

# **URUNANA**

## **RW'ABAREZI**

ISSUE 05 December 2017

### *Competence-based curriculum*



# IN THIS ISSUE

1. FORWARD	1
2. Why Should You Read Urunana Rw'abarezi?	3
3. Implementation of competence based curriculum in schools	5
4. Perspective and Good Practices from Bwishiura Sector, Karongi District	7
5. Competence-based curriculum: a paradigm shift of teaching and learning in Rwanda	13
6. Perspective and Good Practices from Tabagwe Sector, Nyagatare District	16
7. The Implementation of competence based curriculum, current status, challenges and way forward	23
8. Perspective and Good Practices from Nyakabanda Sector, Nyarugenge District	26
9. Gender Equity and Competence Based Curicullum	33

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## FORWARD

Welcome to the fifth issue of Urunana rw'Abarezi, our peer learning magazine for education stakeholders.

In July 2013, the Rwanda Education Board through its department of curriculum and pedagogical materials development embarked on a journey of reviewing the old education curriculum.

The Rwandan education philosophy is to ensure that young people at all levels of education achieve their full potential in terms of relevant knowledge, skills and appropriate attitudes that are required to make them be prepared to be integrated in society and to leverage on employment opportunities.

In line with these efforts to improve quality of education in schools, the Government of Rwanda emphasises the importance of aligning the curriculum, the teaching, the learning as well as the assessment approaches in order to ensure that the country achieves the kind of development that is needed.

There are many factors that determine the quality of teaching and learning of students and the competences they acquire as a result of the learning process. They include the relevance of the curriculum, the required teachers' pedagogical approach, the required assessment strategies and instructional materials. All these components are being aligned with the new curriculum.

The fundamental aim of reforming the curriculum is to guarantee quality education becomes a reality in Rwanda in response to the Country's long-term vision to position itself nationally, regionally and globally by fostering knowledge and competence

based economy that will empower its citizens. This should be achieved by ensuring that our education system embraces a competence-based curriculum that will help students develop independent, lifelong learning habits; appropriate skills and knowledge; and applications to real-life situations.

In the same perspective, VWOB Rwanda in collaboration with REB and URCE is implementing a new Multi-Year programme entitled "Leading, Teaching and Learning Together (LT)2" (2017-2021) to continue promoting the quality of basic education through enhancing school leadership and setting up an induction system for New Teachers.

The programme focuses on advancing the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum while supporting the improvement of learning outcomes in Mathematics for girls.

This particular issue of Urunana rw'Abarezi magazine will focus on sharing experiences, best practices and

challenges from teachers, school leaders, sector education officers and other education stakeholders around the implementation of the new competence based curriculum in schools in Rwanda.

It is our hope that this magazine will serve as a platform for all programme stakeholders to share experience, good practices, challenges,

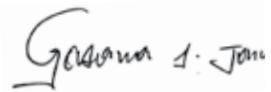
and modeled solutions to continue promoting quality basic education with the focus on advancing the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum.

We are therefore confident that you will enjoy reading this magazine and that you will contribute to enriching this platform by sharing your precious experiences and good practices as we strive

together towards quality education in our schools.

Sincerely,

**Janvier GASANA  
Director General,  
Rwanda Education  
Board**



# Why Should You Read Urunana Rw'abarezi?

By Eugene RUKYEBA

"The kind of schools we need would make teaching a professionally public process. By "professionally public" I mean that teachers (read educators=teachers and education leaders) would have opportunities to observe other teachers [read educators] and provide feedback. No longer would isolated teachers (teachers and education leaders) be left to themselves to figure out what went on when they were teaching; **secondary ignorance is too prevalent and too consequential to depend on one's personal reflection alone**.....When an individual [ e.g. an educator working in isolation] suffers from secondary ignorance, not only does s/he not know something, but s/he does not know that she does not know. In such a situation, correcting the problem may not be possible. The way in which one remedies secondary ignorance is not through self-reflection, but through the assistance of others.....The image of the teacher [or head teacher] isolated in a classroom [school leader isolated in his/her school] for five days a week, 44 weeks a year, is not the model of professional teaching practice that we need."

Elliot W. Eisner, 2002

In order to avoid secondary ignorance sometimes referred to as blissful ignorance, school leaders are advised to read **Urunana rw'abarezi** magazine as well as other school leadership literature and benefit from ideas, knowledge, skills and attitudes of fellow school leaders about how to effectively lead and manage teaching and learning in schools.

Without collaborative learning among school leaders, knowledge, skills and best practices

in education remain locked within individual school leaders, instead of being made available to others for validation and collective application. **The problem of working in isolation is that a school leader may be doing the wrong things, doing them the wrong way, getting the wrong results and all along believing firmly and with unwavering conviction that they are doing the right thing and doing it right.** This is the true description of

secondary ignorance. With collaborative learning, individual knowledge is not only made available to colleagues who may need it for improving their own professional school leadership and management competence and practice, but it is also an opportunity to have it [knowledge] confirmed or corrected in the process of discussion for purposes of deepening and unifying understanding of educational challenges so that correct solutions

can be collectively found.

Professional learning networks perform two main functions among other things:

1. Improving the attitudes, skills and knowledge of educators through professional dialogue, exchanging expertise, collaborative study as well as collaborative and collective problem solving
2. Improving student learning achievement through strong professional leadership and teaching

School leaders can engage in professional learning networks through face to face meetings or through writing. Face to face meetings could be better but like most good things they are costly and it would be very difficult for school leaders to meet every time they have a mutual or individual educational concern to discuss and resolve. Thus professional networking through writing was initiated by VVOB through the creation of a peer learning magazine to complement face to face professional networking. Urunana Rw'Abarezi magazine serves as a platform for

school leaders to share leadership experiences, attitudes, skills and knowledge of solving educational problems collectively and collaboratively through writing. Therefore, it is important that every school leader in particular and educators in general do read the magazine and contribute ideas and practical experiences in form of articles and feedback if they want to avoid working in isolation as well as the risk of suffering secondary ignorance and be the effective leaders and managers of teaching and learning needed by their schools.



# Implementation of competence based curriculum in schools

By Dr Joyce MUSABE

## The purpose of the competence based curriculum

In 2015 Rwanda launched the competence based curriculum (CBC). A curriculum plays a big role in determining what and how learners learn what is taught. The shift to the CBC was therefore a much needed national decision. The CBC is relevant and well aligned to the appropriate methodological approaches, assessment strategies and instructional materials. It intends to develop competent Rwandans with appropriate skills to meet the nation's needs in terms of skills on the job market.

## Implementation schedule

The implementation of the competence based curriculum is being done in phases. In 2015

it was officially launched and in 2016 it started to be used in pre-primary (*all classes Pre-primary 1-Pre-primary 3*) and all first years of each level (*primary: P1 and P4, Secondary: S1 and S4*). In academic year 2017 it was implemented in both first years and second years of each level (*Lower primary: P1 and P2, Upper Primary: P4 and P5, Lower secondary: S1 and S2 and Upper Secondary: S4 and S5*). So, this indicates that it will be implemented at all classes' levels in 2018.

## How far have we gone?

With the collaboration of our Development Partners, the following have been achieved with regard to the successful implementation of the competence based curriculum since 2016:

- All subject syllabi for all levels were printed and

distributed in schools;

- Instructional materials aligned to the curriculum
- Textbooks and other learning and teaching materials were also procured and distributed in schools though we haven't reached a good ratio of one textbook per child. This will be increased progressively until we reach the target of one to one.
- Teachers are continuously being trained and other education leaders at different administrative levels oriented.

## Any special message to teachers and school leaders

### To teachers:

#### **A call to teachers to embrace the change:**

We are living in a

changing world and challenging 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our nation's ambition to develop a knowledge based society will only come true if teachers change their traditional methods of teaching in order to provide quality education to learners.

