a more flexible and inclusive educational system must comprehend important stakeholders' perceived advantages and difficulties during the shift. This study intends to further the continuing discussion regarding Kenya's education reform and ultimately strengthen its ability to deliver high-quality instruction that prepares its youth for the possibilities and challenges of the twenty-first century.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The change from Kenya's traditional time-based structures to a learner-centred paradigm, as represented in the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), can transform the country's approach to education completely. According to academics and researchers, a learner-based system has many advantages over the outdated 8-4-4 system, providing strong justifications for the switch. Flexibility, self-pacing, engagement, affordability, a skill-based approach, and a lack of unhealthy competition for spots in primary and secondary schools are characteristics of CBC. In contrast to the prior system, CBC encourages equity, egalitarianism, and sensitivity to cultural and social surroundings. Additionally, it successfully lowers dropout rates and removes the prior system's dictatorial characteristics (Amutabi, 2019).

One of CBC's significant advantages is its adaptability, which considers the various demands of students. Individual students can direct their learning using the curriculum's flexible structure. Unlike the 8-4-4 system's strict deadlines, CBC allows students to enrol at any level and gives credit for prior learning. It fits in well with current needs for lifelong learning and Kenya's recently adopted National Qualification

Framework (NQF), providing students more flexibility over their educational journey (Amutabi, 2019).

Amutabi (2019) noted that Kenya's move to a competency-based curriculum (CBC) has many benefits. The disturbing practice of pupils repeating classes, pervasive in the earlier 8-4-4 and 7-4-3-3 systems, is practically eradicated under the CBC. No matter their age, students may regulate their pace and advance to the next level once they have mastered the material according to the 2-6-3-3 approach, which places more emphasis on the final product than the trip. This change benefits independent and adult learners with flexible schedules by removing the rigidity of locking slower learners into lower classes. Additionally, the CBC redefines the role of teachers by recognizing that learning is a group activity. Teachers no longer project an image of being all-knowing autocrats; instead, they encourage a more open and collaborative learning atmosphere, giving students the freedom to actively engage with the subject matter, ask questions, and take ownership of their education (Amutabi, 2019).

The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), which represents the shift from traditional time-based structures to a learner-centred paradigm, holds distinct opportunities and problems for the Kenyan educational system. According to studies in the USA and South Korea, CBC adoption can considerably improve problem-solving abilities, encourage lifelong learning, create self-efficacy, and increase learner autonomy (Muchira et al., 2023). These advantages point to the possibility of a more competent workforce, supported by a strong focus on self-efficacy. However, the Kenyan setting brings unique difficulties, such as few possibilities for teacher training, insufficient financing for implementation, differences in educational approaches, and difficulties with assessment methods (Muchira et al., 2023).

In addition, the preparation of teachers is essential for the effective implementation of CBC. Early-grade primary teachers in Kenya have raised concerns about their readiness to provide CBC (Momanyi & Rop, 2020) effectively. The implementation and evaluation of the curriculum have been hampered by insufficient teacher preparation and a hazy understanding of the CBC. Kenya must give teacher training and capacity-building funding top priority in order to overcome these obstacles (Momanyi & Rop, 2020). Notably, the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), which serves as an example of the shift to a learner-centred paradigm, has the promise of significant advantages for Kenya's educational system. Its successful implementation, however, depends on addressing the abovementioned issues, such as teacher readiness, finance, and the requirement for uniform pedagogical techniques. Kenya's dedication to this change demonstrates its commitment to raising educational standards and empowering students to meet the changing challenges of the twenty-first century.

A deeper understanding of the techniques and tactics for assisting Kenya's educational system's successful shift from traditional time-based frameworks to a learner-centred paradigm can be gained from additional publications. The study by Cheptoo and Ramdas (2018) highlights how critical it is to ensure that all parties involved in education, including instructors, thoroughly understand the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). Teachers must have the knowledge and abilities necessary to apply CBC successfully. It is crucial to offer teachers ongoing professional development opportunities, workshops, and training to help them understand the CBC tenets and transition from traditional teacher-centred approaches to learner-centric ones (Carla & Vander, 2018).

