



**Research Brief on Public Education
in Kenya, October 2023.**



**PUBLIC EDUCATION WORKS: THE LEARNER AT THE CENTRE OF EDUCATION IN
COMPETENCY BASED CURRICULUM IN KENYA**

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE STUDY ON
“THE IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY EDUCATION IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN
KENYA: CASE OF 100 SCHOOLS IN 20 COUNTIES”



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Summary

This research paper was produced collaboratively by the Ministry of Education Directorate of Quality Assurance and the East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights) in Kenya. The paper draws its lessons from the research findings. The research was undertaken in Kenyan Public Primary Schools to assess the implementation of quality education.

The paper is written at a time when globally there is a growing trend of Privatization and commercialization of public services. Public Education is facing similar threats as one of the public services. The paper reaffirms the role of the State as the primary duty bearer in respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the right to education for all.

This research builds its case that public education works using the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) as an education system that places the learner at the center. Various aspects have been drawn from the study to demonstrate that public education works as it is in the case of Kenya and that the best interest of the child is a priority.

Key lessons have been demonstrated to show how the Kenyan education system places the child at the center and how the CBC is a good case to demonstrate indeed public education works. The paper, therefore, shows positive aspects of the Kenyan Education System in light of CBC.

Education context for Kenya

Kenya is a signatory to various international and regional conventions and treaties, which have been aligned with the national laws. These legal frameworks are meant to protect and promote Free and Compulsory Quality Basic Education for all. Kenya’s education conforms to the African Union’s Agenda 2063 goal on education, which is “Well Educated Citizens and Skills revolution underpinned by Science, Technology and Innovation”. This



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underlines the need to make significant investments to support education reform to develop human and social capital with a focus on Innovation, Science, and Technologyⁱ.

Kenya's philosophy of education is *"provision of holistic quality and inclusive education and training for transformation to a knowledge-based economy, social cohesion, technical development, and sustainable development"*.

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The National goals of education in Kenya are: (i) foster nationalism, patriotism and promote national unity; (ii) Promote the social- economic, technological and industrial skills for country's development; (iii) Promote individual development and self-fulfillment; (iv) Promote sound moral and religious values; (v) Promote social equality and responsibility; (vi) Promote respect for and development of Kenya's rich and varied cultures; (vii) Promote international consciousness and foster positive attitudes towards other nations; (viii) Promote positive attitudes towards good health and environmental protection.

Kenya introduced the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) through the Basic Education Curriculum Framework (BECF) 2017. The framework organizes Basic Education into three tiers for learners following the age-based pathway and four tiers for learners following the Stage-based Pathway, respectively. The introduction of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) is part of the ongoing education reforms, which are expected to foster the acquisition of core competencies; promote values, acquisition of requisite skills, and promotion of life-long learning, while at the same time enhancing the role of parents and communities in the provision of education. The reforms are in tandem with Kenya Vision 2030, a long-term development blueprint for the country aiming at creating "a globally competitive and prosperous country with a high quality of life by 2030."

Further, education reforms in Kenya strive to realize Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4),ⁱⁱ which aims at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The Government of Kenya continues to put efforts into ensuring the realization of the Competency-Based Curriculum. To this extent, in the FY 2022/ 2023, the Government of Kenya increased its education budget from 544.4 billion to 628.5 billion in this financial year. This is a commitment to show the role of education as a key driver for economic and social development and an act to affirm the State.

's role in financing public services as provided for in General Comment 7 of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Further, the government of Kenya continues to improve its systems of accountability by instituting the use of NEMIS to facilitate planning and allocation of education resources to all learners.

Guiding Principles 2.6.1ⁱⁱⁱ. The education sector will be guided by the following principles: (i) Quality, equity, access and relevance in education services; (ii) Patriotism, national unity, mutual social responsibility (iii) Integrity, ethical and moral foundation of our



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society; iv) Fairness to ensure opportunities for continuous learning; (v) Prioritize science, technology and innovation; (vi) Focus on entrepreneurship, agricultural and industrial development; and identify and nurture learners' talents and gifts. (vii) Transparency, accountability, and efficiency.

Research Methods used in the study

The research on the “Implementation of Quality Education in Public Primary Schools in Kenya” was undertaken collaboratively by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights). It aimed at assessing how Free Compulsory Quality Education is offered in Kenyan Public Primary Schools. The research design adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches of data collection.