***Use the subject syllabus for each grade and level:***

The syllabus outlines the content to be taught, suggests the methodological approaches, teaching techniques to be used and best assessment strategies. Preparing your lessons according to the syllabus will lead to equipping your learners with the needed competences: knowledge, skills and attitudes and values.

***Purposeful use of available textbooks and other materials:***

Since 2009 all schools were equipped with textbooks and other learning and teaching materials. Although the curriculum has changed those instructional materials can still be helpful to both students and teachers. For a teacher to prepare a good lesson he/

she needs to read from different books. Teachers are advised to use these books because they contain the content that is still relevant.

**To school leaders:**

***Monitoring and providing guidance to teachers:***

Monitoring is a key responsibility of school leaders (head teacher, director of studies (DoS) and/or responsible. In addition to providing the subject syllabus to each teacher, school leaders have to make sure the teachers do their schemes of work and daily lesson plans as per the competence based curriculum. Indeed it is very vital for school leaders to make sure the competence based curriculum is being implemented in their schools.

***Organise school based in-service trainings (SBI):***

REB has trained a number of teachers from each school and learning area or subject (subject leaders). According to the training plan these teachers should train their fellow teachers at school level. It is

the school leaders' responsibility to organise these trainings on a regular basis. During these training sessions, teachers come together and discuss on difficulties they may have faced in their lessons. They exchange ideas around lesson planning, integration of cross cutting issues, appropriate teaching learning techniques and so on depending on their specific need. School leaders are encouraged to arrange for these training sessions in their schools. As we encourage peer learning among students so it is very helpful to teachers too.

***How to access the curriculum and related documents:***

For more information on the competence based curriculum, visit Rwanda Education Board's website ([www.reb.rw](http://www.reb.rw)). You can access the curriculum related documents like curriculum framework, all subject syllabi, lists of approved textbooks, guidelines for the implementation of the curriculum and so on.

# Empowering children toward problem-solving

**An impact story from MUSABYIMANA Geras, Teacher at College Ste Marie (Karongi/ Western Province)**

Since 1998 Geras has been dedicating all his strength and time to educating children in the most disadvantaged schools in (Karongi? Elsewhere? Call him for details). But for Geras, education is more than enabling the numeracy and the literacy potential of children.

Geras believes that "education is about effecting a positive attitudinal and behavioral change in the lives of our children and on a daily basis"

Which is why he was thrilled to share with Urunana magazine his vision of the impact of the new competence based curriculum in the teaching and learning in schools and how it will help foster quality education.



"First of all, the knowledge based curriculum is not a horrible curriculum like some might think. It played a crucial role for many years and all of us in the education today

benefited from it. The problem is that it has serious limitations in the way teachers managed their lessons and in the way students learned. Since it was one of the driving forces of our

learning and teaching system, it has a big impact on the learning outcomes of our children. Being more knowledge-oriented, we found ourselves striving to develop crammers instead of producing well-rounded and competent people who were unable to innovatively solve their own problems" Geras says.

But according to Geras, the integration of values into teaching as a requirement toward holistic quality education is something one should applause:

"In looking back at our Country's history, we see that authors and instigators of trouble-makers were very educated. But did they have values? Were they attitude healthy and inspiring? Did they use their knowledge to competently fix social economic problems the Country was facing? Were they innovative? Again, history can help us answer these questions. I will nevertheless observe that values integration into the teaching, gives some purpose to the learning process and it motivates students to apply the acquired skills

in their lives within their respective context and culture"

Geras explains how the competence based curriculum brings a positive change in a classroom setting:

"The important thing to understand is that the learning dynamics should change. Yes, the teacher is the manager of the class. He is responsible for the safe environment. It is his role to ensure that all children are learning and that students with special needs are not left behind. This means of course that lessons planning and teaching design should be done in keeping with this objective to ensure that inclusion is taken into account. But when it comes to learning, teachers should let children participate in a very interactive way. The new competence based curriculum allows teachers to tell their students 'You can make it. You are brilliant. You have a great potential that I want you to tap into'. This will encourage children to have to feel free to display their competences and how far they have gone in learning how to utilize

their knowledge and competence to solve real life problems"

However, despite the great things that are expected from the competence based curriculum, Geras is not unaware of some challenges that may slow down teachers on their journey toward quality and fulfillment as they strive to empower teachers. Yet Geras is optimistic and thinks that 'we need to keep up the great work!'

"Effective lessons planning, child-centered teaching methods, active participation, developing students cognitive skills, etc. are great things we are all looking forward to as we implement the new competence based curriculum. We want our children to succeed and to make a difference. Yet there is a price to pay. We need to ensure we have the needed equipment, the needed textbooks, and the right learning materials to get there. But until we get there, our focus as teachers should still be to empower our lovely students beyond the need of imparting knowledge. It is all about empowerment"

# Education is about transformation

**An impact story by Thaciana NYIRAGARUKA, Director of Studies (DOS) at Groupe Scolaire RURAGWE, Karongi/Western Province**



Director of Study of (School name?), she felt very happy to share her perspective on why she believes the competence based curriculum is the right way to go with regard to fostering quality education into classrooms.

"The new competence based curriculum is a new way of teaching that is progressively revolutionizing the learning and the teaching in our schools and the whole education sector. It is a great way of not only imparting knowledge and skills to students, but also to help them develop as emerging future leaders who will be enabled to use their innovation ability and critical thinking to make transformative decision

**F**or Thaciana, people matter first. Especially when it comes to education. From her 20 + years of experience in education and school leadership and management, she believes that "quality

education is about transforming the lives of children by giving them the power to maximize their full potential and to use their creativity capability"

Which is why, as the

making in the Country” Thaciana said

As an experienced school leader who has served for many years supporting teachers in the process of managing courses and lessons planning, Thaciana advise school leaders and directors of studies to be very supportive to teachers:

“Most of the time, we hear people say that the competence-based curriculum will solve quality related problems in classrooms and I believe they are right. Yet, I also know that it cannot happen without the support of school leaders like head teachers and directors of studies. And furthermore, of sector education officers. But how can teachers be supported? Well, they need affirmation, and understanding from their leaders. They need to be encouraged in their efforts to proactively develop learner-centered classrooms. They need to be given enough time to be ready for the lesson. They need to be offered opportunity to continually learn.

The more we have confident and empowered teachers who have a strong and clear understanding of learner-centric and inclusive education methodologies, the more our children will have a strong purpose of what they are being taught in classrooms, and they will engage in the learning process”

On the other hand, with the new competence based curriculum, teachers should be encouraged to use their creativity to meet the curriculum expectation.

“One thing teachers need to be reminded is that the competence based curriculum ease their work. Unlike the old system where they were expected to do everything, the new curriculum allows them to cooperate with another valuable partner: the student. This is an important element; teachers should always keep in mind as they unpack the new program and as they strive to integrate values into their teaching. Whether the lesson is conducted in small groups, in

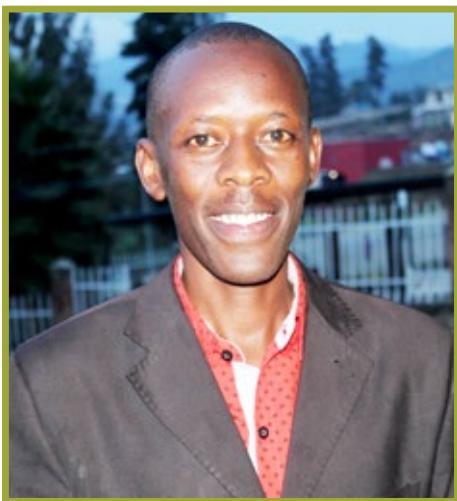
pairs, etc., the ultimate goal is not to say ‘I taught many lessons’ but instead ‘Students learned and understood why they learned what they learned’” Thaciana explained.

And what is the role of the community?

