

Daniel Baheta

What is quality education? Kenya's experience in reforming the education curriculum

Kenya, in the past years, has made significant progress in increasing access, retention, transition, and participation in education through the provision policies such as the Free Primary Education (FPE) and Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE). However, it must be noted that the most recent comprehensive education curriculum reform was carried out in 1985 to incorporate technical and vocational education and training for self-reliance. Everyone in Kenya is not happy about the quality of education in the country. Several reviews of the curriculum had been undertaken since then, but failed to address the fundamental issues and values that would improve the quality and relevance of education to transform the society. Does the current system not enhance citizen's productivity and the acceleration of economic growth?

It is in that connection that UNICEF Kenya, in partnership with the Government of Kenya, spearheaded the high level evidence-based policy dialogue and advocacy on curriculum reforms with strong emphasis on competency-based learning outcomes. The process seeks to ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and training for all children and their seamless transition from one level to the next through the creation of different pathways with appropriate knowledge, skills and values. Specifically, UNICEF Kenya supported, over 20 high-level dialogue sessions, to sustain advocacy and to leverage resources, with key stakeholders including the president of Kenya, senate and parliament Committee on Education), children, faith-based organizations, private sector, civil society, national parents association, teacher associations and unions. As a result, the curriculum reforms led to the development of the National Curriculum Policy Framework, the Inclusive Basic Education Curriculum Framework (with strong focus on competency-based learning outcomes), the Teacher Education Framework, and the National Assessment Framework. Presently, a piloting process in identified schools in Kenya have been established to gather data on the effectiveness of the new curriculum.

The objective of this presentation is to document the experiences of Kenya in conceptualizing and implementing the ongoing education curriculum reform processes, through the utilization of political process, qualitative methodologies such as reflective journals and interviews. The methodologies allowed this paper to capture the specific motivations behind the curriculum reforms, the establishment of relationships among stakeholders, and the activities involved in ensuring that the process is materialized.

As a result, this presentation reveals the following critical experiences of Kenya in relation to curriculum reform processes. First, the curriculum reforms is an opportune transformative cross-sectoral issue and requires a multi-sectoral approach and political good will. Second, there is need to ensure comprehensive stakeholder engagement and its pitching should be at the highest level for performance measurement, accountability and budgetary allocation. Third, there is also a need to go beyond the

framework of the content and competency based curriculum to ensure effective implementation of the new curriculum.