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**Dynamics in the Implementation of Competency Based Curriculum in Lower Primary Schools and Implications on Learning in Kenya**

By

Elizabeth Jerop Katam

Department of Educational Management Policy and Curriculum Development

Kenyatta University, P. O. Box 43844 00100

Nairobi, Kenya

E-Mail: [katam.elizabeth@ku.ac.ke](mailto:katam.elizabeth@ku.ac.ke)

telephone: +254780308073

**Abstract**

Implementation of reforms remains crucial concerns in education in the 21st Century, particularly its success. In Kenya the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) was implemented in 2018 from grade one. The CBC provides for development of individual potential in a holistic and integrated manner with the aim of producing individuals who are intellectually, emotionally and physically balanced. However, the vitality of curriculum reforms depends on the teacher's acceptance of the reform and how their concerns are addressed, because teachers are expected to put reform ideas into practice. Understanding of curriculum model of implementation that have adopted Concerned Based Adoption may guide in CBC issues faced by the teachers for its successful implementation. Specifically, this will help to address emerging issues of CBC as a reform during its implementation. Key recommendation is that all education stakeholders should take note of CBC concerns and address in an effective manner for its successful implementation.

**Keywords:** Kenya, Curriculum reform, competency-based curriculum, teachers, and implementation, Education, Lower Primary

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### **1.1 Introduction**

The successful implementation of curriculum reforms remains crucial concerns in education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially addressing teachers' issues. Many reforms have shaped the Kenya education system since independence. After attaining political independence in 1963, the Government introduced a curriculum reform that impacted on the structure of 7-4-2-3 denoting seven years of primary schooling, four years of secondary schooling, two years high school and minimum three years of university education (Republic of Kenya, 1964). The aim was to expand access to education as well as address racial discrimination occasioned by the colonial education system that was differentiated to favour Europeans above Asians and Africans (Wanjohi, 2011). However, the 7-4-2-3 education system was criticized as skewed towards production of white-collar workers because it lacked the capacity and flexibility to respond to the changing aspirations of individual Kenyans and the labour market needs in terms of new skills, new technologies and the attitude to work (Republic of Kenya, 1976).

In 1981 a task force headed by Professor Colin B. Mackay on establishment of a second university in Kenya recommended a change of the education system from the 7-4-2-3 to the 8-4-4 system of education. The curriculum was re-designed to structure, greater orientation towards technical and practical, less emphasis on examination and diversified. However, the 8-4-4 system of education faced challenges such as limited funds, lack of adequate personnel, facilities and was examination oriented (Shiundu and Omlando 1992).

The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) reform implemented in 2018 is a culmination of interrogation of a series of policy documents and sessional papers, notably the 2012 Taskforce on "re-alignment of the Kenya Education System to Kenya's constitution, 2010 and the Kenya Vision 2030. The CBC reform provides for the development of individual potential in a holistic and integrated manner to produce individuals who are intellectually, emotionally, and physically balanced (KICD, 2017). Further, CBC rolls out in the country, received impetus from sessional Paper no. 1 of 2019 in which the government recognizes that education and training of all Kenyans are fundamental to the socio-economic development of the country. The teachers' concerns on CBC based on the pilot done indicated challenges in handling information that requires digital devices, guiding parents on assessment and homework; grading according to assessment rubrics; changing from thematic to inquiry-based approach, large classes; generating key inquiry questions; takes a long time to plan and it takes time to assess individual learners (KICD, 2018).

According to Otunga (2011), implementing a new curriculum successfully depends on teachers' understanding of the curriculum structure, using the new curriculum materials, changes in the teaching practice regarding activities, skills or behavior, and finally changes in their beliefs to own the reform. Additionally, successful curriculum implementation depends on how teachers

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are positioned in relation to the educational policy at different levels at different stages of their careers, with different amounts of experience, aspirations and competences. Teachers support should be extensive and intensive in regard to new pedagogical skills required, attitude change and self-efficacies necessary to deliver the curriculum reform to achieve its ultimate objective. This can further be made possible by all the teacher educators' active involvement in implementation of the reform (Karolina, Michaela and Petr, 2019). The spirit of curriculum reforms depends on the teacher's acceptance of the reforms and their concerns addressed to put reform ideas into practice (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014). This paper therefore examines theoretical and empirical literature based on a model of curriculum implemented in reforms.

