

The New Curriculum of Education in Kenya: A Linguistic and Education Paradigm Shift

Lillian Kaviti

Abstract

The current system of education in Kenya is the 8-4-4 structure, where children study for eight years of Basic (primary) education, four years of Secondary education and four years of University education. This system was introduced in 1985 to promote man-power capable of performing blue collar jobs, as compared to the former 7-6-3 system that targeted developing a local workforce to replace the British workforce who largely held white collar jobs in the new, independent Kenya. However, over the years, the 8-4-4 curriculum has been widely criticised for a myriad of reasons. The criticisms against this curriculum are that it is too heavily loaded with content, purely examinations-oriented, and generally violating the Rights of the Child by placing undue physical and psychological pressure on learners. In order to address this problem therefore, a new curriculum was hastily crafted and taken through a rushed pilot drive in April 2017 and is expected to replace the current 8-4-4 system by January 2018. Admittedly, this new education system addresses some of the weaknesses of the current 8-4-4 education system, since it is competency-based and focuses more on skills acquisition as opposed to a purely knowledge-based acquisition system. The issues addressed in this paper is how this new and hurriedly crafted curriculum (as well as the introduction of Free Secondary School Education) will be implemented by teachers who are yet to come to terms with the new paradigm shift of teaching and learning. The second issue addressed is whether the crafters of this system took into consideration children's rights, or whether at all, the system was crafted from a child-centred perspective. The concerns are that apart from the manner in which this syllabus was been crafted and planned for implementation, if not reviewed comprehensively may not only violate the rights of future generations of children, but also enhance negative ethnicity from a linguistic perspective. Key words: Learners, 8-4-4 system, 2-6-3-3 new curriculum, Continuous Assessment Tests, Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning, Montessori Approach, Best interests of the Child, Indigenous languages