Thaciana shared: “Every change can be tough and challenging. So is the new curriculum. Among the challenges we know teachers and schools in general face, are the unavailability of some needed textbooks, very limited time for effective lessons planning. Yet another big challenge that is most of the time disregarded is the irreplaceable role that the community can play to support the development of quality education in schools. Therefore, school leaders should be strong team builders who ensure that all key actors are never left behind in this great and amazing process of transforming the lives of our children through quality and relevant education”

# Education is not just about academic success

## *An insight from MUNEZERO Terence SEO Bwisyura Karongi Western Province*



For many years, Terence has been privileged to be a key contributor as an educator, school leader and for the last couple of years as Bwisyura Sector education officer where he provides effective leadership to Bwisyura schools on a daily basis. Some of his responsibilities include managing complex issues such as 'double shifting' in schools, ensuring that quality and relevance are real in the teaching

and learning in schools, and ensuring that school leaders are offered the highest possible care and support to help them do their job properly.

"It is generally believed that for the new competence based curriculum to be translated into practice at the school level and reflected in learning experiences, educators need to focus on skills and attitudes as well as knowledge" Terence said

As his Sector Education Officer, Terence is invested with the responsibility of providing supportive supervision to develop schools and teachers, and timely reporting for statistics, in collaboration with

other key actors like the District director of education and Inspectors:

"As the education officer of my sector, I came to learn that my role isn't about finding failures pertaining to school leadership or quality education, instead to build dynamic teams in schools, to help schools and the community work together to address key issues such as dropout, gender, equity, inclusion" Terence said

But another important area that requires more follow and support from education officers, is the implementation of the competence based curriculum that started to be implemented in 2016:

"We have been struggling for years to

ensure that our schools are places of children empowerment. Not just a place where children are best to reproduce what was taught, or where academic performance is the only thing to look at when assessing the students learning achievement. But since we were using a curriculum that was not facilitating this, we could not successfully move forward. The good news is that today we have a new curriculum that responds to all these needs by fostering students' competence" Terence observed

Terence believes that "the new competence based curriculum is not just a teaching program. It also provides ways of allowing students to be fulfilled by tapping into their potential. It includes courses such as Music, Dance and Drama Music. And we know from contemporary research that these courses can incredibly provide a great channel to help students express themselves and grow in their creativity, communication and social skills. If we combine all this with values integration into

teaching, we have a balanced and holistic program that we are certain will help us move from scarcity to abundance. We will have students who enjoy their learning and develop their creativity that can help them tackle real life issues and find relevant solutions"

*So how can all this be accomplished in a school framework?*

Terence advises: "There are several challenges schools face. They include dropout problems, overcrowded classrooms, few textbooks, limited time to prepare lessons, lack of appropriate lab equipment, etc. Yet, if we all synergize as a strong team, we can be successful. We therefore to ensure there is strong collaboration between school leaders, directors of studies and teachers. When they work in harmony, the school environment is healthier and students benefit from it. So Sector education officers should motivate these key people to ensure they are on track. We also need to ensure that teachers' confidence in their ability to deliver

the curriculum is strengthened. Parents are also other key actors that we need to involve. Through their School General Assemblies, they play a great role in supporting schools in some key management matters and they can be of an incredible help in addressing key issues like students behavior management and dropout"

Continual professional development and peer learning are also areas that should be prioritized to ensure there is an effective implementation of the competence based curriculum:

"Great educators are permanent learners. No one should assume that everything was mastered. Hence the need to continually offer proper training to school leaders, and especially to teachers, and also to parents so that they can all grow in their ability to play their role more than what is expected from them. If we do this faithfully and consistently, we can be sure that we will reap the fruits of our efforts and sacrifice in due time"

# Competence-based curriculum: a paradigm shift of teaching and learning in Rwanda

By Prof. Wenceslas NZABARIRWA



## What is competence-based learning?

**C**ompetence-based learning is a paradigm shift that is different from the traditional conception of learning by listening

and memorizing the information given by the teacher. It focuses on what learners can do and apply in different situations by developing skills, attitudes and values in addition to knowledge

and understanding. Competence-based curriculum is the kind of education that seeks to develop in learners the ability to learn and to perform activities in keeping with prescribed standards (Makunja, 2016).

## Competence-based curriculum in rwanda

The Competence-based curriculum was introduced in Rwanda in 2015 to ensure that young people at every level of education achieve their full potential in terms of relevant knowledge, skills and appropriate attitudes that should allow them to be integrated into the society and exploit employment opportunities (REB, 2015).

Within its competence-based curriculum

framework, Rwanda has identified basic and generic competences to be acquired by learners at all levels of its educational system. They are called "basic" because they are key or vital competences identified based on expectations and aspirations reflected in the national policy documents. In Rwanda, basic competences include literacy, numeracy, ICT, citizenship and national identity, entrepreneurship and business development, science and technology, and communication in official languages. These competences have been identified as basic taking into account their relevancy to the Rwandan history and context (REB, 2015).

Likewise, a number of generic competences were also identified. They are called "generic" because they are used in all domains and can be transferred to real life situations. In Rwanda generic competences include critical thinking, creativity and innovation, research and problem solving, communication,

interpersonal relations and life skills, and lifelong learning. Rwanda stresses on the importance of generic competences because they help students deepen their understanding of subjects and apply their subject learning in a range of situations. They therefore contribute to the development of subject competence. As students develop these generic competences they also acquire the set of skills that employers look for in their employees, so the competences help prepare students for the world of work. The generic competences are also vital for enabling students to become lifelong learners who can adapt to the fast-changing world and the uncertain future (REB, 2015).

### **Challenges related to the implementation of competence-based curriculum (CBC)**

The following are the predominant challenges that compromise the effective teaching of the knowledge, skills and attitudes in education programs:

- ✓ **Insufficient training in CBC:** All teachers have a limited training on the competence based curriculum. Some are already familiar with the new curriculum, but most of them are not.
- ✓ **Insufficient teaching and learning infrastructure and resources:** The effective implementation of the knowledge, skills and attitudes of a competence based curriculum requires enough teaching and learning facilities such as computers and other technological materials, and competence-based textbooks.
- ✓ **Low students' ability:** There are some students who have low academic abilities in such a way that it makes it difficult to teach all competences.
- ✓ **Students' unwillingness to accept learner-centered approach:** Most students are

familiar with the teacher- centered methodologies that were used in their prior educational learning.

- ✓ ***Resistance to change:*** The challenge is that there are some of the agents who resist understanding the essence of the competence-based education, making the implementation of the CBC very difficult.
- ✓ ***Difficulties related to the medium of instruction:*** Lack of communication skills in English (used as a medium of instruction) reported among students is an obstacle to the implementing the new curriculum.
- ✓ ***Insufficient funding:*** It is really very difficult to implement a curriculum under severe budgetary shortage

In is in this regard, that the following suggestions could be considered as recommended

solutions to address the abovementioned challenges.

### Mitigating strategies

To overcome the various challenges impeding on the CBC related to knowledge, skills and attitudes as outlined above, all stakeholders involved should take action by considering the following recommendations:

- ✓ ***Provision of in-service teachers training*** - Teachers should be supported toward embracing the CBC through workshops and seminars.
- ✓ ***Provision of teaching and learning resources*** – Quality education relies on the availability of quality teaching and learning materials. Therefore, teachers and students are encouraged to effectively use available teaching and learning resources and to improvise where and necessary
- ✓ ***Changing the mind set***- Teachers should be encouraged to give up traditional

methods of instruction in order to embrace participatory and interactive methods that engage students in the learning process, both in groups and as individuals.

- ✓ ***Providing financial support to schools***- Funds are required for purchasing learning and teaching support materials, building schools, and reducing the ratio of students per teachers

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# What's great about the CBC?

***An impact story from Mark Kiiza,  
teacher at GS Tabagwe Nyagatare/  
Eastern Province***



**M**ark is a young educator who strives to ensure that his students are empowered everyday through his hard work, dedication, and passion. Despite his limited experience

in the education sector, Mark's vision is to ensure that children are given the right education to ensure the Country's development is achieved.

Despite the many and

serious challenges most public schools face in term of infrastructure, quality, learning materials, etc. Mark refused to give up. But instead, he strongly believes that "teaching is more than a job".