In other studies, the necessity to abandon conventional teaching techniques and adopt new synergetic pedagogies that encourage collaboration and student engagement is highlighted by Perez and Clem (2017)—the teacher's role in the new curriculum changes from being the main knowledge supplier to a facilitator. Teachers ought to foster an atmosphere where students actively build their knowledge. According to Mkonongwa (2019), teachers should take on a coaching role and encourage students in their learning process to make this shift successful. Furthermore, an essential component of implementing CBC is providing instructors with in-service training. Makunja's (2016) research in Tanzania found that a lack of in-service training left many teachers underqualified. Therefore, ensuring that all teachers receive continual

training is essential for a successful transition (Makunja, 2016). The ability of teachers to comprehend and successfully apply CBC ideas in the classroom should be developed.

For the implementation of CBC to be successful, sufficient resources are required. Having enough teaching and learning resources is something that educators, principals, and students stress. Access to high-quality teaching and learning resources is essential for effective education delivery. The government should ensure that these resources are available to CBC (Makunja, 2016; Sossion, 2019; Urunana, 2018). Additionally, Sossion (2019) dictates that The government should set up a legal framework that directs the implementation of CBC. A group of knowledgeable curriculum specialists and education stakeholders should also be established to offer legal support and direction. In order to evaluate the functioning of the CBC and recommend adjustments as needed, clear mandates and terms of reference should be specified.

Additional studies document that Kenya might think about benchmarking with nations that have successfully introduced similar curricula to overcome issues in CBC implementation. Learning from nations like Scotland, Canada, Finland, and others can give us important insights into the best methods (Ngwacho, 2019). Away from benchmarking, Makunja (2016) recommends that since CBC has been implemented nationally, the government should think about creating a national secretariat made up of professionals, academics, and other experts to monitor and address issues as they occur and make sure the curriculum is implemented successfully (Makunja, 2016). These methods and tactics, supported by the research summaries, will help Kenya's educational system shift from time-based structures to a learner-centred CBC model, ensuring that students are engaged and receive the best possible education.

It will tremendously affect all important stakeholders, including educators, students, parents, and policymakers, as Kenya's educational system shifts from a traditional, teacher-centered model to a learner-centered one. As a result of using more innovative and individualized teaching tactics that strengthen connections with pupils, educators often experience an increase in job satisfaction as a result of the transition (Sadeq et al., 2021). Additionally, it develops professional development opportunities that allow teachers to join collaborative learning communities, participate in ongoing skill development, and learn about cutting-edge teaching methods. Further strengthening their commitment to the teaching process, educators have a sense of empowerment and autonomy in adapting lessons to the requirements of specific students.

Learner-centred models put the student at the centre of the learning process, encouraging active engagement on their part. As a result, students are encouraged to take ownership of their education and develop critical thinking abilities (Folashade, 2023). Students gain from individualized learning experiences tailored to their preferences, requirements, and interests. This boosts motivation and academic success. Additionally, a learner-centred approach strongly emphasizes acquiring 21st-century skills like teamwork, problem-solving, and digital literacy, which are increasingly important for success in the modern world (Dole et al., 2016). The benefits of learner-centred education extend to parents as well. Parents report feeling more invested in their kids' education as the educational process becomes more open and tailored to each student. Because of this engagement, they can actively participate in their child's educational development and maintain tight ties to the educational setting (Shah & Kumar, 2020). The learner-centred model also promotes better communication between parents and teachers, helping them comprehend their kid's strengths and shortcomings. Together, parents and teachers may create ideas for improvement, fostering a more supportive and cooperative educational environment.

