



What we teach our children

Kenyan citizens' experiences and opinions on curriculum reforms

1. Introduction

What we teach our children and how we do this are among the most important responsibilities for any society. How do we prepare the next generation for the challenges they will face in life? How can they compete in a marketplace for jobs that is already global and where young people will soon also be competing with artificial intelligence?

Part of Kenya's response to these questions has been to adopt a competency-based curriculum (CBC) for schooling. The CBC is designed to emphasize the development of key skills and applying those competencies to real-life situations. It has been in place in Kenyan schools since 2017, replacing the previous outcome-based curriculum. In October 2022, the government of Kenya established the Presidential Working Party on Education Reforms (PWPR) to collect views

from the public on among other issues in the education sector, the implementation of the CBC and to make recommendations.

This brief presents data on citizens' experience and opinions on the competency-based curriculum (CBC). Data for the brief come from a special round of Twaweza's Sauti za Wananchi mobile-phone panel survey. This was created through random sampling from a database of contacts from previous surveys to establish a new nationally representative panel comprising 3,000 respondents. For this brief, data were collected from 3,000 respondents in the ninth round of the special Sauti za Wananchi panel, conducted between November 3 and November 17, 2022.

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Sauti za Wananchi



Key findings include:

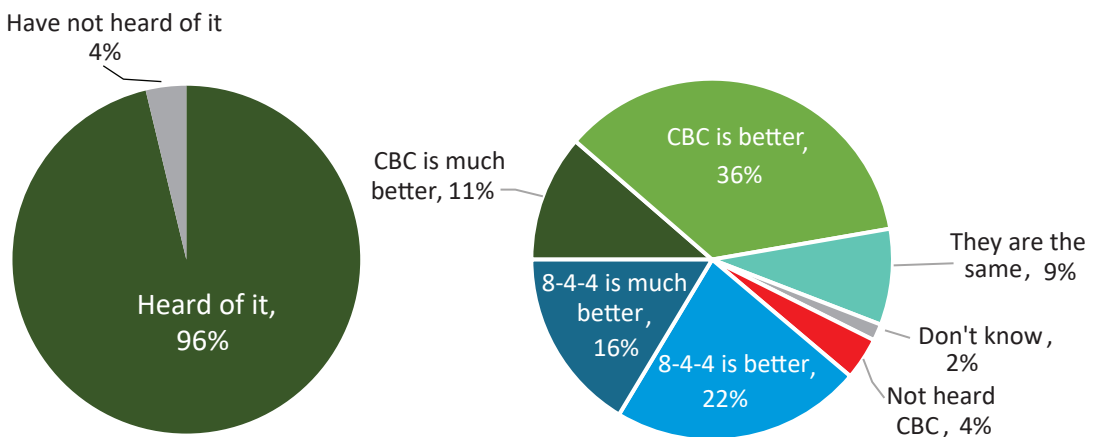
- Citizens prefer the CBC over the 8-4-4 system, by a 9% margin
- Citizens list the main challenges facing the CBC as its financial cost and time-demanding on the parents
- The main change proposed by citizens to the CBC is to reduce the financial cost on the parents' side
- 2 out of 3 citizens are aware of the taskforce that is reviewing the CBC
- More citizens are dissatisfied than are satisfied with the country's direction on curriculum reform

2. Kenyan citizens' experiences and opinions on the competency-based curriculum (CBC)

Insight 1: Citizens support the CBC over the previous curriculum by a 9% margin

Almost all citizens (96%) have heard of the competency-based curriculum (CBC) and citizens favour the CBC over the previous 8-4-4 system. Half (47%) say the CBC is better, including one out of ten (11%) who say it is much better, while four out of ten (38%) say the previous "8-4-4" system is better.