The population of the study was drawn from Education Officers, Teacher Service Commission (TSC), Heads of institutions, teaching staff, boards of management, and learners. The following methods of sampling were employed: purposive and random sampling. Purposive sampling targeted the education officers and TSC as key informants, while simple random sampling was used on 100 Public Primary Schools spread across 20 Counties. 5 Public Primary Schools were randomly sampled from the 5 sub-counties in each County. This was deemed to be representative enough.

The data collection used varied methods and tools, including structured questionnaires that targeted heads of schools, focused group discussions (FGD) for learners and teachers, key informant interviews (KII) with education officers and representatives of parents on the school board, participant observations (PO), and document analysis of key documents used in the delivery of the pedagogy.

The Kenyan Case

Education as a Right

Kenya's education system is anchored on the Constitution of Kenya 2010, Acts of Parliament, international agreements, protocols and conventions, and relevant policies from the Ministry of Education, line Ministries, Departments, and Agencies. The Constitution of Kenya 2010, Article 53, guarantees every child free and compulsory basic education. On the global human rights front, the overarching Principle 1 of the Abidjan Principles^{iv} emphasizes the role of the State to respect, protect, and fulfil the right to education of everyone within their jurisdiction in accordance with the rights to equality and non-discrimination.

The learner at the center of education in the Competency-Based Curriculum in Kenya

Research on “the implementation of quality education in public primary schools in Kenya” brought out key aspects that demonstrate learner-centeredness in the CBC. Its findings were categorized in five dimensions, namely: Leadership and management, curriculum organization and implementation, learners' welfare, physical infrastructure, and community involvement.



The Kenya learner-centeredness case is therefore based on the research findings as presented in each of the dimensions discussed hereunder;

1. Leadership and Management

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To ensure active involvement of learners in leadership, there was the existence of well-structured pupils' leadership councils whose leadership was also represented in the Board of Management.

Capacity-building activities externally organized on leadership, CBC, CBA, and learners' health were cascaded to teachers, learners, and parents.

The existence of pupils' leadership councils exhibited the nurturing of citizenship amongst learners. To ensure efficiency and effective utilization of public resources for the benefit of the child, boards of management have been constituted and given mandates to manage and enhance resources for schools as provided for in the Basic Education Act No. 14 of 2013.

2. Curriculum organization and implementation

The study revealed that the majority of schools have been provided with designs by the Ministry of Education for all learning areas. The design enabled the teachers to engage learners in the learning process. Teachers maintained lesson notes, which were used in the teaching process. Besides this, the findings confirmed the use of class attendance registers, which contributed to improvement in regular attendance by learners. The study further revealed that assessment records were maintained, outlining the competencies acquired by each learner at various levels of learning.

It was evident that learners were actively involved in various learning activities, including group work to enhance communication and collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. The teaching-learning process revolved around project work, fieldwork, Group discussions, practical/hands-on activities, and extended activities. The research findings revealed that Kenyan education encouraged the development and use of learning resources to enhance learning and skill acquisition. These aspects of learner-centeredness are heightened by the Government's efforts to retool practicing teachers in the new CBC pedagogy. So far, 55,125 teachers have been retooled against the targeted 60,076^v since the inception of the CBC in 2017. This ensures the change in teaching and learning from teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches.

The findings showed that the Ministry of Education (MoE) had distributed many textbooks to schools with an aim of having a learner-to-textbook ratio of 1:1. The MoE target was found to have been achieved in many public schools except for newly established schools and the few that experienced an influx in enrollment.

The research findings confirmed that public schools adhered to curriculum timelines by holding staff meetings on opening day, setting the school calendar of activities, and developing strategies for tracking learner progress and performance feedback.



Parental engagement contributed to ensuring that learners actively participate in the learning process while at the same time mitigating cases of absenteeism.

3. Learners' welfare in the education system

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The study findings established that learners were sensitized to the dangers of buying food from unauthorized vendors and adherence to school rules and regulations, with a view to nurturing the sense of responsibility and self-efficacy, as well as good citizenship. To enhance the nutrition of learners, County governments are allocating part of their budgets towards school feeding programmes. For instance, the Nairobi City County launched a 1.7 B school feeding programme^{vi}.

Many schools engaged learners in varied co-curricular activities, clubs, and societies whose activities ranged from athletics, scouting, music, environment, and drama to health clubs, integrity clubs, and martial arts. These activities enhance creativity and imagination, good health, discipline, teamwork, and appreciation of environmental protection and conservation. The core-curricular activities also promote the spirit of the implementation of the East African Community “Regional Sporting Strategy 2023 - 2025” which espouses a life-long learning approach with the aim to equip all learners with relevant skills^{vii}.