"As long as I have the opportunity to empower the younger generation through generation, I feel alive and fulfilled. When I started to teach, I felt burdened by the low salary teachers receive. But as I started to see some of students going for university studies, I realized I was doing some serious work" Mark said.

In 2015, the Rwanda Education Board (REB) officially launched the New Competence Based Curriculum in response to the Rwandan overall vision to transform

the education system from a knowledge based approach to a competence based one. The CBC (like it is often called) started to be implemented in Rwandan schools in 2016 and is expected to boost children learning achievement and to champion learner-centric methodologies in classrooms.

As one of the key actors implementing the new competence based curriculum, Mark was so gracious to share with Urunana rw'Abarezi readers his perspectives on the CBC and how he thinks it is going to transform the learning of many children in Rwanda.

### **But what is it that is so special with the CBC?**

"The time has come where teachers do not have work alone. They have students as their key partners" Mark said, referring to the pre-CBC period where teachers were viewed as the center of the learning. One of the greatest things we are now seeing in our classrooms is that students are at the core of the teaching process. This was not the case before".

"With the new Competence Based curriculum, teachers are facilitators. They are not the source of knowledge but they inspire children to tap into their potential and to learn. With the new CBC, students are invited to develop their attitude (heart), they are given the chance to acquire knowledge (head) and they are given the needed skills they need in their learning. They become competent and empowered" Mark said.

An important component of the CBC is the use of effective teaching aids:

"The beauty of the CBC is that it allows teachers to involve children in the design and proper use of teaching aids. This requires teachers to do a consistent and substantial preparatory work to ensure that children are given more room to interact with the learning materials. When children are given the chance to participate in their learning in this way, they hardly forget what they learn. When they do it themselves, they keep it and they own it. They don't just memorize but

they understand the principles" Mark added.

Lesson planning is also viewed from a different perspective:

"The new CBC is different in that it makes teachers include cross cutting issues in the process of lesson planning. Important themes like sex education cannot be downplayed when planning a lesson on reproduction. In addition, slow learners and children with special needs are not left behind. Their special needs are taken into consideration not only in the planning process but also in the teaching and learning process"

One of the main objectives of the new competence based curriculum is to make teachers play a catalytic role in the development of children's cognitive skills. Mark believes that if it is well utilized, the CBC can be a powerful tool to help educators to get there:

"We educators do not develop cramming machines. We should not. We should promote the development of critical thinking in the learning of our students.

Our role is to encourage them to think outside the box, to explore and to discover. We should teach our students that making mistakes as they learn is an important step in the learning process. I believe that if we do this faithfully and patiently, we will help them increase their ability to create and to innovate. All we need to do is to give them the needed space, to guide them properly, and to encourage them to actively participate in their learning with their peers through group works. This helps even slow learners to adapt quickly. It also favors teambuilding and collaboration from the early age" Mark observed.

But on top of all this, Mark reminds us that

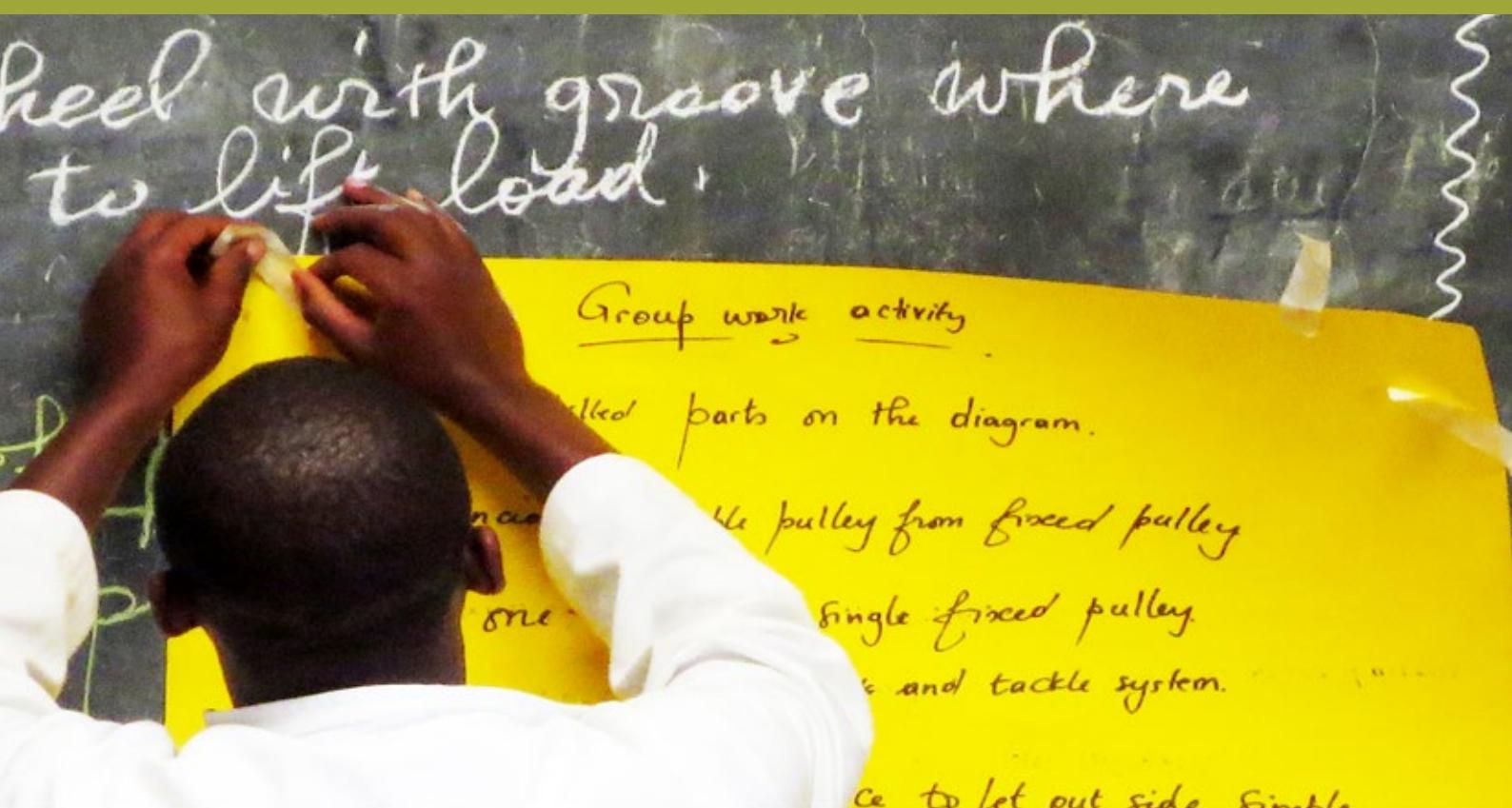
"education without values produce clever criminals". He believes that values integration into teaching is the ultimate mission of any teacher who wants to empower the new generation:

"Teachers often struggle with how to adopt effective students' behavior management techniques. Yet one of the most effective ways to be successful in that is to teach them values and to integrate them in the learning process. When we teach our children that what they learn will contribute to empowering their communities, and their countries, that's already a great starting point in collaborating with them to emulate values-based behavior

and principles-based attitudes"

Despite the existence of some serious challenges in the implementation of the CBC like having few textbooks (1 textbook for 5 children) in schools, or having very limited labs equipment that are impeding on the learning of children, Mark remains very positive about the future long-term outcomes of the CBC:

"Having a competence based curriculum is already a great achievement. School transformation does not happen overnight. We should be integral and faithful in the little things that are entrusted to us" .



# Making a lasting difference in the new generation

**An impact story by Rwakibibi Eugene on GS Runyinya Nyagatare/East**



Eugene is a very experienced educator. Prior to becoming Head teacher at Group Scolaire Runyinya, Eugene served in many different positions as an educator including teaching and school leadership and management.

