

Education Evidence for Action (EE4A)
4th EE4A Conference and Policy Roundtables

Concept note

Theme: Nurturing an Evidence Culture in implementation of Competence Based Curriculum (CBC & CBET) in Post-COVID Era

Date: 25th-26th November 2021

Venue: Naivasha

1. INTRODUCTION

In Kenya, education is one of the main priorities of the government evidenced by the fact that Kenya is a signatory to all the international conventions on education, including attaining the Sustainable Development Goals by the year 2030. The country's Constitution promulgated in 2010 guarantees every child the right to quality basic education and as such the government has consistently invested resources to deliver this right and achieve all educational ambitions, in line with the Kenya Vision 2030. Through coordinated resource mobilization, the Ministry of Education is implementing the National Education Sector Strategic Plan (NESSP, 2018-2022). NESSP prioritizes key education reforms, among them the shift from 8-4-4 to the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) and Competency-based Education and Training (CBET); devolution of early childhood education (ECDE) and vocational training to local governments; reforming the higher education sector; and the revitalization of Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

Over the last decade, impressive progress has been achieved through collaboration between the government, private sector, development partners, civil society and academic and research institutions. Government expenditure in education has grown immensely from Ksh. 313.4 billion in 2015/16 to Ksh. 496.8 billion in 2019/20 Economic Survey, 2020). Over the past 20 years, the Government has maintained the education expenditure around 20% of total government expenditure. The level of expenditure underpins an increasing trend in budget allocation to education that began in 2014. In Kenya's budget for the financial year 2021/2022, education budget makes up 25.9% of Kenya's total government expenditure, corresponding to 4.1% of nominal GDP. The Net Enrolment Ratio in both primary and secondary education has expanded from 91.2 percent and 51.1 per cent in 2017 to 93.1 per cent and 53.2 per cent in 2019, respectively. Following the 100 percent transition policy, transition to secondary was estimated at more than 85.5 percent in January 2019, the highest in Kenya's history. Similarly, the enrolment of youth in TVET and Universities has grown immensely from 267,363 and 522,059 in 2017, hitting a high of over 430,598 and **509,473** in 2019. This implies TVET enrolment doubled or expanded by 95 per cent while university enrolment increased by 18 per cent. In 2017, the government rolled out the CBC, with the vision of nurturing every learner's potential. Though evidence is still building, the learning assessments point to expanding development of foundational competences among children. Despite the decades of commitment to education, the idea of achieving equitable, quality and inclusive education and life-long learning faces a number of critical challenges. Key among these is the improvement of learning and training outcomes; eliminating inequalities in access and learning outcomes across all education levels, and inclusion, particularly for the marginalized groups of learners. Though the 2020 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education posted better results than in previous years, only 18 percent of the candidates achieved a mean of 50 percent (C+ and above). At the same time, a study carried out in 2019 by the Aga Khan University established that more than half of employers (in 24 counties) were dissatisfied with the skills possessed by the youth occupying entry-level jobs. While CBC and CBET are geared at flipping what children learn, how learning happens, and aligning skills training to the demands of

the 21st Century work place, the teaching and training workforce must be re-tooled to effectively implement the new curricula, and the learning and training assessments reformed to measure the new competences. Parents and the society at large must understand and be empowered to support learning. At the same time, the learning and training environments must be upgraded in line with the emerging policy commitment.

The above notwithstanding, the disruption by COVID-19 has decelerated movement in many ways while affecting the teaching and learning ecosystem. Anecdotal evidence estimates that when schools fully re-opened in January 2021, the learners had drifted by around 12 months from where they had left in March 2020¹. Learning inequality was also exacerbated by the inequitable access to remote learning opportunities, and the varied access to home-learning support. The year 2021 offers a good opportunity to reflect on the opportunities for recovering from the COVID-19 crisis, and using evidence to make strategic choices for strengthening the resilience and equity of Kenya's education, training and skills development; and re-energizing movement towards the 2030 ambition.

2. CONTEXT

Education Evidence for Action (EE4A) was established in 2015 by a group of education researchers and policy makers, to close the gap between research, policy and practice. The vision was to coordinate evidence producers and strengthen their intervention in translating data into evidence, and make the evidence accessible to policy-making and the interventions to improve learning. EE4A was founded then as a platform for sustained collaboration among policy makers, research institutions and the various users of evidence. EE4A has two objectives: 1) Facilitating an evidence-ecosystem in education; and 2) Linking education evidence to inform policy and action.

