

REDEFINING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN COMPETENCY BASED CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN KENYA. A CRITICAL REVIEW

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Abstract

Kenya has made significant strides in implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum. However, there have been challenges, which the government has been trying to address. Parents have raised concerns about their involvement in their children's academic work and their increased role in the implementation of the new curriculum. The purpose of this study was to review literature on and redefine parental involvement in implementation of Competency Based Curriculum. The study was guided by the Structural Functionalism Theory by Emile Durkheim guided the paper. Desktop critical review of various journal articles and other secondary sources was carried out. The study established a great concern of parents that the new curriculum is resource expensive and demands of them to be involved in the implementation of the curriculum. Parental involvement includes helping learners in the entire learning process and in doing assignments. The new curriculum does not only focus on academic work but also non-academic work and therefore, forcing parents to assume roles in holistic development of their children. Since the focus of the curriculum is on the competencies, feedback from parents is very vital in complementing teachers' role especially in guiding their children to choose the right pathway in senior school. There is a need for constant communication between the teachers in the process. The expanded role of parents in implementation of the new curriculum should be explained well so as to overcome the teething problems that are being associated with the Competency Based Curriculum.

Key words: parental involvement, competency-based curriculum, nonacademic, pathway

Introduction

Parental involvement has long been recognized as a crucial factor in shaping children's educational outcomes. Thus, active parental participation enhances student motivation, academic performance, and overall development ^[1]. In Kenya, the role of parents in education has evolved over the years, reflecting broader educational reforms and societal changes. Introduction of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in 2017 marked a significant shift from traditional knowledge-based learning to a skills-oriented approach, necessitating a redefinition of parental involvement ^[2]. CBC emphasizes a learner-centered approach, integrating practical skills, creativity, and problem-solving into the educational framework ^[3]. This transformation calls for a more engaged and participatory role for parents, moving beyond conventional support functions to active collaboration with teachers and learners. However, many parents struggle to adapt to these new expectations due to lack of awareness, training, and resources ^[4]. This study critically reviews the emerging roles of parental involvement in the implementation of the CBC in Kenya. It explores historical developments, identifies current challenges, and examines strategies aimed at enhancing parental participation. By redefining parental roles within this educational framework, stakeholders can work towards ensuring that CBC objectives are effectively met, fostering holistic learner development. Parental involvement in education has long been recognized as a critical factor influencing learner achievement and holistic development. This study explores the historical trajectory of parental involvement in Kenyan education and examines its redefinition within the context of CBC implementation.

Historical Development of Parental Involvement in Kenyan Education

During the colonial era, Kenyan education systems were predominantly mission-driven, with limited parental participation. Post-independence in 1963 marked a pivotal shift as the government sought to democratize education, recognizing parents as essential stakeholders. The introduction of the 8-4-4 system in 1985 further emphasized academic excellence, but often marginalized parental roles to peripheral support functions. The enactment of the Basic Education Act of 2013 underscored the importance of parental involvement, mandating the establishment of Boards of Management (BoMs) in schools, which included

parent representatives. This legislative framework aimed to foster collaborative decision-making processes, enhancing school governance and accountability.

In response to the global shift towards skills-oriented education, Kenya introduced the CBC in 2017, aiming to nurture learners' competencies beyond rote memorization. The CBC emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, and practical skills, necessitating active parental engagement in the learning process. The CBC's learner-centered approach positions parents as co-educators, integral to reinforcing competencies acquired in school. This paradigm shift requires parents to participate actively in homework, project-based learning, and in development of learners' talents and interests. Notably, however, many parents feel inadequately prepared to support CBC activities, citing lack of understanding and resources [4]. Additionally, insufficient training and awareness among parents hinder effective participation in CBC initiatives [3]. To address these challenges, the Kenyan government and educational stakeholders have initiated programs to sensitize and train parents on CBC requirements. Workshops, community meetings, and media campaigns aim to bridge the knowledge gap, empowering parents to fulfill their roles effectively. Schools are also encouraged to establish functional Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) to facilitate continuous dialogue and collaboration. These challenges notwithstanding the ongoing efforts to equip parents with the necessary skills and knowledge are pivotal for successful realization of CBC objectives. Continued research and policy interventions are essential to strengthen this collaborative framework, ensuring that parental involvement effectively contributes to holistic development of learners.