Eugene's philosophy of education is holistic. Education, he says, is about not just teaching and equipping

students. It is about empowering them with love. And this includes paying attention to their inner desires, passions and ambition.

"I love education. It is the surest way of making a long lasting positive difference in this new generation in our Country" He said.

As schools are rolling out the new competence-based curriculum, Eugene shared with our readers his views on how this is going to impact students learning and teachers' work in schools:

"For many years, knowledge transfer has been the key purpose of our

education systems, especially in Rwanda. We thought that if our children acquire a lot of knowledge, most of our problems pertaining to students learning achievement will be solved. That was a big mistake. Students do not need only knowledge. They also need relevant skills and the right attitudes and values that are required to ensure that what they learn is helpful to them individually and to their fellow citizens" Eugene remarked.

From a school leadership perspective this means many things. The first thing being how able teachers are in delivering the curriculum:

Eugene observed: "As a head teacher, my main role is to ensure that through my leadership,

teachers are offered the highest level of care and support that are required to make them be able to take care of our students and to do it with love and motivation. My role is to ensure my fellow teachers (since I am also one of them!) never forget that all that we do is about these precious children. Our education system should be child-centered. Teaching therefore is not a simple process of transferring knowledge from the teacher to the student. It is a living partnership where teachers help students to actively participate in their learning”

A key element of the new competence curriculum is to ensure that students are given much space and time to connect with one another and to learn inclusively:

“This is a great way of ensuring that teachers take their lesson planning more seriously and that they do more research to ensure that they are seriously ready to facilitate the lesson. This includes the use of relevant and contextual teaching aids, and the

use of appropriate textbooks, despite challenges of limited availability of textbooks that many schools have been facing since the new curriculum started to be implemented”

However, teachers are not the only actors that can bring positive change in schools:

“The Competence-based curriculum is one of the ways we can develop quality education in our schools. It helps us ensure that students feel fulfilled in their learning and that they are really empowered and that they become competent with the needed values that can help build our communities. However, we also need the support from the community. Quality education is a school-community partnership. We need parental involvement as well. We need parents to understand that they are welcomed to participate in school matters, and that school management is not restricted to head teachers only. We believe that if parents follow up on their children’s education

on a daily basis, if they attend parent general assemblies on a regular basis, if they actively participate in this healthy process of mutual accountability with school leadership and teachers, our children will be well supported and empowered” Eugene insisted.

Although the new curriculum implementation does not seem to be smooth due to some challenges that include the need for continual professional development for teachers, and few textbooks available, Eugene encourages teachers not to lose hope: “At least we now have the opportunity to ensure that our children learn in a child-friendly environment. Our teachers now understand that genuine learning is about empowering children. Not just imparting knowledge. We have a clear framework to operate in and we can look forward to greater things in the future as we gradually overcome today's challenges”.

# MUKARUSHEMA Domitilla

**Sector Education Officer Tabagwe Sector, Nyagatare/Eastern Province**



**W**ith more than 20 years of experience as an educator, Domitilla had the privilege to interact with both the knowledge-based and the competence-based curricula in her long career in the broad education sector. As the

Sector Education Office of Tabagwe Sector, she has daily responsibility of ensuring that quality education in the sector is not compromised and that the 6 schools in her Sector are well equipped and supported.

As the new

competence-based curriculum is being implemented in different schools, Domitilla was one of the very well placed to share with Urunana rw'Abarezi readers, why the new competence curriculum is the right solution to help improve students learning performance.

"In order to fully understand the beauty of the new competence-based curriculum one needs to understand the nature and the limitations of the previous one. The old curriculum was of course meant to help children acquire knowledge in keeping with our Country's strategies to build an economy that is driven by knowledge and ICT" Domitilla said

Yet, the knowledge based curriculum is known to have been powerless in the process of empowering

students: "It was much more about feeding knowledge into children rather than helping them acquire strong and relevant skills and competence needed on the market. We could see how children were bored or annoyed" Domitilla explained

*So what's so special about the CBC?*

Domitilla shares that "in the old system, the teacher was literally the master. He was the source of the knowledge. Even in our communities, the name of "Mwalimu" (teacher) entails the concept of knowledge and of authority. In a classroom therefore, a good student was the one who listened to everything that was taught without questioning. And a good student was expected to reproduce literally what was taught. The teacher was never wrong. Group discussions were viewed as a waste of time rather than ways to encourage active participation. So there is a great hope in the new competence based curriculum for our schools"

"However, as the overseer of education in Tabagwe Sector, Domitilla advises that

key actors involved (Sector Education Officers, Head teachers, Director of Studies, Teachers, etc) should be at the forefront of quality education development in schools. The CBC alone cannot change our school toward abundance. There needs to ensure that our schools are more child-friendly and open to all children including those with special needs. The CBC alone cannot make children love to learn or to stay in schools. The CBC is another powerful tool that is more effective when used in the right learning environment. It can also be a way to alleviate students' dropout by fostering inclusive education" Domitilla said

As part of building synergy between educators, peer learning could be a very effective system that educators could leverage on, especially header teachers and teachers could tap into:

"There are many good practices that school leaders and teachers can learn from one another. I am thinking of effective practices in designing teaching aids, or best practices in

encouraging parents to play their expected role in supporting schools. I am thinking of best solutions to alleviate dropout and to bring all those out-of-school children....Currently, the implementation of the CBC is not without challenges and obstacles. Yet, through peer learning some of these challenges could be to a certain extent taken care of. Some schools for example could agree to exchange books, in response to the books shortage problem. Some teachers, especially experienced ones could co-mentor their peer teachers in effective ways to plan lessons or in inclusive education.

Domitilla hopes that the best is still to come, despite some roadblocks that schools face:

"Every new system brings its challenges. But looking forward, we need to ensure that the CBC is integrated in our way of thinking. It should be part of the DNA of our education system. But to get there, we will need to join our efforts and work together for the greater good of our children".

# Implementation of competence based curriculum, current status, challenges and way forward

By KANAMUGIRE Camille



**S**ince 2013, the Rwanda Education Board initiated a review of the curriculum to ensure that there is a more compelling response to the needs of the learner, the society and the

labor market. It was therefore required to move from knowledge based learning to a competence based one. The review emphasized on knowledge, skills and attitudes by streamlining the

coherence within the current syllabi content and by benchmarking them with syllabuses from other countries around the world.

Moreover, this review was consistent with what is emphasized in National Policy documents such as Vision 2020, EDPRS II and 7YGP (2010-2017). All these policy documents emphasize the ambition of Rwanda to build its economy on knowledge and technology.

Following the launch of the CBC in April 2015, a series of workshops were organized with the purpose of explaining in details what the CBC is about and how it is going to be impact the learning

and the teaching. The workshops targeted various stakeholders at all levels including REB officials, District Officials, SEOS, Head teachers, parents and students.

As of January 2016, the CBC started to be used at the levels of pre-primary, primary and secondary.

### **Current status of the implementation of cbc**

This 5<sup>th</sup> issue of Urunana rw'Abarezi is released as the CBC is in its 3<sup>rd</sup> implementation phase. Specifically with regard to the provision of textbooks, teachers' guides and other Learning and Teaching materials (LTMs).

In August 2016, the Department of Education Quality and Standards (EQSD) carried out a survey in 80 sampled schools including nursery, primary and secondary levels. These sampled schools represented all categories (public, private and government aided schools). Investigated areas included pre-implementation

activities such as orientations 'workshops, teaching and learning methods used in the implementation of CBC, textbooks, teachers' guides and other teaching and learning materials as well as challenges faced by schools while implementing the CBC.

From the findings, the following pre-implementation activities, two main activities namely: training attended by Head teachers, Directors of Studies (DOS), Subject School Leaders and other teachers and availability of new Competency Based Curriculum documents were achieved at 88.8% and 100% respectively. The lower percentage (30%) was observed in the availability of new textbooks for the CBC. Although many textbooks have been delivered since then, there are still about 37 titles that are missing, most of which are for advanced level in the following areas: Languages, Humanities and Sciences and Maths. Some titles are

also missing for creative arts books for Primary and Ordinary levels.