**Figure 1: Have you heard about the competency-based curriculum (CBC)?
If so, how do you rate it compared to the 8-4-4 system?¹**



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile phone survey, special r9 (November 2022)
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

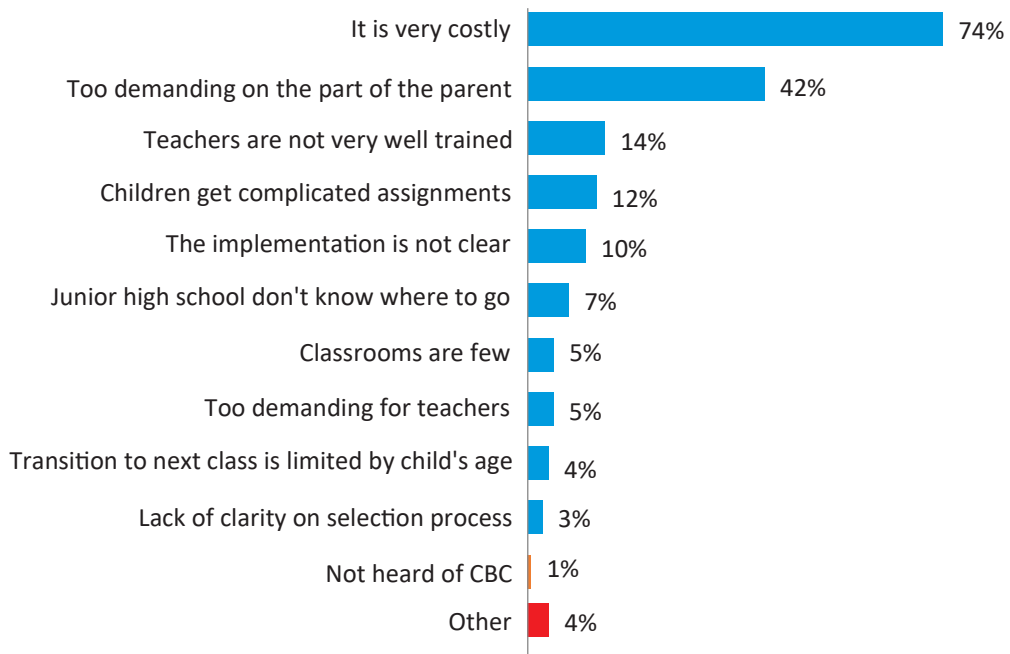
1 Percentages in charts may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Insight 2: Citizens list the main challenges facing the CBC as its financial cost and its time demand

The main challenges facing the CBC as cited by parents are that it is very costly (cited by 74%) and that it is too demanding on parents (42%).

Other challenges cited include that teachers are not well trained in teaching the CBC (14%), that children get complicated assignments (12%), that implementation is not clear (10%) and confusion over where children should go for junior high school (7%).

Figure 2: What are the main challenges facing the CBC?
(multiple responses permitted)



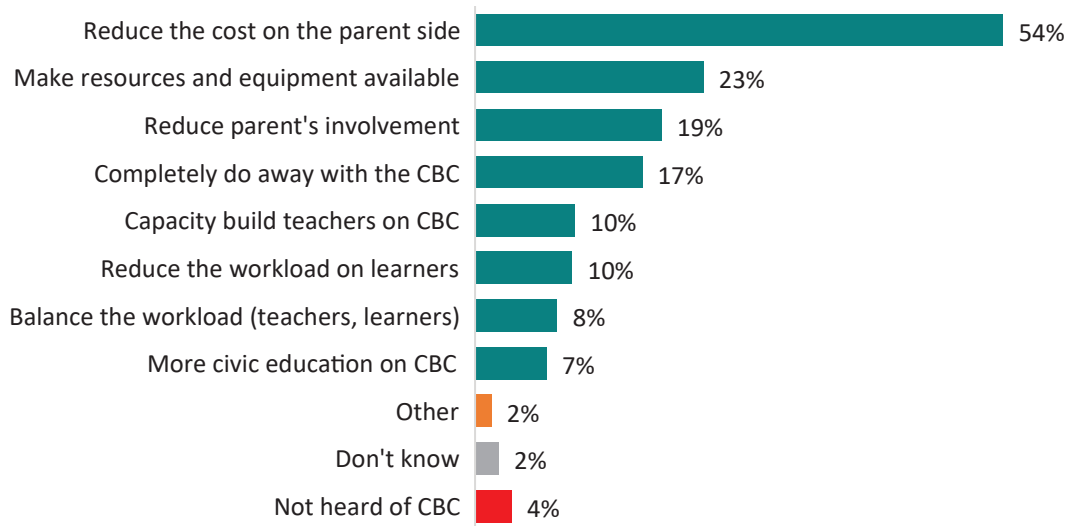
Source: Sauti za Wananchi mobile phone survey, special r9 (November 2022)
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