### **Statement of Problem**

The success of any curriculum reform depends on a number of factors. The key factor is the teacher focus. Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions play a fundamental role in understanding the reform. However, overlooking on the teacher concerns has led to many reforms facing many challenges during implementation. This paper focus on teachers' implementation of competency-based curriculum reform in lower primary schools in Kenya.

### **Research Questions**

- i. Which concerns teachers' face when implementing CBC
- ii. How are the teachers' concerns addressed for effective implementation?

### **1.2 Review of Relevant Literature**

This paper adopted Lewin (2012) 3-step model to change. The 3-step model to change focus on three steps: Unfreezing, changing and refreezing which helps in comprehending success of change process. According to Lewin, process of change involves creating the perception that change is needed, moving towards the change by implementing as modification is embraced. This model assumes the change is planned and emphasizes that no matter what kind of change is being made (i.e. structure-, system- or behavior-related), people are always the root of the change. The model also places a heavy focus on reducing resistance to change by referring to two forces in an organization-driving forces and restraining forces. Driving forces are reasons people are motivated to change. Restraining forces represent reasons people are hesitant to change. The stages of Lewin's Change Model are as follows:

The first step is the unfreezing. This stage is the preparatory stage for a change to occur and takes places as driving forces become greater than restraining forces. People are more motivated than hesitant to change. People prepare to make the desired change. However, to get to this point, a lot of resistance, such as fear of the unknown or breaking old habits, must be overcome. Strategies used to make the reform successful include proper communication by keeping people updated about the status of the change and making employees aware of how the change will impact. Training follows by giving people the knowledge and skills needed to reach expectations. There is also employee involvement in decisions about the change and allowing them to share their ideas. Stress management that involves giving employees opportunities to discuss their concerns regarding the change is carried out.

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Negotiation is done by giving employees something they want to persuade them to make the change. Similarly, coercion by giving employees set dateline though this is an extreme example, but people don't change simply because they are asked to. They need a reason to do so, and sometimes this method of reducing resistance is necessary. The unfreezing step entails continued creation of awareness on rationale of the reform to all stakeholders particularly the teachers who are the actual implementers' needs to own its philosophy, pedagogy, objectives, resources and its evaluation. Concerns raised by all stakeholders particularly teachers should be addressed meaningfully. This can be achieved by addressing uncertainty and fears of all the stakeholder mainly parents, learners and the teachers. More vital is that teachers need more support during this period through training and retraining and embracing their views.

The second step is the changing step. This stage is when the change actually occurs. People learn the new behaviors, systems and structures. Successful transition is characterized by changes in culture, norms and practices in curriculum implementation. This step requires cooperation of the entire stakeholder playing their roles to support the successful implementation of the new reform. The crucial stakeholders are particularly the teachers who are key implementers need support to avoid them from reverting back to their old ways of implementation.

The last step is the refreezing. This is the continuous support of the reform implemented. This stage is where the reform is reinforced. This is done through feedback and organizational rewards for demonstrating the desired behavior. Similarly, teachers' educators' positive reinforcement efforts in all aspect will enhance the teachers' continuous implementation of the reform. Many reforms have short lived or failed due to failure of continued support to the teachers, lack of resources and administrative challenges.

### **1.3 Strategies for curriculum implementation**

Curriculum implementation refers to what happens in practice as compared to what was supposed to happen. Curriculum implementation includes the provision of organized assistance to staff to ensure that the curriculum reform is delivered at the classroom level. Implementation is a process change which usually is not simplistic. The crux of change depends on three dimensions that include the use of new materials, the use of new teaching approaches, and the possible alteration of beliefs (Fullan,2007). Therefore, addressing teachers' needs is indeed key during curriculum implementation since if the reform cannot change, move, perturb and inform teachers, it will not affect those whom they teach (Igbokwe Mezieobi and Eke, 2014). The new focus in curriculum reforms also reflects the shift from educational inputs to learning outcomes, including the generic competencies that all students need for life and work in contemporary society (UNESCO,2014). It is emphasized that competence development requires sophisticated implementation strategies and that the development of cross-curricular competences is a complex pedagogical task, demanding profound and sustained changes in the organization of the teaching and learning process and the training of teachers, as they have to support students in developing competences and are also expected to have acquired these competencies. Curriculum implementation as the systematic process ensures that the new curriculum reaches the intended consumers who are the learners, teachers, parents and the society without delay or deviations

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(Oluoch,1982). It also involves making the new curriculum and the accompanying materials and resources generally available to all schools within the jurisdictions of the curriculum reform (Otunga, 2011).

