

Chapter 12

Implementation of Competency-Based Curriculum in Higher Education Institutions in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The growing global economy has brought about new challenges and requirements. This calls for reforms in the education sector. This chapter sought to investigate preparedness of higher institutions of learning on implementation of competency-based curriculum (CBC) in Kenya. The primary objectives were to establish the level of training of academic staff and availability of teaching learning resources for competency-based curriculum implementation in higher institutions of learning. The study established that universities in Kenya will receive the first competency-based curriculum cohort in the year 2029, and preparations for the implementation of the new curriculum are ongoing.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6586-8.ch012

INTRODUCTION

Every Country pursues education reforms with the primary purpose of enhancing political, economic, cultural, and social development (Juan, 2019). To that end, competency-based curriculum (CBC) is a current global educational reform whose implementation cuts across all levels of education including higher institutions of learning. CBC focuses on acquiring competencies which are defined as the ability to do a particular activity to a prescribed standard in solving problems.

The idea of CBC can be traced as far back as in 1957 in the United States of America (USA). This is when the whole idea was provoked by the Soviet Union which launched the first satellite—Sputnik I—into orbit around the Earth in 1957. This event brought about a realization that the United States of America had fallen behind in the space race. The Soviet Union’s action sent shock waves throughout the American society. In response, the USA held its educational system accountable for this failure and challenge (Hodge, 2007). What followed was the introduction of CBE (Competency Based Education) in the United States in the 1960s. This came about as a reaction to; public concern that students were not being taught the skills needed for success in life, in reaction to international issues on competition including the “space race” after Sputnik and in addressing legislation.

In 2013, Zambia commenced the revision of her education. The country revised her curriculum from a knowledge-based one to a competency-based one or outcome-based curriculum. The knowledge-based curriculum had been used since its political independence from the British in 1964. The Competency Based Curriculum was introduced in Zambian schools in order to help learners in the country to focus not only on the acquisition of knowledge but also on skills, values and attitudes. These would most likely help bridge the gap between the labour market and the school system (Mulenga & Kabombwe, 2019). The aim of the 2013 revised Zambian curriculum was to produce self-motivated, life-long learners, confident and productive individuals, holistic, independent learners with the values, skills and knowledge that enable them to succeed in school and in life (Zulu, 2015).

Research studies and evaluations of the content-based curriculum began in 1999. For instance in 2005, the Upper Basic Education National Survey was conducted. Through this study, data was collected from learners, parents, teachers, head teachers, education administrators, tertiary institutions, traditional leaders and various stakeholders in order to come up with a curriculum that was effective and relevant to the Zambian society. The Ministry of General Education (MoGE) commissioned five curriculum studies which were conducted by scholars and researchers from the University of Zambia. Based on the recommendations of these studies, the competency-based curriculum was adopted in order to respond to the calls of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number four on Quality Education and the

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