

PRESS RELEASE

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Kenyans have been asked to wary of misleading curriculum criticism as Piloting of the curriculum underway

Kenyans have been asked to be wary of misleading criticism of the ongoing curriculum reforms ahead of piloting in 470 schools countrywide.

Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) Director, Dr Julius Jwan said the proposed curriculum is ambitious, futuristic and in tune with the global directions.

Many countries have adopted such a competency based, and learner focused curriculum approach, which is one of the education reforms envisaged to make the country's education system more globally competitive.

The Director said the 'Basic Education Curriculum Framework,' (BECF) that is open for public scrutiny was arrived at in a participatory and inclusive manner, with both local and international partners, contributing to its development.

"The process was primarily driven by Kenyan curriculum developers who based the reviews on the country's needs. The foreign hands have mainly been in capacity building but, local experts have remained in charge," Dr Jwan said yesterday.

However, he said, there is still room for fine-tuning areas that Kenyans still feel need fixing before it is endorsed to replace the 8-4-4 system that has been blamed for mainly drilling learners to pass examinations.

"Let us however desist from public lynching of individuals or institutions charged with that responsibility and offer alternative views that can enrich the curriculum," Dr Jwan said.

He said the move to stagger implementation of the proposed curriculum and pilot it in some schools countrywide was deliberately meant to provide room for further scrutiny, to ensure the final product is universally acceptable.

The schools will be supplied with curriculum designs, teachers' guides and pupils' books that will be used in the pilot programme for teachers to start familiarizing themselves with them before teaching begins.

The proposed curriculum replaces the current Standard One to Form Four with Grade 1 to Grade 12.

However, the focus now for the piloting, is on the early years, these being two years of pre-school education, and the first two years of primary education.

"Pre-school education is very critical. If you do not provide the right foundation to a child, by the age of five, then an opportunity is lost, hence the need for an education system that lays emphasis on the Early Childhood Development," Dr Jwan said.

Many Kenyans are in agreement that we need to switch from the current education system that has been widely criticized for being exam centered and failing to recognize and nurture

other learners' abilities.

Already, close to 2,000 teachers from the 47 counties have been trained on the new syllabus developed by a team of experts that relied on a needs assessment study conducted countrywide.

The needs assessment study on Early Childhood Development, Primary and Secondary Education including Special Needs Education was undertaken in January 2016 in a National Conference on March 30, 2016 where the findings were disseminated.

The resounding recommendation was that the country needed a curriculum that would embrace the differences in ability and learning styles of the recipients and ultimately enable each learners to realize success and fulfillment within their individual capacities. This set the stage for conceptualization of the relevant learning areas that would make these goals a reality.

On January 30, 2017 the proposed Basic Education Curriculum Framework was presented to stakeholders for adoption following which the curriculum designs were formulated. Subsequently, the curriculum designs for Early Years Education (Pre-primary 1 & 2, Grade 1, 2 & 3 have been validated and approved for use in the pilot by the KICD Course Panel and Academic Committee.

Out of the 470 schools 5 are pre-primary and 5 other primary schools in each county and institutions of learners with Special Education needs have been selected to participate in the pilot study of the new learning curriculum.

Amongst the selected schools are public, private, rural and urban schools which are a representation of the types of schools found in the country.

The pilot phase began with an initial meeting with all the head teachers of the selected pilot schools on April 21, 2016 at KICD which was presided over by the Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education, Dr. Fred Matiang'i

The training of Quality Assurance and Standards Officers and Curriculum Support Officers to enable them effectively execute their supervisory role during the pilot has just been concluded.

Additionally 1888 teachers from the pilot schools in the 47 counties were taken through the curriculum requirements that entailed being taught how to handle various teaching subjects.

This included competence based education, inquiry learning, multiple intelligences to recognizes differentiated learning styles, value-based education, learning resources, assessment and collaboration and teamwork which are all critical components of the reformed curriculum.

The teachers are free to begin utilizing the different learner-centred methodologies and assessment modes they have been exposed to as they return to their schools.

With the curriculum and the learning materials in the final stages of production it is envisaged that these will be introduced to the teachers from May 29, 2017 for utilization in the pilot study.

“It is all about a teacher being able to verify what a learner can do as opposed to what they know,” Dr Jwan said. “A teacher will be more of a facilitator than an instructor. We will allow a child to play a bigger role and the teacher will do more than just telling a child what to do.”

Teachers who participated in the trainings in Nairobi said the proposed system is rich in content and allows them to take care of the needs of both bright and average learners.

“The current system of education focuses so much on bright students, with weak ones being left behind,” Ms Matilda Ngugi, a teacher from Kariobangi, Nairobi, said in reference to the differentiated learning method in the proposed curriculum that caters for all types of students.

The envisaged changes, she said will provide a paradigm shift in the way exams are conducted by facilitating the assessment of learners, progressively.

“Drilling learners purposely to pass examinations is working against the country’s wish to achieve vision 2030, which is the country’s economic blue print.”

Strongly embedded in the pilot is the component of monitoring and evaluation with feedback being received from the teachers, head teachers, Quality Assurance Officers as well as the Curriculum Support Officers to enable effective support to the teachers.

The pilot will progress through the second term which ends in July with the target classes as pre-primary 1&2 and Grades 1&2. The resultant report will be used to improve the curriculum designs as well as the learning process, and further guide the envisaged roll out of the Early Years Education curriculum in January 2018.

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Notes: The KICD Act 2013 prescribes the persons authorized to develop curricula and curriculum support materials. KICD develops curriculum using a panel system comprising of practicing teachers, teacher educators, university lecturers, quality assurance and standards officers and curriculum support officers from Teachers Service Commission, among others.

The curriculum reform process is being undertaken within the framework of the curriculum development cycle which has nine specific stages namely:

1. Needs Assessment
2. Conceptualization and policy formulation
3. Development of curriculum designs
4. Development of syllabuses and approval
5. Development of curriculum support materials
6. Piloting
7. Teacher preparation
8. National Curriculum Implementation

9. Monitoring and evaluation