Fullan and Pomfret (1977) have argued that implementation of reform requires time, personal interaction and contact, in-service training and other forms of people-based support. According to the KICD (2017) the seven strategies adopted for the CBC reform as follows: There is the situation analysis/needs assessment stage that involves collection of adequate data from all the key education stakeholders that informed the need for the new reform. The project formulation/formulation of goals and objectives follows based on the priorities established from the needs assessment that continue to guide the new reform considering the country's philosophy, aims, goals of the education and the mission and vision of the country's education. The development of curriculum designs/development of programme for each level of education is done by the experts at the KICD. Development of curriculum materials and equipment is done accordingly or delegated by KICD to publishers. The curriculum piloting is carried out in all representative institutions in order to rectify mistakes identified. The curriculum implementation is rolled out as stipulated and finally, curriculum evaluation adopts largely the formative than summative evaluation.

#### **1.4 Continuous Curriculum Support and Curriculum Implementation Models**

Continuous curriculum support entails the provision of organized assistance to the key curriculum implementors to ensure curriculum reform is delivered at the classroom level effectively. This paper examines only one model of curriculum implementation that is closely associated with teachers who are key implementers of reforms and teacher educators whose continuous support is crucial for successful curriculum implementation. The understanding of the model by all the stakeholders may guide implementation of the CBC reform which has been rolled out. The models focused is the Concerned Based Adoption (CBAM) model.

According to Halls and Loucks (1978) the CBAM model is based on the belief that all change originates with individuals. The key players are the teachers during curriculum implementation with the sole focus of adopting the reform and view as their own. It focuses on changing of the individual teacher. The levels of this model are unrelated, self, task and impact while the stages of concerns include awareness, information, personal, management, consequence, collaboration and refocusing. The unrelated level consists of awareness stage which the individual has no concerns about the innovation. Individuals at the self-level (informational and personal stages) of concern have not necessarily fully adopted the innovation. Individuals at a task level (management stage) may be asking themselves about ways to best organize their time to allow for reform use. The impact level has three stages and sees the individual progressing from being less concerned about the reform impact on them as an individual and being more global in their concerns. In this model, the curriculum is not implemented until teachers' concerns have been adequately addressed. Teachers are expected to be creative with it and modify where necessary, tailoring it to their students. The model is useful in determining attitudes and feelings held by teachers, the degree of engagement that teachers

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exhibit with the reform tools, and acknowledges that any given reform effort will be subject to adaptations as a result of individual implementation practices involved in the change process (Halls and Loucks, 1978).

The CBAM as an implementation model indicates the Levels of Use of the reform (LoU) portion useful in studying the performance of the teachers during implementation. It also indicates possibility of non-utilization of the reform in its six levels of use as follows: There is renewal where teachers are re-evaluating the quality of their use of the innovation, examining modifications of the present innovation, new developments in the field, and exploring new goals for themselves and the system. In integration teachers are collaborating with their colleagues in varied activities to achieve collective impact on students. The routine and refinement need few changes to be addressed in order for the teachers to implement the reform. The mechanical use makes teacher to focus on daily implementation often resulting in disjointed and superficial use of the innovation. Preparation involves teachers preparing for the first use of the innovation while in orientation teachers are acquiring knowledge of the innovation and are exploring its values and demands in their classrooms. The non-use is where the teachers have little or no knowledge of the innovation, no involvement with the innovation and are doing nothing toward becoming involved in it (Morag and Marie, 2016).

