

Right of Reply to an article on Tuesday-May 30, 2017

We are open to constructive criticism on Curriculum reforms-KICD

By Julius Jwan, PhD-Director/CEO, Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development

I am writing in response to an article that appeared in 'The Daily Nation' dated May 30 2017, authored by Prof Evan Mwangi on the ongoing curriculum reforms that focus more on a competency based approach.

KICD appreciates that many Kenyans are not fully conversant with the contents of the 'Basic Education Curriculum Framework' (BECF) that seeks to replace the current 8-4-4 system.

This informs the ongoing efforts to take Kenyans through every process of the curriculum reforms. Contrary to an impression created, KICD is open to public views on the proposed curriculum. Such views especially those pointing out the areas that need further scrutiny and suggested interventions, to enrich the final product.

It is clear that based on previous studies, the current curriculum has been widely criticized for failing to recognize and nurture the talents and interests of learners, early enough.

Indeed, the Summative Evaluation of the Curriculum done in 2009 indicated that the curriculum content and its implementation, was mainly academic and examination oriented.

The current curriculum makes little provision for the recognition of the learners' potential, gifts and talents due to too much focus on examination.

Previous reviews of the curriculum in 1992, 1995 and 2002 had not adequately addressed fundamental issues that would enhance production of learners who can exploit their potential to the full and accelerate economic growth.

This informed this noble task of developing a curriculum that is based on a countrywide comprehensive needs assessment, to respond to emerging educational needs.

The government developed the Sessional Paper No. 2 of 2015 on "Reforming Education and Training in Kenya," based on the 2012 Report of the Task Force on the "Re-alignment of the Education Sector to the Kenya Vision 2030 and Constitution of Kenya 2010."

The proposed curriculum is learner centred and not just cramming to pass examinations with the ultimate goals being appropriate application of knowledge, and not necessarily just its acquisition.

Every learner will be nurtured to excel in their areas of greatest interest and ability. The Framework values excellence and competitiveness rather than raw competition for examination grades.

This will play a role in helping to reduce the challenge of malpractice in examinations because each learner will be guided to excel in their area of interest and ability.

The education framework will provide opportunities for schools to empower parents to contribute to the learning outcomes for their children and to be engaged at all tiers and levels

of basic education.

The BECF is a product of collective effort with both local and international partners, contributing to its development. The development of the curriculum is guided by the national goals of education, which recognize the need to have international consciousness embedded in learning to ensure Kenyans fit into the global arena.

We cannot develop the curriculum in isolation, by being blind to global standards. We must develop an educational system that suits our national needs but, must be in context of regional and international benchmarks. Developers of this curriculum followed this path.

However, 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 and providing an opportunity for information sharing for comparison purposes.

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 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 and 2, Grade 1, 2 and 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.

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 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.

Therefore, KICD appeals for caution to avoid misleading the public when making comments about such a noble exercise that has and is still being subjected to a wide range of consultations before its final roll out.

Dr Jwan is the Director/CEO, Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development

Email: jjwan@kicd.ac.ke

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