Despite, the above missing titles, most of titles have been supplied to schools especially for primary level and O' level. There are some textbooks and teachers' guides that are still being distributed to schools for the second phase (for P2, P5, S2 and S5).

### **Challenges**

There has been a very less significant change in the teaching and learning methods. Teachers are generally still using the teacher-centered methodology rather than the learner-centered one.

In some schools though, teachers try to involve learners in their learning through the use of groups work. Yet there need to ensure this is done more effectively. There need to ensure there are clear instructions given to students on how activities should be carried in those groups.

Most of schools have received printed CBC except for

some subjects like ICT and Swahili (in combinations like Literature Kinyarwanda and Kiswahili (LKK) where Swahili is of the core subjects). The biggest challenge is that, despite the trainings that have been organized, most of teachers are still struggling to use of CBC in a proper way. There is need to have a continual and consistent training framework in place with emphasis on subject based- training.

The unavailability of new textbooks especially for Advanced level and some elective subjects remains a challenge especially for teachers who do not understand how to include generic competences and cross cutting issues in their lessons.

The School Based In service training (SBI) is not fully operational. More planning is needed from Head teachers and DOS to ensure that teachers take the lead in the implementation of the CBC on a regular basis.

### The Way Forward

The monitoring of the CBC implementation in sampled schools indicated that some key achievements are to be celebrated:

- Many schools have received the CBC and the planned trainings have been done including the orientation and the subject-based training;
- Most of Textbooks, teachers' guides and other Learning and Teaching Materials (LTMs) for P1, P2, S1, S4 and S5 have been distributed to schools and are being used as support to implementation of CBC;
- Yet there is need for more training to increase the implementers' confidence in rolling out the CBC toward the expected results. The issue of missing textbooks as well as other LTMs should be addressed in order to help teachers handle

new concepts of CBC such as generic competences and cross cutting issues that need to be introduced in all lessons delivered at school level;

- More planning is needed from Head teachers and DOS to help trained teachers be School Subject Leaders (SSLs) that are capable of implementing the CBC on a regular basis.

There have been intensive discussions on the importance of encouraging and promoting locally published books to help alleviate the issue of the issue of copyright currently owned by publishers, production of quality textbooks for some subjects that require understanding within the social-cultural context such as History of Rwanda, social studies, general studies and others. This could also resolve the issue related to cost effectiveness and the textbook ratio.

# Quality Education, the engine of a Country's Development

***Impact Story from Group Scolaire Kabusunzu, Nyakabanda Sector with Eric Joseph MURINDA, Head Teacher at Groupe Scolaire Kabusunzu***



**E**ric has been an educator for more than 20 years. During that long

period he has had the privilege to serve as a teacher and as a school leader. Eric's

philosophy of education can be summarized into one phrase: "Education is the engine of our Country's Development"

As an experienced educator, Eric welcomed Urunana rw'Abarezi into his office to share perspectives on the Competence Based Curriculum.

"From a school leadership vantage point, the new Competence Based Curriculum is destined to sharpen the mind of our children. Children are not expected to be crammers any more. What an amazing paradigm shift!" Eric shared.

What's so special about

the Competence based curriculum?

Eric explains: "The new competence based curriculum is designed in a way that children feel eager to learn. It is conceived in a way of triggering their curiosity. And isn't education about triggering the learner's curiosity rather than filling them with lot of content? Experience has demonstrated that discoveries, researches and competences result from what I could call healthy curiosity. With the new competence based curriculum, we make learners leverage on their curiosity and acquire new competence and skills. This is what any school leader should envision for his or her school in order to achieve quality"

Eric views in the new curriculum a great opportunity for Rwanda to emerge economically not just nationally but also regionally:

"We have as an objective to have a competitive education in the region in a way that our students will be very competitive and competent on the market. This is therefore a great opportunity

for as to strive toward that effect. While with the knowledge based curriculum students acquired too much content with poor practices, the new competence provides a balanced and holistic opportunity to translate the learning into practice"

But what should school leaders like head teachers or heads of studies do to ensure that teachers are able to implement the new curriculum in their classrooms, and to do it accordingly?

"School leaders should ensure that both teachers and students are well facilitated. Speaking of facilitating teachers, we know there are challenges that we all face as schools. Yet there are opportunities that we can leverage on to ensure our teachers are given the occasion to grow in their capacity to implement learner centric methodologies. And one of the ways of doing that is to encourage teachers to build and to engage in professional learning networks where effective teaching practices and experiences are

exchanges and learned" Eric said

School leaders should also ensure that formal Continual Professional Development (CPD) is a reality:

"Most teachers today have spent most of their careers teaching using knowledge based methodologies. So it is imperative to ensure they access refreshing trainings, workshops and other materials to help be sharpen their skills in order to have our students be impacted" Eric advised.

As more schools are currently struggling against the scourge of school dropout, Eric believes that the CBC could be a great asset school should look forward to as they strive to ensure that children's dropout is alleviated:

"We know that one of the reasons some children give up on school is that they cannot cope up with some teachers' pressure who disregard the importance of inclusive education and who are unable to support slow learners. This makes some of the students be discouraged. Some even say that they hate

schools. With the new curriculum, there is a much bigger room for making children enjoy the lesson by applying inclusive and active participation techniques that proved to be effective in most developed Countries”

And what about the community, particularly parents? Eric encourages school leaders to continually reassure parents,

especially those living in rural areas with a limited ability to grasp some important concepts:

“Some parents cannot understand all these things. Especially those with a very low educational background. Some may be surprised when they see the kind of assignments given to their children since they were used to different approaches

that were essentially knowledge-based. It is therefore the role of school leaders and teachers to continue to clarify and encourage parents through various meetings like the School General Assemblies/Committees and to enlist their consistent and permanent involvement in the education of their children”.



# The development of a Country lies on a Competent Youth

*An impact Story from Groupe Scolaire Kabusunzu by Laurence MUKAMANA*



Laurence's impressive track record as an educator can be easily spotted not only from her enthusiasm as she shares her experience and insight but also from the depth of her thoughts that are authority.

Her vision for education

education sector, Laurence did not fail to express her contentment about the new Competence based curriculum:

"I love it because it is what we need to be freed from scarcity to abundance. It is a new method of teaching

is to empower the youth. "Give me a competent youth and I will give you a bright future for a Country" she stated With more than 20 years of experience in the

that ensures that both teachers and children are empowered and successful. I know from my experience as a teacher that the old knowledge based curriculum was boring and that it made children be less interested in learning. It assumes that teachers were the source of the knowledge and it blocked the emergence of competences and skills from children"

So what is it that is so special with the new competence based curriculum from Laurence's view point?

Laurence explains: "Children are kings. They are at the center of the learning process. They are offered the chance to engage through qualitative

group discussions and to participate in learning activities. They acquire not just the knowledge but also skills, new attitudes, values like integrity, and they are allowed to know their culture better"

The CBC is also seen as a way of motivating children: "Is it a surprise to see that there is a new enthusiasm in the learning process given that children know that they own their learning process?" Laurence asked. Given that they understand that all can make it, something great is sparked from within them. They start loving to read. Textbooks do not belong only to teachers like some used to think. What's great about all this is that students do not resist learning some 'boring' subjects like Math, Physics, etc. since they understand the importance of these subjects in real life. In the past, we have taught some important concepts like healthy nutrition, water sanitation, but students would not understand how to translate those concepts into practice"

Another important new pillar of the competence based curriculum is the integration of values into the teaching and learning process:

"Our students do not just receive knowledge and competences. They are taught to be 'intore'. They understand that science without conscience is destructive. They value the importance of working in groups and they learn from their interactions with their peers to respect other's opinions and approaches" Laurence observed

But what can we expect from the competence based curriculum from a teacher's vantage point? How does it work in a classroom?