### **1.5 Studies on Implementation of Curriculum Reforms Based on CBAM**

The study of CBAM has attracted a great deal of studies as a result of the presumed link between the levels and type of individual's concerns and the successful implementation of reforms. In the United States a study examined the impact of a changing educational context on the teachers as the key implementers using the CBAM model. The CBAM model was used to evaluate the concerns of teachers in the early stages of participating in a one to-one laptop initiative implementation at the middle school level. The findings revealed that several teachers rarely used the laptops for teaching and learning confirming their concerns about being proficient with the innovation; teachers more frequently used the technology for functions they were personally comfortable hence embracing the traditional ways. The majority of the teachers were uncomfortable as they attempted to blend their traditional pedagogies with the requirements for teaching in the one-to-one environment. Some of the teachers' biggest concerns were in relation to planning and meeting curricular goals an indication that they were uncomfortable with the prospect of modifying their existing practices and making accommodations for teaching in a one-to-one environment. Further, observations conducted in the concurrent study confirmed this interpretation as teachers were observed primarily using laptops for word processing and other teacher-centred curriculum activities. Teachers who expressed concerns in management by incorporating the one-to-one computer access into the daily routines, lesson plans, and student activities were completing their master's courses and were constructivist in philosophy and pedagogy. The concerns of the administration indicated that those joining the school after were concerned with gaining a greater understanding of the change, while administrator involved from the beginning of the change were concerned about management of the innovation but also had high level impact concerns indicating a desire to share the effect of the one-to-one initiative

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with the immediate and distant community, focused on adequate training for teachers and sustaining the program (Donovan, Hartley and Strudler,2007).

In Sri Lanka a 5E instructional model was introduced as a curriculum reform that shifted from objective based to competency-based pedagogy. The CBAM model was used to identify teachers' stages of concern. The findings of the study revealed that a number of teachers were in two major groups: self (personal, informational) and impact concerns (consequence, collaboration). The results indicated that many teachers were still thinking how the 5E used affect them while others wanted more information about the 5E. They needed more training and workshops for knowing about the 5E curriculum reform. Only few teachers at the consequence and collaboration focused on how the 5E instructional model impact on their students and were more collaborative. Few teachers at awareness, management and refocusing indicated mixed stages of concern among teachers. Considerable number of teachers were well aware about the 5E and they were not worried about available resources for implementing 5E in their school curriculum. Teachers at refocusing indicate that they think about alternative approach that would better than 5E and pointed that alternative strategies are needed to push forward the teachers at the personal concerns through professional developments such as continuous in-service training, absorbing more teachers in workshops and monitoring to improve in implementing 5E instructional approach (Mohamed, Sharifah and Puteh,2012).

In Bangladesh a study of teachers adapting and implementing active learning into their practice in primary school was based on CBAM revealed that teachers concerns were on pedagogical concerns on all teachers knowledge and ability to apply active learning, use of supplementary materials repeated concern identified by all the teachers had to do with their ability to select and incorporate appropriate supplementary materials, curricular concerns and teachers responsibilities challenges, class environment concerns of ensuring positive learning environment, time for implementation was also constrained, differentiated support to learners emerged across all the teachers and student outcomes varied for high and low achievers (Park , 2012).

In assessing concerns and leading pedagogical innovation in higher education that adopted CBAM model results indicated that faculty members were generally interested in obtaining more information relative to authentic strategies and their role in the implementation process, others tutors were less worried about their ability to master the skills and use authentic strategies, few indicated that there was no resistance to the innovation. The results yielded implications for adjustments in the school's implementation support mechanisms in the areas of student orientation exercises, faculty development, curriculum review, and school leadership (Mungal, Kamla and Saha, Gour,2017).

The CBAM was used in Birchfield high school to train teachers and administrators in the Understanding by Design (UbD) instructional framework. The concerns that were expressed by teachers include attention, collaborative time, school resources, focus' on external mandates to enhance the reform (Brian and Anthony, 2012). An assessment of the implementation of the Early Reading Initiatives (ERI) in Zimbabwean primary schools from early childhood to grade two that premised the study on CBAM revealed that teachers expressed the need of having more refresher courses, providing adequate curriculum material including audio visual, more time was

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needed, and teachers needed to be exempted from activities such as sports and preparing of extra records (Saiden & Raramai, 2018).