The Role of the Basic Education Act (2013) in Parental Involvement in CBC Implementation

The Basic Education Act (2013) serves as a legal framework guiding provision of education in Kenya. It emphasizes inclusive and quality education while recognizing the vital role of parents in shaping learners' academic success. The Act mandates parental participation in school governance, decision-making, and the overall educational process. This legislation provides a strong foundation for redefining parental involvement in the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) by ensuring that parents actively contribute to their children's learning experiences. The act envisages several parental roles in the development of the child's

education from early grades to senior schools. The first role on Parental involvement is enhancing parental participation in school governance. The Act requires schools to establish Boards of Management, which include parent representatives. These boards play a crucial role in decision-making, policy implementation, and school management. Through their participation, parents influence curriculum delivery and contribute to a conducive learning environment for CBC. Additionally, Parent-Teacher Associations have been strengthened under the Act, ensuring consistent engagement between parents and educators [2].

The second role of the parent is to strengthen home-school collaboration. CBC emphasizes learner-centered education, requiring parents to take an active role in reinforcing competencies acquired in school. The Act advocates for regular communication between schools and parents, ensuring that parents are well-informed about their children's progress and curriculum expectations [4]. Schools are encouraged to involve parents in co-curricular activities, practical projects, and mentorship programs, aligning with CBC's emphasis on holistic education. The third role is supporting equity and inclusivity in education. The Act promotes inclusive education by ensuring that children from all backgrounds receive equitable learning opportunities. Parents are expected to support children with special needs and those from disadvantaged communities, helping to bridge gaps in educational access and resource availability [3]. The CBC framework aligns with this provision by encouraging diverse learning pathways tailored to individual learner abilities and interests. The fourth is addressing parental challenges in CBC implementation. Thus, despite the legal framework supporting parental involvement, challenges persist. Many parents lack adequate awareness and training to effectively participate in CBC activities [4]. To address this, the government, through the Ministry of Education, has implemented parental sensitization programs through workshops and digital learning platforms to equip parents with the necessary skills [5].

The Basic Education Act (2013) thus, provides a legal foundation for active parental involvement in education, which is crucial for successful implementation of the CBC. By strengthening school governance, fostering home-school collaboration, and ensuring inclusive education, the Act empowers parents to take an active role in their children's

learning journey. However, continuous efforts are needed to address knowledge gaps and equip parents with the skills required to support CBC effectively.

Objective

The objective of this study was to establish a new understanding of parental involvement in competency-based curriculum implementation in Kenya.

Theoretical framework

The study is guided by structural functionalism, a theory developed by Émile Durkheim (1895/1982) ^[6], which views society as a complex system whose interdependent parts work together to promote stability and social order. In the context of parental involvement in the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Kenya, this theory provides a lens through which we can understand how institutions such as the family, school, and government interact to support educational objectives ^[6]. The CBC, introduced in 2017, is a structural component of Kenya's education system designed to produce skilled, competent, and adaptable learners ^[7]. Schools act as agents of socialization, equipping children with the knowledge, skills, and values needed for societal integration. Parents play a functional role by providing support at home to reinforce classroom learning. Structural functionalism emphasizes the interdependence between family and school, with parents expected to contribute through home-based learning, provision of resources, and participation in school activities ^[8].