Laurence shares: "With the CBC, teachers have a more flexible ability to plan their lessons in a way that will allow students to acquire some competences. Teachers now can include compelling activities that trigger the child's ability to develop cognitive skills. Teaching aids that are used are also designed in a way

that children will easily learn the lesson. Some activities like group discussions are powerful since they trigger the development of critical thinking. Other activities like map reading or research are also very important since they encourage children to develop their ability to solve problems and their sense of observation. Things that the old curriculum could not easily allow"

This is why Laurence expressed a great empathy for her peer teachers who strive to ensure children are empowered despite the limited resources and many challenges in the broad education sector:

"The Government invested a lot of resources in ensuring we have a great curriculum. It is a great success but there are still challenges like few textbooks or few teaching aids, etc. However, teachers are brave and should not give up! We can use our creativity and give the little that we have with a big heart and a great passion. We shall make it".

# Working as a team leads to success

## *An impact story by Anatole SINGIZUMUKIZA, Nyakabanda Sector Education Officer (SEO)*



**A**natole is very well known by most of his colleagues for his wisdom and peace of mind. And even more. He is respected for his Leadership skills as a team builder.

Since 2012, he has been

serving as the Sector Education Officer in Nyakabanda, one of the popular sectors of Nyarugenge District. He provides oversight to up to 11 schools.

As the one who is invested with the responsibility of

supporting schools to achieve students learning achievement in his Sector, Anatole too shared his insights on the new competence based curriculum:

"The new Competence based curriculum will work as a catalyst in fostering quality education in our schools since it emphasizes the complex outcomes of the learning process. It is not only about knowledge. It is also about developing the right attitudes required to build competences and needed skills"

Anatole looks forward to a deep transformation in schools and in the lives of students as a result of the appropriate implementation of the new competence curriculum in schools:

"Since teachers are actively involving students in their learning, and since head teachers and teachers understand the necessity to bring on board parents by encouraging them to be proactively involved in the education of their children, we can anticipate a deep transformation of our schools and of our children's lives"

Anatole therefore encourages his peers sector education officers to take seriously their mission of empowering school leaders and teachers in order to help them be successful in developing quality Education in schools:

"Sector education officers are not police officers. SEOs should visit schools not to find faults and to put the blame on head teachers but to express encouragement, empathy, support and to build a team where issues can be addressed. There are many issues that cannot be addressed in loneliness. Teamwork matters. Working as a team matters"

School Dropout has

been identified as one of the toughest scourges of the Rwandan Education Sector. Yet Nyakabanda Sector was able to decrease the dropout rate from 0, 2% to 0, 01%, a result that is attributed in part to the implementation of the Competence Based curriculum:

Anatole believes that "the implementation of the competence based curriculum helped many schools to foster a child-friendly environment where students feel at home. Children do not feel threatened by the prospect of being labeled 'weak' or 'stupid'. Students feel at peace since teachers are adopting effective behavior management practices that exclude corporal punishment but emphasize motivational corrective techniques. Students are given the chance to learn at their pace and in different ways. Students are offered the chance to learn from different learning resources. But on top of that, schools partner with parents to ensure these ones are caring and involved in the education of their children".

As one of the successful and respected Sector education officers in Nyarugenge District, we asked Anatole to share a piece of advice that could help other SEOs make a significant difference in their own schools:

"One of the ways that I would recommend to my peer SEOs to use as they struggle to see quality education in their schools, it to use Professional Learning Networks. I personally have been empowered through these networks. I learn for instance how to effectively apply 'mass-inspection' by partnering with different head teachers through collaboration. There are many great things that one can learn from a peer. We all know that head teachers and teachers need our support. We are there to encourage them and to motivate them on a regular basis. Therefore, it is important that, as education officers, we continue to warm one another, share experiences, and apply innovative solutions that were developed and successfully implemented by others".

# GENDER EQUITY AND COMPETENCE -BASED CURRICULUM

By: NYIRANDAGIJIMANA Anathalie

## Introduction

The term “gender equity” is often referred to as “gender equality”. So do they really mean? Gender equality means that males and females have equal opportunities and benefits. Evidence demonstrates that when women and men are relatively equal, economies tend to grow faster, the poor move quickly out of poverty, and their wellbeing is enhanced (World Bank 2001). Gender equity is the process of being fair to both female and male. To ensure fairness, it is important to take into account social and historical disadvantages that have created imbalances between girls/women and boys/men and adopt some compensation measures depending on identified needs. These positive or special measures called “positive discrimination” aim

to foster greater equality for the group of people who have faced discrimination. In this article the focus will be on how the Competence-Based Curriculum intends to address the issue.

## The integration of Gender into the Competence-Base Curriculum (CBC)

Launched in 2015, the Competence-based Curriculum is designed to develop learners’ competences rather than just their knowledge, by focusing on what young people can do rather than just on what they know.

Gender is one of the eight cross-cutting issues integrated in the new curriculum. In line with this, gender related topics are taught in Social studies in primary, in History and citizenship for Ordinary level and in General Studies and

communication skills in Advanced level. On one hand, through a competence-based approach, learners gain not only the knowledge but also the skills and positive attitudes/life skills related to gender in the mentioned subjects. On the other hand, all teachers in different subjects are encouraged to use a gender-sensitive approach to learning when planning and delivering lessons and when managing learner’s activities.

The introduction of a gender perspective into the curriculum aims to improve the outcome of quality teaching by enabling girls and boys to exploit their full potential and talents without any discrimination or prejudice. Addressing gender inequality throughout the curriculum needs to consider different aspects of schooling,

such as textbooks and other learning and teaching materials, ways of teaching and learning, guidance and counseling, interactions within and out of the classroom, the school learning environment, etc.

### **Training of teachers and school leaders is key to mindset change**

According to Bloom (1976), attitudes are a major indicator of a person's success in a subject area. Teachers need to implement effective gender-sensitive strategies in order to provide quality education. They also need to relate to female and male learners as individuals, and not through gender-based perspectives. They need to focus on each individual learner's skills and/or weaknesses, and thus conduct a class session free from gender bias.

To foster gender responsive culture in schools, teacher and school leader's mindsets change is the most important aspect to deal with. This requires that teachers and school leaders are trained to

equip them not only with gender related knowledge but also with skills and gender sensitive attitudes that enable them to cater for specific needs of both girls and boys. Teachers need to be aware of their own beliefs and behavior towards male and female learners. Well trained teachers and school leaders are expected to adopt a gender sensitive approach to learning breaking gender-based stereotypes in class and school activities. For example, the common practice of appointing boys as group leaders and girls as note takers or reporters should be avoided. Such appointments should be made based on the individual skills of the learners regardless of their gender.

### **Textbooks and gender inequalities**

Another key aspect that needs to be considered is related to textbooks and other learning and teaching materials. In fact, as noted by Mlama, textbooks and other learning resources can reinforce gender inequalities (Mlama, 2005, p.12). During textbook evaluation to

implement CBC, the successful titles must encompass positive attitudes to gender and avoid any kind of gender stereotyping. Text, scenarios, and illustrations should demonstrate gender equality at school, in work, in leadership, politics, at leisure and other social activities and in the pursuit of opportunities. There is need to shift from textbooks where women are weak, passive and submissive, soft and emotional, mostly depicted in domestic, care giving and supportive roles while men are portrayed as powerful, strong, active, hard and rational, assertive and intelligent as well as leaders in society.

### **Guidance and counseling and gender equity**

Girls/women are under-represented in fields traditionally considered as male-dominated such as Engineering, Science and Mathematics. They feel less confident about their abilities, even when they have good performance. This attitude is constantly embedded in their beliefs as a result of

gender stereotypes that depict men as superior in Mathematics, Sciences and better suited to engineering jobs than women.

Teachers and school leaders will assist individually each learner to identify his/her abilities and interests to make informed decisions about their education and career pathway. Girls should be especially supported and encouraged to do Sciences, Engineering and Mathematics.