There are various obstacles to overcome to move toward a learner-centred educational model. Due to deeply ingrained old teaching methods and worries about losing control in the classroom, educators typically meet opposition to change, as demonstrated by a study in Kuwait (Sadeq et al., 2021). For a transition to be effective, it is imperative to address this opposition. Additionally, applying learner-centred techniques necessitates additional time for lesson planning, tailored assessments, and student support, and instructors

may need help with restricted resources, such as access to technology and educational materials. Students may first struggle to adjust to the greater autonomy and responsibility brought on by learner-centered approaches (Popovich & Pangborn, 2022; Sadeq et al., 2021). Learning results may also vary during this shift, making it challenging for policymakers and educators to gauge and evaluate students' progress effectively. When implementing systemic reforms in education, policymakers face opposition from various stakeholders, including educators and parents (Bruns et al., 2019). Additionally, the transition to a learner-centred approach might necessitate significant investments in infrastructure, technology, and teacher training, which could burden school budgets. It is essential to adequately address these issues if learner-centred education is to be successfully implemented in Kenya.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to thoroughly analyze the shift in Kenya's educational system from traditional time-based frameworks to a learner-centred paradigm represented by the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), a multifaceted research technique was used. The research process included thoroughly examining the literature, triangulation, and content analysis. In order to evaluate and analyze pertinent documents, policy papers, curricular materials, and educational reports about the change in Kenya's educational system, content analysis was used. Triangulation required cross-referencing information from several sources to assure the correctness and dependability of the data. The literature review is made up of a comprehensive analysis of scholarly works, books, research studies, and official papers on the subject made up of "Kenya education system," "Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC)," "learner-centred education," "Kenyan educational reform," and "teacher" were among the search terms used in this study.

FINDINGS

The research's findings thoroughly explain how Kenya's educational system should and can change from traditional time-based structures to a learner-centred paradigm under the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). The study found that implementing the CBC has many benefits, including more flexibility, self-pacing, engagement, affordability, and a move away from unhealthy competition among students for academic positions (Amutabi, 2019). This change encourages equity and inclusivity by significantly reducing the common practice of students repeating classes. In addition, CBC promotes critical thinking, emphasizes the acquisition of 21st-century skills, and gives students the freedom to take responsibility for their education (Dole et al., 2016; Folashade, 2023). Teachers benefit from improved job satisfaction, possibilities for professional growth, and a sense of empowerment in adapting lessons to the needs of specific students as facilitators in this new method (Sadeq et al., 2021). The study also identified many obstacles, such as educator resistance to change, the requirement for extensive teacher preparation, resource constraints, and inconsistent learning outcomes during the shift (Sadeq et al., 2021; Bruns et al., 2019). Adopting CBC requires large investments in infrastructure, technology, and training, which impacts school budgets and is met with opposition from various parties. These results highlight how intricate and multidimensional Kenya's educational transition has been, stressing how crucial it is to properly address these issues to reap the rewards of a learner-centred paradigm.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continuous Professional Development

Implementing CBC requires fundamentally transforming teachers' roles from knowledge producers to learning facilitators. Setting up a strong structure of ongoing professional development is crucial to assist this transformation. This system should provide instructors with continuing professional development opportunities, workshops, and training in best practices for learner-centred education. Continuous

professional development guarantees that instructors may successfully facilitate student-centred learning throughout their careers by encouraging collaboration among educators and providing them with the tools they need to adapt to the changing educational landscape.

2. Adequate Resource Allocation

The key to the Competency-Based Curriculum's (CBC) successful implementation in Kenya is adequate resource allocation, which guarantees that teachers and students have access to the necessary resources and conditions for successful learner-centred instruction. This budget must consider infrastructure development, teaching and learning materials, technological integration, fairness and inclusiveness concerns, and sustainable financing strategies. In order to ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to succeed in the 21st century and to support an inclusive, high-quality educational system that fosters innovation, critical thinking, and creativity in the classroom, the government must prioritize these investments.