Durkheim's concept of dysfunction explains the challenges that may arise when parental involvement is lacking, such as limited awareness of CBC demands, socio-economic barriers, and resistance to replacing the traditional exam-based model. When parents fail to fulfill their expected roles, the education system's function is disrupted, leading to diminished learning outcomes ^[6]. Recent studies have highlighted that inadequate parental sensitization and training hinder effective participation in CBC initiatives ^[9]. Durkheim also stressed the importance of social cohesion, asserting that a stable society requires collaboration among its members. In CBC implementation, teachers, parents, and policymakers must work synergistically. Strengthening community support systems, awareness campaigns, and policy reforms can promote more effective parental involvement

[8]. Structural functionalism also acknowledges that social institutions evolve to meet changing societal needs. CBC represents such an evolution, emphasizing lifelong learning and practical skills, which demands that parents adapt to new roles in education. Therefore, societal expectations surrounding parental involvement must shift to align with the learner-centered principles of competency-based education

Methodology

The study examined the existing literature, various policy documents, and personal experience and observations as an educator in the development of the research findings of this study. This study employed a critical review methodology, which involved an in-depth analysis of existing literature, policies, and empirical studies related to parental involvement in the CBC implementation in Kenya. The review evaluated the strengths, weaknesses, and contributions of literature to the topic while identifying gaps in research.

The study adopted a qualitative, desk-based research design, using secondary data sources such as government policy documents, journal articles, conference papers, and reports from educational institutions. This approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of the evolving role of parents in CBC implementation.

The review involved sourcing scholarly articles, policy documents, and reports published between 2013 and 2024, ensuring both historical and contemporary perspectives on parental involvement in CBC. Selection of materials was based on relevance. In the process, sources directly related to CBC implementation, parental involvement, and education policy in Kenya were examined. Another factor which was considered was credibility. Peer-reviewed journal articles, official government reports which included articles and papers from conferences done by the Ministry of Education, and studies from reputable institutions made samples of the papers reviewed. The last consideration was recency of the articles. Preference for recent publications (2018–2024) were used to capture the most current challenges, policies, and trends affecting CBC parents. A critical review methodology provides a structured and analytical approach to evaluating parental involvement in CBC implementation. By synthesizing diverse perspectives, this study identified policy strengths

and gaps while offering recommendations for strengthening parental engagement in Kenya's education sector.

General Findings on the Development of the CBC in Kenya

The CBC was introduced in Kenya in 2017 to replace the 8-4-4 system, aiming to equip learners with practical skills and competencies relevant to the 21st century. This shift sought to address the limitations of the previous content-heavy curriculum by emphasizing learner-centered education. Over the years, the CBC has exhibited notable strengths and encountered significant challenges. A further elaboration included the strengths and weakness of implementing the curriculum in Kenyan schools. Among the first strengths was learner-centered approach. The CBC emphasizes active learning, encouraging students to engage in practical activities that foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This approach moves away from rote memorization, promoting a deeper understanding of subject matter [7]. The second one was skill development. By focusing on competencies such as creativity, communication, and collaboration, the CBC aims to prepare students for real-world challenges. This holistic development is intended to produce well-rounded individuals capable of adapting to various professional environments [7]. The third point was cultural relevance. The curriculum incorporates elements of Kenyan culture and heritage, allowing students to connect their learning to their own experiences and communities. This inclusion fosters a sense of identity and national pride among learners [7]. The last one was parental involvement which was the centre of this study. The CBC encourages active participation from parents in their children's education, fostering a collaborative environment that supports student learning both at school and at home [10].

Studies have also highlighted a number of documented weaknesses of the CBC as implemented in Kenya. The prominent challenge was implementation challenges. The transition to the CBC has faced obstacles, including inadequate teacher training and insufficient resources. Thus, many educators feel unprepared to effectively deliver the new curriculum, leading to inconsistencies in teaching quality [11]. Another challenge is the problem of resource constraints in schools and the national budget. Thus, many schools, particularly in rural areas, lack the necessary infrastructure and materials to support the hands-on learning activities promoted by the CBC [11]. This disparity creates inequalities in

educational experiences and outcomes. Another striking problem which was widely spread was parental resistance. Some parents have expressed concerns about the demands of the CBC, citing increased time and financial commitments. This resistance is often rooted in lack of understanding of the curriculum objectives and benefits [12]. A major challenge among teachers was assessment difficulties. Thus, evaluating competencies requires more nuanced assessment methods compared to traditional exams [11]. Developing and implementing assessment tools has proven challenging, leading to potential inconsistencies in measuring student progress. The last was equity issues. The CBC's reliance on resources such as internet access and parental involvement may disadvantage learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds, exacerbating existing educational inequalities.