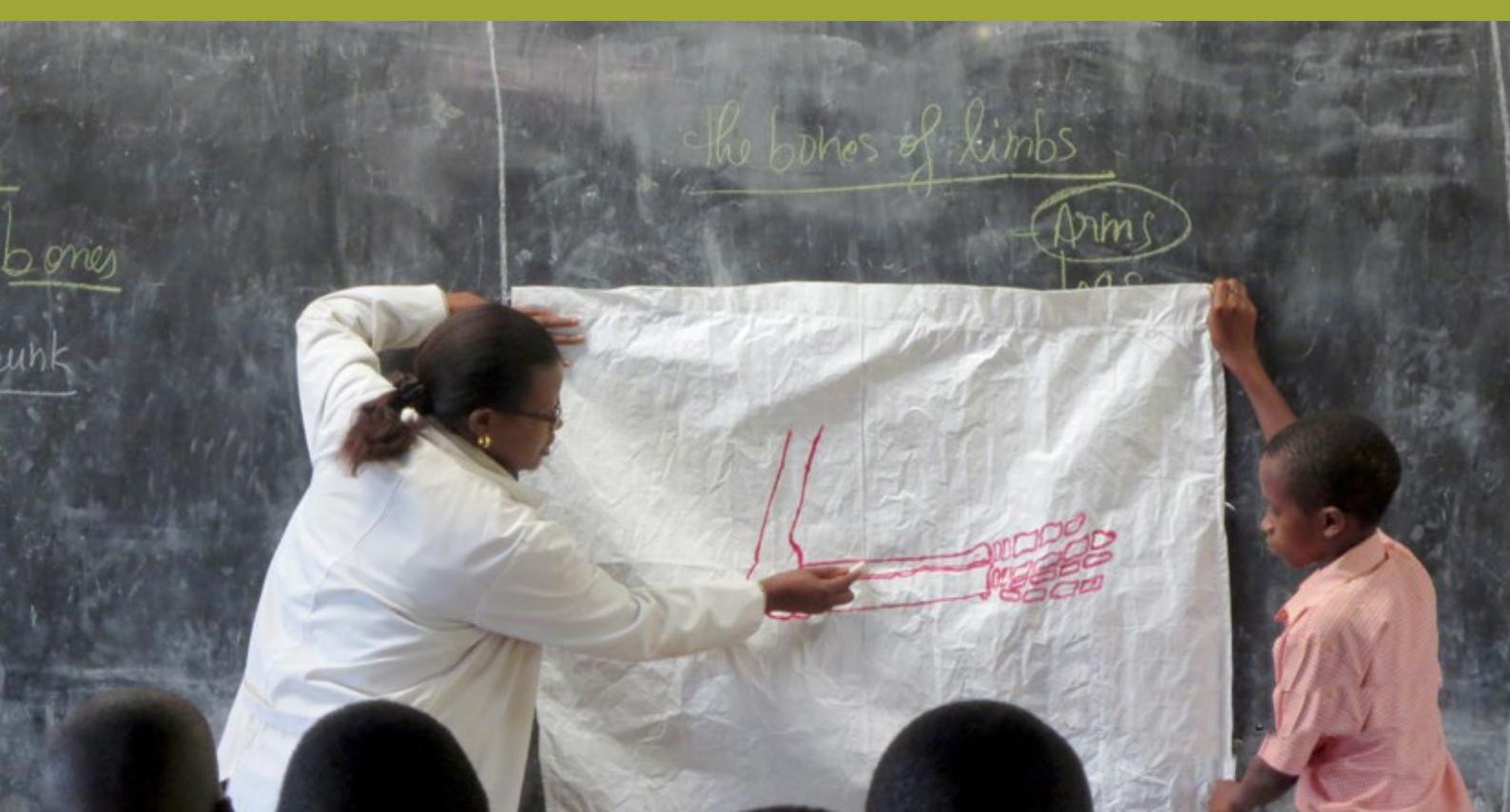
### Conclusion

Gender equality is crucial for quality education. Quality education that seeks to promote gender equality is aware of gender inequalities and addresses them

in teacher training, teaching and learning practices, curriculum and textbook content, school management, student-student and teacher-student relations, stakeholder involvement, etc.

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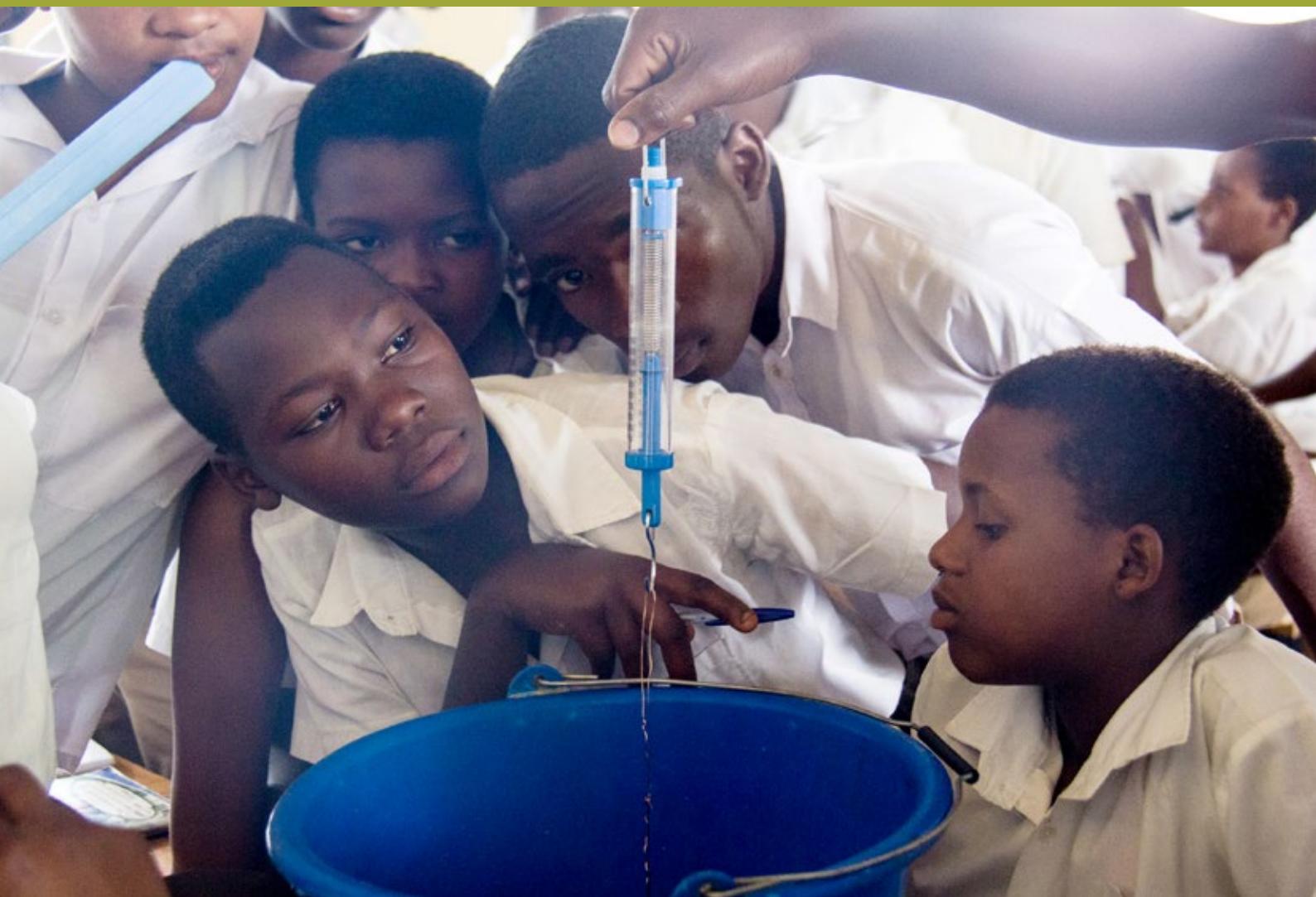




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