The study affirmed the efforts of the Government’s provision of sanitary towels to girls in public schools. This contributes substantially towards enhancing retention and regular class attendance. This was affirmed in the study findings, and this forms part of the government of Kenya’s strategy of affirmative action geared towards ensuring that no child is left behind in accessing education.

4. Physical facilities

The findings showed that the majority of schools had social amenities developed and supported by various duty bearers, including the MoE, National Government Constituency Development Fund (NG-CDF), development partners, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, and individual alumni. The majority of the public schools were connected to electricity and had ICT equipment to facilitate digital learning. The majority of schools had playgrounds that were fairly marked and well utilized by learners to enhance their physical fitness and talents.

5. Community involvement

In inculcating the value of citizenship and care for the environment among learners, the study revealed that a majority of the schools provided opportunities for learners to engage in community activities such as cleaning of local markets, tree planting, and hygiene campaigns under the supervision of their teachers. Other related activities included visiting the aged people, the sick, and the rescue centers in the community to offer support. All these enhanced community service learning contributed towards a better society as envisioned in the 4K Club (Kuungana Kufanya Kusaidia Kenya)^{viii}.



Parents and other community members were found to be involved in follow-ups on learners' progress, providing support such as food, uniforms for vulnerable learners, and the provision of learning materials to the schools. Others assisted in the provision of sanitation facilities to the schools. This aspect of the findings points to the realization of parental engagement and empowerment to take part in their learners' welfare.

Key Lessons

1. State investment in public quality education is key

The government of Kenya has made significant investments towards ensuring quality in the provision of Free and Compulsory Quality Education in public institutions, as anchored in Article 53 of the Kenyan Constitution 2010. This has been achieved through the Free Primary Education capitation grant, teacher recruitment, training, and capacity building, provision of instructional materials to all learners, among others. These investments have resulted in a consistent increase in enrollment of learners over the years, hence guaranteeing access, retention, inclusion, and transition.

2. Presence of appropriate legal frameworks that guarantee quality education

Having in place relevant laws, regulations, policies, and guidelines that govern the provision of quality education is paramount. Enforcement of this legal framework through the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards guarantees the right of the child to attend school and access quality education. The overall impact on policy compliance improves attainment of learning outcomes as a contribution to Kenya's Vision 2030 and Sustainable Development Goal 4.

3. Teacher support in the classroom

To ensure the learner achieves all learning outcomes as envisaged in the competence-based curriculum, the role of quality assurance and standards officers is instrumental in continuous teacher support on quality lesson delivery.

Conclusion

Public education is faced with huge challenges of privatization and commercialization. However, Kenyan education demonstrates a strong case of public education.

The desire to enhance public education has been seen in the government's efforts, which prioritize education through the ongoing reform agenda. The President constituted a presidential working party to engage Kenyans and review the education system. The working party has produced a report^{ix} which is under review by relevant duty bearers with an aim of developing a comprehensive implementation plan to guide required education reforms in Kenya.

The government, through the MoE, has put in place policies and regulations that are being implemented by various departments in the MoE to ensure education standards are upheld. The Government, through quality assurance and standards, continues to policy



framework to regulate private actors in education by ensuring they meet compliance and not jeopardize the rights of the learners. Such policies and Guidelines include the registration Guidelines for Basic Education Institutions 2021, Guidelines for Junior Secondary Schools 2023, among others.

Page | 8 The research finding may not have been exhaustive, yet they have provided a yardstick to which to measure how quality education is provided in public schools in Kenya and reaffirm the State's commitments towards investing in public education with the child at the center.

This paper, therefore, is designed to inspire various education stakeholders, including legislators in parliament (policymakers), Ministry of Education officers implementing education policies, Teachers Unions, teachers/ educators, parents, civil society actors, international development partners, among others, to reinvest in Free Compulsory and Quality Public Education for all. The paper, while demonstrating positive steps towards the realization of public education, emphasizes is placed on the State to provide regulatory oversight of quality-assuring public education, continuously regulate private actors in education, as provided for in the preamble of the Abidjan Principles^x, and finally provide financial and material support to continuously improve public education to serve all children in Kenya.

There is a global consensus regarding the importance of the right to education. States have an obligation to realize the right to education for all by providing free, inclusive, quality public education^{xi}. Public education is a tool that provides equal, just, and sustainable societies. This study has showcased positive examples of Kenya's public education that is learner-centered.

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