Parental involvement in children learning at home

Parental engagement is defined as a partnership between family, school and society, through increasing parental awareness of the benefits of their involvement in their children's education as well as providing skills to parents to do so [10]. Parental engagement in children's education is characterized by active communication with the school, existence of learning connectivity at home and at school, forming a strong community and identity in children, clarifying the role of the family in achieving school goals, consulting with the school in making decisions about children, collaborating with parties outside the school that lead to achievement of educational goals, and participation in programs initiated by the school [9, 10].

In Kenya's CBC, parental involvement in homework and home-based learning is pivotal for reinforcing classroom instruction and fostering essential competencies [12]. This engagement not only enhances academic achievement but also promotes holistic development. Parental support in homework and home-based learning provides learners with personalized guidance, reinforcing concepts taught in school. This involvement is linked to improved academic performance and development of self-discipline and responsibility. The Kenya Institute the successful implementation of CBC, as it ensures that learning extends beyond the classroom into the home environment. However, parents face numerous challenges in the process of supporting their children with homework. Many parents lack a clear understanding of the CBC framework, making it difficult for them to effectively support

their children's learning at home ^[13,14]. Parents also face a big challenge of time constraints especially employed ones. Work commitments and busy schedules limit the time parents can dedicate to assisting their children with homework, affecting the consistency and quality of support provided ^[14]. Another challenge was resource limitations. Some parents lack access to necessary learning materials or a conducive home environment for studying, hindering effective support of their children ^[15].

The study also reviewed some of the strategies employed by stakeholders to include parents as active partners in the implementation of CBC. To address these challenges, the following strategies were recommended to support parents cope up with the many challenges. First, was the introduction of parental education programs ^[10]. This involved Organizing workshops to educate parents about the CBC structure and their role in supporting home-based learning that can bridge knowledge gaps. Next was flexibility of engagement opportunities. Schools can provide various avenues for parental involvement that accommodate different schedules, ensuring more parents participates ^[14]. There was also a recommendation on the provision of resources to deserving parents. This should involve collaborating with community organizations to supply necessary learning materials that can alleviate resource constraints faced by some families ^[15].

Parental Provision of Learning Resources in Kenya's CBC Implementation

In Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum, parental involvement in providing learning resources is crucial for effective curriculum implementation. Parents are expected to supply materials such as textbooks, digital devices, and other educational tools to support their children's learning experiences. This active participation enhances the learning environment and aligns with the CBC's emphasis on practical skills and competencies. The KICD outlines specific parental roles in CBC implementation, including the provision of necessary learning materials ^[13]. By supplying resources like textbooks, art supplies, and technological devices, parents enable hands-on learning and facilitate development of critical skills. This support is essential for reinforcing classroom instruction and promoting learner autonomy.

Despite the recognized importance of parental support, several challenges hinder effective provision of learning resources. Economic limitations prevent some parents from acquiring

necessary educational materials, leading to disparities in learner preparedness and engagement [16,17]. Some parents may not fully understand the specific resource requirements of the CBC, resulting in inadequate support for their children's educational needs. Integration of digital tools in the CBC poses challenges for parents who may lack technological proficiency or access to digital devices, limiting their ability to support e-learning components [14, 18, 19].

Thus, parental provision of learning resources is integral to the successful implementation of Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum [20]. By understanding and addressing the challenges faced by parents, stakeholders can develop supportive strategies that enhance parental involvement, thereby improving educational outcomes and promoting equity in learning opportunities [21, 22].

Parental Participation in School Activities and Decision-Making in Kenya's CBC Implementation

In Kenya's CBC, parental involvement in school activities and decision-making processes is pivotal for fostering a collaborative educational environment [21,22]. Such engagement ensures that educational strategies align with the needs of learners, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the curriculum [23,24]. Active parental involvement in school activities and decision-making contributes to a holistic educational experience by enhancing educational outcomes [16,17]. When parents participate in school functions and governance, they collaborate with educators to create supportive learning environments, leading to improved student performance [20, 25]. Another way is to engaged parents serve to as bridges between schools and the broader community, facilitating resource mobilization and community support for educational initiatives [26, 27]. It was also observed that parental involvement in decision-making processes ensures that school administration remains accountable, fostering transparency in the implementation of educational policies [24, 28].