Insight 3: The main change proposed by citizens to the CBC is to reduce the financial burden on the parent's side

The most widely-proposed change put forward by citizens for how the CBC could be improved is to reduce the cost to parents, cited by half (54%) of citizens. Other suggestions include to make resources and equipment more widely available (23%), reduce the involvement of parents (19%), build the capacity of teachers (10%), reduce the workload on learners (10%), better balance the workload (8%) and provide more education to the public on CBC (7%).

One out of six citizens (17%) suggest the CBC should be dropped entirely.

Figure 3: What changes would you like made to the CBC?
(multiple responses permitted)

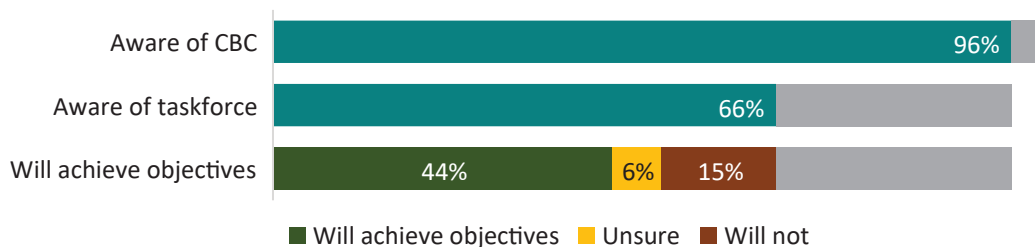


Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile phone survey, special r9 (November 2022)
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

Insight 4: 2 out of 3 citizens are aware of the taskforce that is reviewing the CBC

Most citizens (66%) are aware that the government has created a taskforce to review the CBC. Citizens are three times as likely to think the taskforce will achieve its objectives (44%) than to think it will not (15%).

Figure 4: Are you aware that the new government has put a taskforce in place to review the CBC? Do you think this will achieve the intended objectives in reforming the CBC?

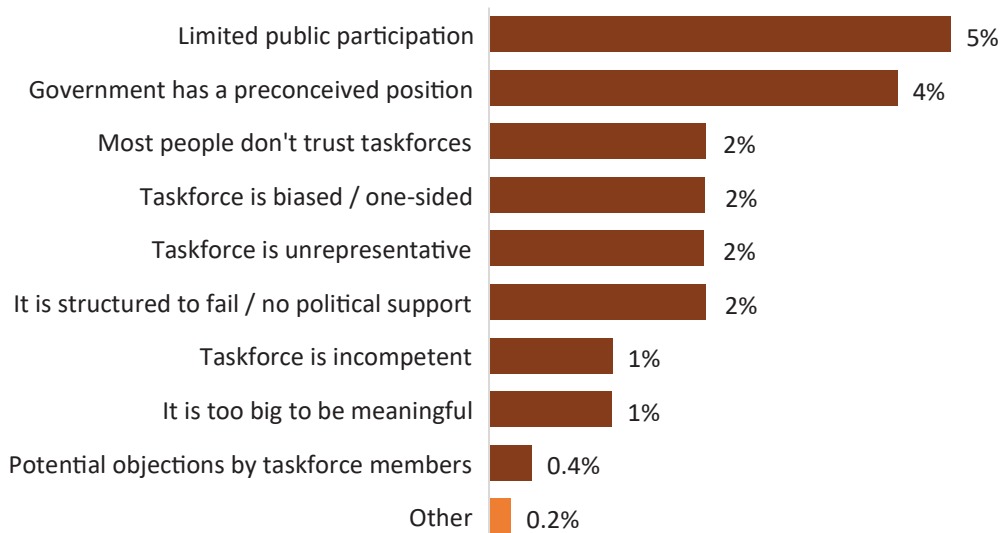


Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile phone survey, special r9 (November 2022)
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