EE4A's vision is pursued through two pathways: The continued engagement of evidence producers in and out of government (including the key directorates in the Ministry, Universities, research institutions and non-state research institutions and big interventions), and nurturing close relationships as fertile ground for evidence use. At the same time, evidence producers unite their evidence into a single stream for flow of evidence, that better calls for attention and avoids the stimuli-overload that would come from the countless players in the education sector. On the other hand, the community of evidence producers and users access available data, invest in joint translation to evidence, and makes sense of and share this evidence through open roundtables and conferences. This collaborative effort is hoped to yield both the culture of co-creation of evidence and its use in the education sector, for the improvement of learning and training as well as policy formulation and implementation.

3. THE EE4A CONFERENCES

The EE4A Biennial conference is the key pathway for engagement on education evidence. In these conferences, new evidence is presented to policy makers and key actors, and the engagement with it promoted through policy roundtables involving all the State Departments and their allied SAGAs. The inaugural EE4A conference was held on December 2-3, 2015 in Nakuru, attended by around 100 stakeholders. Among the conclusions drawn from the 2015 EE4A conference was the need to adopt a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach to dealing with inequalities affecting education. A series of policy roundtables on Day 2 distilled key evidence and linked this to the policies in Early Childhood, Alternative basic education, inclusive education, teacher distribution and incentives, and the capitation model for greater equity. Some of the insights were picked up by policy and practice, while others are still undergoing interrogation.

¹ <https://www.right-to-education.org/blog/impact-covid-19-right-education-kenya>

The second EE4A conference took place on 4th – 6th December 2017 in Nyeri. This conference was attended by 109 stakeholders out of which 36 were government officials. It resulted into production of two policy briefs: one on teacher distribution and the other on quality of education. The third conference was held on 28th and 29th November 2019 in Machakos. The conference themed “Evidence-Based Education Reforms for Sustainable National Transformation” was structured to include research findings on educational policy and practice, panel discussions, presentation of policy oriented posters and research from the semi-autonomous government agencies (SAGAs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). On 27th May 2021, EE4A hosted a one-day policy forum to present and discuss available evidence as part of the Joint Sector Review. This has led to the co-hosting of a sector workshop to infuse evidence in finalizing the review of the NESSP, held in Naivasha from 5th to 8th July 2021, with all the five state departments in education.

4. THE 4TH EE4A CONFERENCE , November 2021

Different from previous years, this conference comes in a very unique time. The Education Taskforce on Implementation of Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) finalized its report in March 2021, loaded with many recommendations. The TVET sector also started implementation of Competency Based Education and Training (CBET) curriculum in 2017. The mid-term review of NESSP is under finalization. The replenishment of the Global Partnership in Education (GPE) is happening in July 2021, co-hosted by the UK and Kenya governments. Besides the implementation of CBC and CBET, the focus of government is to recover from the impact of COVID and normalize the school calendar by January 2023.

The 2021 conference aims at consolidating and making evidence available to inform the many choices that are being made in the education sector at this time. This aim is articulated through the conference theme - **Nurturing an Evidence Culture in implementation of CBC/CBET in the Post-COVID era**. The conference will achieve three objectives:

1. Share evidence on learning through and post-COVID in Kenya;
2. Link available evidence to solutions in policy and practice, on learning in emergencies; and
3. Affirm a community of evidence producers and users in education for improvement of learning.

Conference sessions will include plenary and breakout presentation sessions, panels and policy roundtables.

5. CALL FOR PARTNERSHIPS

The EE4A welcomes state, development partners, research institutions and non-state actors to forge partnerships in the delivery of the 4th EE4A Conference. Specific areas of support include:

- i) Financial Support;
- ii) Conference logistics;
- iii) Provision of technical expertise
- iv) Submission of papers and presentations; and
- v) Any other relevant support

6. CALL FOR PAPERS

The call for papers will be divided into two parts: an open call to be sent out to all generators of education policy-relevant research evidence; and a restricted call that will be sent out to selected institutions/authors for papers on specific sub-themes. The open call for papers will provide an opportunity to access an array of research across the

country. These papers will be reviewed by a selected panel of EE4A members who will select high quality studies with potential of informing education policy and practice.

The restricted call will target 5 papers (one per theme). This will involve working together with a lead institution to examine and collate evidence on the theme, to produce a background paper. The 5 papers will be co-sponsored by the respective state organs/departments and the EE4A members working on the themes.