Despite its importance, many parents are unaware of opportunities to participate in school governance or feel unqualified to contribute meaningfully [17, 23]. Parents facing economic hardships may prioritize immediate financial needs over school involvement, limiting their participation and in some communities [16]. Cultural norms may discourage active parental

involvement in school affairs, viewing education as solely the school's responsibility 20, 27. Parental participation in school activities and decision-making is integral to the successful implementation of Kenya's CBC. By addressing existing challenges and adopting inclusive strategies, schools can foster a collaborative environment that enhances educational outcomes and aligns with the holistic goals of the curriculum [22-25].

Parental Monitoring and Assessment of Learning Progress in Kenya's CBC Implementation

In the context of Kenya's CBC, parental involvement in monitoring and assessing their children's learning progress is pivotal [22-23]. This engagement not only reinforces classroom learning but also ensures that educational objectives are met effectively [24]. The study observed that when parents regularly track their children's academic activities, it leads to improved educational outcomes [17-20]. This involvement ensures that learners remain focused and motivated, aligning with the goals of the CBC [21, 29]. Parents who monitor their children's progress can identify specific areas where additional support is required, facilitating timely interventions 19. Regular assessment and communication about a child's progress foster a collaborative relationship between parents and educators, enhancing the overall educational experience 16, 20.

Notably, however, some parents lack a comprehensive understanding of the CBC framework, making it difficult for them to effectively monitor and assess their children's progress [22, 30]. Busy work schedules and other commitments can also limit the time parents have available to engage in their children's academic activities. It was also observed that economic challenges restrict parents' ability to provide necessary resources or dedicate time to monitor academic progress [17, 29]. However, by addressing existing challenges and adopting supportive strategies, parents can significantly enhance their children's educational experiences and outcomes [20, 21].

Parental Role in Career Guidance and Talent Development in Kenya's CBC Implementation

Kenya's CBC emphasizes career guidance and talent development from an early age 22, 24. Unlike the previous content-based system, CBC nurtures learners' abilities beyond

academics, focusing on skills, talents, and personal interests [19, 21, 31]. Parents play a crucial role in this process by identifying, supporting, and providing opportunities for their children to explore their potential [32]. Parents observe their children's interests from an early age, whether in music, sports, drama, science, or entrepreneurship [33]. A parent who notices a child's interest in painting can enroll them in an art class or buy art supplies to encourage creativity [25]. Parents introduce children to professionals in different fields, helping them understand real-world career options. A parent working in healthcare might take their child to visit a hospital to learn about different medical careers.

Parents provide learning materials, enroll children in talent academies, or invest in training programs. A child excelling in soccer may be enrolled in a local football academy or provided with proper training kits. Parents motivate children to engage in school competitions, music festivals, science fairs, and sports tournaments [17]. A child passionate about coding can be supported to participate in STEM competitions or join a robotics club.

Parents work with teachers to ensure their child's skills align with CBC career pathways, including arts, technology, and vocational training [20]. A school may recommend TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) courses for a child interested in hands-on skills like carpentry or fashion design. CBC promotes entrepreneurial skills, and parents can encourage their children to develop business ideas [28, 33]. A parent may provide small capital for a child to start a home-based business, such as selling handmade crafts or home-baked snacks. However, some parents do not fully understand CBC's focus on talent-based education [23]. Some talents require resources (e.g., musical instruments, sports gear) that may be expensive [25]. Some parents still prioritize traditional careers (doctor, lawyer, engineer) over talent-based careers. Parents are key players in ensuring the success of CBC's career and talent development goals. By recognizing and nurturing their children's interests, they prepare them for a dynamic job market and empower them to excel in their chosen fields.