The main reasons given for thinking the taskforce will not achieve its objectives are limited public participation in the process (5%) and the view that the government has already decided on the outcome of the process (4%).

Others say that most people don't trust such taskforces (2%), that it is one-sided (2%) or unrepresentative (2%) or that it has not political support and is designed to fail (2%).
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Figure 5: If you think the taskforce will not achieve its objectives, why?
(multiple responses permitted)

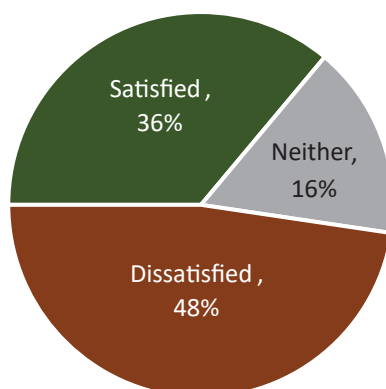


Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile phone survey, special r9 (November 2022)
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

Insight 5: More citizens are dissatisfied than are satisfied with the country's direction on curriculum reform

More citizens are dissatisfied (48%) than are satisfied (36%) with the direction Kenya is taking to reform the school curriculum.

Figure 6: In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the direction Kenya is headed in reforming our school curriculum (e.g. CBC, TVET)?



Source: *Sauti za Wananchi* mobile phone survey, special r9 (November 2022)
Base: all respondents (n=3,000)

3. Conclusions

The brief presents the views of citizens from across the country on a significant aspect of education reform in Kenya: the introduction of a competency-based curriculum (CBC).

The first point to note is that the level of awareness of the CBC system amongst Kenyans is almost universal. Citizens prefer the CBC over the outcome-based curriculum (implemented under the 8-4-4 system). Some (9%) are of the opinion that the two curricula are the same. This suggests a gap in knowledge amongst some Kenyans. However, as the 8-4-4 system is gradually phased out, it is likely that this number will go down.

A significant concern is raised by the fact that more citizens are dissatisfied with the country's direction on curriculum reforms than are satisfied. Implementing CBC has not been smooth and challenges remain. Most notably, a large majority of citizens (74%) point out that it is costly, and others note that it is demanding on the part of parents. Citizens' main suggestion is to find ways of reducing the cost to parents.

Acknowledging the challenges of education reform, President William Ruto established the Working Party on Education Reform with the mandate to evaluate the education system and propose recommendations. Awareness of this working party/taskforce amongst Kenyan citizens is high, at 66%, and most citizens are optimistic that the taskforce will achieve its objectives of undertaking a comprehensive review of the country's competency-based curriculum, basic education as well technical and university education, within a period of six months. Specifically on the CBC, the Terms of Reference of the working party are to "cause and undertake summative evaluation of Kenya competency-based curriculum" and "to assess and recommend

an appropriate structure to implement the competency-based curriculum²”.

Those who are sceptical about whether it will achieve its objectives give various reasons, including that public participation will be limited and that government has [is merely validating] a pre-established position.

As the working party proceeds, they could learn useful lessons from the data presented in this brief, most particularly on the challenges associated with the CBC. Moreover, they will also need to find ways to cultivate trust among citizens. Otherwise, citizens may hold back information that could go a long way in supporting education reform in Kenya, and the working party’s findings will lack public support and popular legitimacy.

2 <https://www.president.go.ke/president-william-ruto-has-appointed-a-taskforce-to-evaluate-the-competency-based-curriculum/>

