

Effects of Abrupt Changes in the Educational System on Pupils' and Students' Mental Health in Kenya: A Transition from the 8-4-4 System to the CBC System

Author: Jann Awuor Onyango, BSc. Public Health, Maseno University

Affiliation: Public Health Practitioner and Researcher

Abstract

The transition from the 8-4-4 system to the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Kenya represents a significant shift in the educational landscape. This abrupt change has introduced new learning methodologies, increased parental involvement, and altered evaluation strategies. While the CBC aims to improve skill acquisition and critical thinking, its rapid implementation has raised concerns about its effects on students' mental health. This study examines the psychological impact of this transition, assessing stress, anxiety, and overall well-being among students and pupils. The findings highlight the need for systematic reforms to ensure a smooth transition that prioritizes mental health.

Keywords

Education transition, Competency-Based Curriculum, mental health, student well-being, stress, Kenya

Introduction

Educational transitions significantly impact students' cognitive and psychological well-being. Kenya's shift from the 8-4-4 system to the CBC was sudden, leaving stakeholders—students, teachers, and parents—struggling to adapt. This study investigates the mental health consequences of this abrupt change, focusing on stress levels, emotional strain, and coping mechanisms.

Materials and Methods

A mixed-methods approach was used, incorporating surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. The study sampled pupils in primary schools, students in junior secondary levels, parents, and educators. Data collection focused on anxiety levels, stress indicators, adaptability, and perceived challenges associated with the new curriculum. Ethical approval was obtained from relevant bodies, and informed consent was secured from participants.

Results

Student Well-being and Anxiety Levels

Preliminary findings suggest that the abrupt transition has led to increased anxiety, confusion, and stress among students. Key stressors include curriculum overload, unfamiliar learning strategies, and heightened parental expectations. Many students report difficulty adapting to competency-based assessments, while teachers struggle with inadequate training.

Teacher and Parental Perspectives

Educators and parents noted increased academic pressure on students and a lack of preparedness among teachers. Parents expressed concerns over additional costs associated with CBC, contributing to household stress.

Discussion

The shift to CBC presents both advantages and challenges. While fostering critical thinking and creativity, the rapid transition has inadvertently exacerbated stress and uncertainty. Inadequate stakeholder preparation has contributed to the psychological burden experienced by students and educators alike. The study underscores the necessity of phased implementation, enhanced teacher training, and mental health support systems. Comparisons with similar educational transitions globally highlight the importance of structured reforms in minimizing adverse mental health impacts.

Conclusion

The abrupt change in Kenya's education system has had notable effects on students' mental health, warranting urgent intervention. A structured transition framework, mental health support, and stakeholder engagement are crucial in mitigating these effects and ensuring a more effective and sustainable educational reform.

Recommendations

1. Gradual implementation of CBC to allow smooth adaptation.
2. Enhanced mental health programs within schools.

3. Comprehensive teacher training and curriculum familiarization.
4. Increased parental awareness and support systems.
5. Further research on long-term psychological impacts of the transition.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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