Collaboration with Teachers and Educators in CBC Implementation

Competency-Based Curriculum requires a strong partnership between parents and teachers to ensure effective learning. Unlike the traditional education system, CBC focuses on

learner-centered approaches, making parent-teacher collaboration essential in tracking progress, addressing challenges, and enhancing skill development ^[36]. Parents and teachers share insights about a child's strengths, weaknesses, and learning needs ^[37].

A parent who notices their child struggling with reading can work with teachers to create a home-based literacy plan. Regular parent-teacher meetings help parents understand the child's performance and required improvements ^[35]. Schools should provide digital portals where parents access progress reports and teacher feedback. CBC assessments focus on competencies, not just exams; teachers guide parents on how to support learning at home ^[39]. A parent learns how to assess creativity by helping their child with art or project-based assignments. Teachers alert parents about possible learning difficulties like dyslexia, ADHD, or special needs, allowing early intervention ^[34]. If a child has difficulty concentrating, a teacher may recommend specialized support at home and in school. Schools organize CBC workshops, career days, and talent development programs where parents participate actively ^[37]. Parents attend career mentorship forums where professionals inspire learners about different career paths. CBC encourages real-life application of knowledge; teachers and parents coordinate to reinforce learning at home ³⁸. A teacher may suggest parents take their children to historical sites for practical Social Studies lessons. Despite all these opportunities, some parents are too busy to attend school meetings or follow up on learning ^[35]. Some parents still expect exam-based results instead of competency tracking while schools lack effective communication channels to update parents regularly.

Support for Learner Well-Being in CBC as the Role of Parental Involvement

In the process of implementing Competency-Based Curriculum, parental involvement is pivotal in ensuring the holistic development of learners ^{39, 40}. Beyond academic achievements, parents play a crucial role in supporting their children's emotional, social, and moral well-being, aligning with CBC's emphasis on life skills and values ^{13, 41}. Active involvement in a child's education fosters a sense of security and belonging, contributing positively to their emotional well-being ⁴². Parents who engage in open conversations about school experiences help children manage stress and build resilience ⁴³. Studies have highlighted that while parents generally exhibit high levels of parenting satisfaction and

self-efficacy, they also experience moderate levels of mental fatigue and stress, indicating the need for balanced support systems 44. Parents serve as primary role models, teaching children's essential social skills such as empathy, cooperation, and respect 45. Encouraging participation in community service or group activities enhances learners' social interactions and community awareness. Parents instill moral values and ethical principles, guiding children to distinguish right from wrong. Discussing real-life scenarios where honesty and integrity are emphasized reinforces moral development 41. Parents ensure children maintain balanced diets, regular physical activity, and adequate rest, which are vital for effective learning 44. Organizing family sports or outdoor activities promotes physical health and strengthens family bonds 46.

Every parent who values education of the child shall create a supportive home environment that values education and encourages a positive attitude toward learning 43. Designating a quiet study area and setting consistent study routines enhance academic focus. Despite all these, parents balancing work and family responsibilities may struggle to dedicate adequate time to their children's well-being. Some parents may be unaware of effective strategies to support their children's holistic development 40. Economic challenges can hinder access to materials and opportunities that promote well-being 44. The Basic Education Curriculum Framework provides 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 22. Parents play a crucial role in ensuring that their children are developing the various competencies as envisaged in the Basic Education Curriculum Framework.

Conclusion

Parental involvement is integral to successful implementation of Kenya's CBC, particularly in nurturing learner well-being. By actively supporting their children's emotional, social, moral, and physical development, parents contribute to formation of well-rounded individuals equipped with essential life skills. Successful implementation of Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum relies heavily on active parental involvement in areas such as home-based learning support, resource provision, career guidance, and learner well-being. However, challenges such as limited awareness, financial constraints, and weak parent-school collaboration have hindered full parental participation. This study has

highlighted the need for structured training programs, better communication strategies, and policy enhancements to strengthen parental engagement in CBC. There is need to create parental awareness through training workshops, improving collaboration between parents and schools through digital platforms and PTA engagement, and providing financial and policy support to facilitate equitable access to learning resources. If implemented effectively, these strategies will ensure that CBC achieves its goal of equipping learners with practical skills and competencies, fostering a well-rounded and future-ready generation.

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