3. Collaboration and Benchmarking

Kenya can benefit greatly from benchmarking and working with nations that have successfully implemented learner-centred curricula as it adopts the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). Kenya can learn a great deal about best practices, potential hazards, and methods specifically designed for the Kenyan environment by doing comparative studies with other countries that have successfully navigated similar educational transitions. For instance, nations with progressive educational systems, like Finland, can provide advice on promoting teacher autonomy and innovative learning spaces. The experience of Canada can offer insights into meeting the needs of various students and guaranteeing inclusive education. Furthermore, Kenya's evaluation techniques for CBC may benefit from being modified in light of Scotland's curriculum design and assessment approach. Collaboration may build a dynamic platform for cross-cultural learning and adaptability through information sharing, exchange programs, and cooperative research efforts, strengthening Kenya's educational transition and creating a global perspective on pedagogy and curriculum design.

4. A Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Policy

A thorough and continuing research, monitoring, and evaluation policy must be established to evaluate and improve Kenya's learner-centred Paradigm. This policy should include two essential elements: First, it should inspire academic institutions and researchers to conduct ongoing studies that offer data-driven insights into how CBC affects student results, teacher effectiveness, and resource usage. These research projects will act as useful feedback mechanisms to guide changes and improvements in policy. Second, the policy should develop a strong framework for ongoing evaluation and monitoring, which includes systematic data collection on student learning outcomes, teacher effectiveness, and resource usage. Regular assessments are necessary to monitor progress, evaluate the success of CBC, and pinpoint areas that need improvement. Kenya can ensure that the CBC remains sensitive to the changing requirements of its educational landscape through the synergy of research and continual evaluation, establishing a culture of adaptation and evidence-based decision-making.

5. Stakeholders Involvement

As it incorporates various viewpoints and supports ownership and buy-in, stakeholder participation in Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) shift to a learner-centred paradigm is crucial. Since each group offers priceless information, involving teachers, students, parents, and politicians ensures that decision-making and implementation procedures are informed and thorough. Participating increases the likelihood that stakeholders will accept and support the changes, which is essential for implementing CBC effectively. Additionally, their participation fosters a climate of cooperation, understanding, and

accountability, eventually resulting in a more inclusive and successful educational system that satisfies the changing requirements of the twenty-first century.

6. Curriculum's Flexibility and Adaptability

The long-term effectiveness of Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) depends heavily on flexibility and adaptability. A strict and inflexible curriculum can easily become outdated during fast technological advancement and changing societal needs. The CBC must be flexible, allowing modifications to remain current and responsive to the evolving educational context. This flexibility enables educators to adapt to new educational approaches, technological advancements, and changes in the knowledge and abilities students need to succeed in the twenty-first century. The CBC becomes a dynamic instrument for fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation by embracing flexibility and adaptability, enabling students to succeed in a constantly changing world. It aligns with the fundamental ideas of learner-centred education, in which the curriculum is customized to meet the requirements of specific students and those of a society that is changing quickly. As a result, Kenyan children will receive a contemporary and forward-looking education.

CONCLUSION

The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), an example of the learner-centred Paradigm Kenya is moving toward, represents a significant change in the nation's approach to education. Increased flexibility, student engagement, a focus on critical thinking, and 21st-century skills are just a few of the many possible benefits of this transition. It is with difficulties, though, such as opposition to change, the requirement for teacher preparation, the distribution of resources, and worries around assessment procedures. Implementing a comprehensive set of recommendations is essential for navigating this transition successfully. These recommendations include ongoing professional development for teachers, adequate resource allocation, collaboration and benchmarking, a strong policy for research and evaluation, stakeholder involvement, and a flexible and adaptable curriculum. By implementing these suggestions and overcoming the obstacles, Kenya can develop an educational system that empowers teachers and students, promotes critical thinking, and equips young people with the dynamic opportunities and challenges of the contemporary era, ultimately setting the standard for how education should be redefined for the 21st century.

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