In Kenya the level of implementation of ASEI/PDSI classroom practices in science subjects, a case of SMASSE project premised the study on CBAM. The findings revealed that the level of implementation of the ASEI/PDSI classroom practices in the public secondary schools was partial due to the heavy teaching load by the teachers, the head teacher supervision of the implementation of ASEI/PDSI classroom practices was limited. Recommended further training to the head teachers for effective management of teachers after in-service programmes, more teachers to be employed to facilitate adequate preparation for ASEI lessons and apply learner-centred approaches that the innovation recommends, quality assurance officers to urgently address the self and task concerns of the teachers so that they can start implementing the innovation fully (Ndirangu, Nyagah and Kimani, 2017)

In Kenya, despite the roll out of the CBC curriculum in the lower primary school in 2018, teachers have raised concerns. Similarly, both the administrators and the teachers waiting for the continued roll out may be having myriad of concerns. This is for instance the report from the CBC pilot indicated that over half of the respondents expressed that they were able to use an inquiry-based learning approach. Teachers' ability to derive content from the designs revealed that the majority of the teachers, (85.4%) can derive content from the curriculum designs while the majority of the teachers (66.9%) indicated that they were adequately supported by the curriculum support officers (KICD, 2018). In contrast, another study also revealed minimal training of majority of teachers on its contents and teaching methods which tends to hinder their application of essential knowledge and skills of the curriculum, there is lack of adequate approved textbooks for teachers and learners as well as instructional materials and parents and other education stakeholders' involvement and public participation in the curriculum reform process were quite inadequate (Sifuna and Obonyo, 2019). Similarly, a study regarding the success of CBC in Kenya revealed that teachers tend to teach content as opposed to building competencies, instructional materials were not clear on the skills, integration of the core competencies is another challenge and Curriculum Support Officers (CSO's) said that teachers have challenges in implementing CBC by employing teacher centred approaches as opposed to the discovery methods that allow learners to utilize their interest and talents to acquire skills and competencies through personalized learning (Momanyi and Rop, 2019).

The study has revealed that despite the roll out of CBC in Kenya, teachers have concerns that need to be addressed by the relevant stakeholders to make it successful. Therefore, in order to implement the CBC in Kenya based on the studies that adopted CBAM model; the recommendations suggested on the various stages and levels such as retraining teachers and the head teachers, providing adequate curriculum resources including audio, reducing workload, recruiting more teachers, ensuring adequate time for teachers to reflect, relooking on co-curricular activities, implementing schools support mechanisms in the areas of student orientation exercises and school leadership and focusing on evaluations should not be overlooked by all the relevant stakeholders especially ministry of education and teachers service commission.

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### **1.6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, there is a need for the smooth progressive implementation of the new reform. This, therefore, calls on all the relevant government bodies and non-governmental organizations to determine the best ways of addressing teachers' concerns to embrace CBC. The challenges facing the teachers should be viewed positively and dealt with using the curriculum implementation model

### **1.7 Recommendation for the Ongoing CBC Implementation in Kenya**

The TSC should adopt the CBAM implementation models to guide all INSET courses for the remaining early year education, middle school education, senior school, and tertiary institutions to curb teachers' resistance. The TSC should also focus on intended, taught, and learned curriculum during the INSET courses. The teacher's pedagogical skills in the implementation of CBC in the classroom should be enhanced for its successful adoption during actual practice.

The KICD needs to develop simple and clear manuals for all the stakeholders to understand and support CBC. Similarly, KICD should also develop comprehensive manuals for the teachers and all the teacher educators in various forms that are easily accessible and understood. Effective and innovative practices are those that promote teacher-directed curriculum change and management. Inset courses organized by the government may not help teachers conceptualize fully the CBC framework. Inset should go beyond the mere implementation of the CBC as this will limit what teachers will learn and teach regarding the intended, taught, and learned curriculum. The focus of the inset should be extended to focus on teachers' concerns even in informal forums.

The government should be able to view teachers' resistance as a positive force that requires further strategies to be adopted for the successful CBC implementation. In this regard inset courses organized should focus on addressing teachers' concerns especially as demonstrated in the CBAM curriculum implementation model.

Since the CBC reform involves a wide range of changes that need to be understood by the implementers, there is a need for the government to organize for incentives that will attract both the implementers and the consumers during the ongoing implementation and future preparations and implementation.

Emphasis on the provision of instructional materials does not guarantee to learn. It should be well understood that teachers' hidden concerns need more support concerning practicing the new reform to realize its successful implementation.

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