7. CONFERENCE SUB-THEMES

1. Implementation of CBC and CBET

Issues [Evidence on]:

- i) Strategic choices for CBE and CBET Implementation.
- ii) Emerging evidence to promote CBC and CBET Implementation
- iii) Opportunities and challenging issue of transition; abolishing boarding schools; Evidence for Implementation of CBC and CBET Reforms.
- iv) Evidence generation and data

2. Access, equity and inclusion in education

Issues [Evidence on]:

- i) Strategic choices for inclusivity - children with special needs across the board.
- ii) Gender - emerging evidence to promote learning for boys and girls
- iii) Children furthest behind - evidence on improving learning in ASALs
- iv) 100% Transition – issues and prospects; implementation of Junior and Senior Secondary School Education
- v) What works in promoting education equity and inclusion in Kenya
- vi) Financing of education – confronting the growing inequalities- Pre-primary, primary, secondary, TVET, Special needs education, skills development, University education
- vii) STEM/STEAM

3. Building resilience for quality learning during and through emergencies

Issues [Evidence on]:

- i) Impact of Covid-19 on education and prospects for recovery
- ii) Learning in emergencies - Assessments on disruptive situations to learning i.e Elections, nomadic livelihoods, famine or drought, conflict
- iii) Technology, Innovations and opportunities to support learning.
- iv) What works in sustaining learning through emergencies/strengthening resilience

4. Teaching and Training capacities for recovery and impact

Issues [Evidence on]:

- i) Teacher/trainer capacities for achieving CBC/CBET
- ii) Role and use of technology in teaching and training
- iii) Prospects for parental empowerment and engagement
- iv) Physical Education and Well being

5. The changing skills landscape

Issues [Evidence on]:

- i) Impact of COVID on skills demand - emerging careers/skills needs beyond COVID
- ii) Skills for working and living in the 21st century
- iii) Role of Universities and TVETs in aligning to CBC and CBET
- iv) Digital skills and STEM
- v) Evidence generation and data

8. GENERAL CONFERENCE FLOW

Day 1

Morning – Opening plenary with keynote paper presentation

Mid-morning – Opening Plenary – Setting the stage on conference theme [presentation of background papers and Panel Discussions]

Afternoon – Presentation of Papers in Sub-theme Breakouts

Day 2

Morning – Presentation of Papers in Sub-theme Breakouts

Mid-Morning – Policy Roundtables on Sub-themes 1, 2 and 3

Afternoon – Policy Roundtables on Sub-themes 3 and 4

Evening – Conference closing and awards at special dinner/Gala

9. CONFERENCE FORMAT

Depending on the COVID situation and regulations, the conference will adopt either an in-person or blended format. The selected conference venue will be one that aligns with the requirements for COVID-safety and optimized blended participation. If the conference goes for the blended format, the EE4A team (including a person each from the sponsorship teams) will be at the venue, as well as all paper presenters and people on the conference program. The other targeted evidence producers and users will connect online, including the possibility of critical global audience.

10. CONFERENCE TIMELINES

Conference date: November 25th to 26th, 2021, Naivasha

Sharing of concept, call for partnerships and call for papers:	6 th August 2021
Deadline for receiving of abstracts:	27 th August 2021
Feedback and request for full papers:	17 th September 2021
Deadline for receiving full papers:	17 th October 2021
Feedback and request for presentations	29 th October 2021
Deadline for receiving presentations:	12 th November 2021

References

- [1] Republic of Kenya (2010), The Constitution of Kenya, 2010, Government Printer, Nairobi. Kenya
- [2] Republic of Kenya (2007), Kenya Vision 2030: a globally competitive and prosperous Kenya, Government Printer, Nairobi. Kenya
- [3] Republic of Kenya (2019), Economic survey 2019, Government Printer, Nairobi. Kenya

[MoE - NEMIS + KNBS data; KUCCPS on career selection; KNEC - candidature and exam results; KICD/UNICEF/Zizi Afrique - parental engagement through COVID; HELB - demand of loans through COVID; INEE - impact of COVID on learning/projections;]

Global Partnership in Education

UNESCO -IBE Strengthening the SDGs through SDG Goal 4

Republic of Kenya (2019). The Sessional Paper on Education No 1 of 2019, Government Printer, Nairobi. Kenya