



## A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CURRICULUM REFORMS TAKING PLACE IN SOMALIA AND GLOBALLY

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### Abstract:

This paper examines a critical analysis of curriculum reforms taking place in Somalia and globally. It highlights the importance of education as a fundamental human right for the development of individuals and society. The paper explores how curriculum reform has become a global trend, driven by globalization, changing learner needs, and the desire to align education with global standards and competencies. It analyzes a series of curriculum reforms taking place worldwide, including examples from the United States, Europe, East Asia, Africa, and other countries. The focus then shifts to the specific case of Somalia, a country rebuilding its educational system after years of instability and conflict. The paper highlights the significance of curriculum reforms in shaping the future of Somali learners and addressing the challenges of the 21st century. It examines the rationale, objectives, processes, outcomes, and challenges of curriculum reforms in Somalia, along with comparisons to other countries undergoing similar reforms. These reforms emphasize various aspects such as critical thinking, creativity, vocational skills, and cultural relevance. The paper recommended the need for teacher training and professional development, improved, stakeholder engagement, global collaboration, and technology innovation.

**Keywords:** curriculum, curriculum reforms, education, technology, technology integration.

### 1. Introduction

For the development of individuals and society, education is a fundamental human right. To guarantee that all children have the chance to learn and succeed, an effective

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curriculum must be developed and implemented. Curriculum reform has become a global trend as a result of globalization. A series of curriculum reforms have or are taking place worldwide, for example, in the United States of America, Europe, East Asia, and in all sub-Saharan African countries, particularly in the development of new curricula due to social, political, and technological progression (Thelma & Phylis, 2020). These reforms aim to address the changing needs of learners, align education with global standards and competencies, and tackle social issues prevalent in society. Education for all and curriculum relevance to both people and society are two critical aspects of the enormous trend in educational reform taking place globally. Furthermore, the need to improve global and local socio-scientific and economic competitiveness is also driving curriculum reforms in many countries

According to Mohamed (2023), curriculum reforms are deliberate and planned changes in the content, methods, and goals of education to improve its quality and relevance. Curriculum reforms can also be seen as innovations that introduce new ideas, practices, or products to the educational system. Curriculum reforms are influenced by various factors, such as social, economic, political, and technological changes, as well as global trends and challenges in education.

In Somalia, curriculum reforms are especially important as the country rebuilds its educational system after years of instability and conflict. These reforms will play a vital role in shaping the future of Somali learners and ensuring their preparedness for the challenges of the 21st century. According to Heritage (2013), Somalia has multiple curricula that are based on different languages, ideologies, and sources of funding. These curricula are often outdated, irrelevant, or inconsistent with each other and with the national goals and vision of education. Moreover, Somalia lacks a national body that can regulate and oversee the quality and delivery of education across the country.

In recent years, Somalia has embarked on a process of curriculum reform and innovation for higher education as part of its efforts to revitalize and transform its education system. According to Eno *et al.* (2015), higher education in Somalia has witnessed a remarkable revival since 1991, with the emergence of many private universities and colleges that offer various programs and degrees. However, these institutions also face many challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure, low-quality standards, limited resources, poor governance, and lack of accreditation.

The purpose of this paper is to critically analyze the curriculum reforms that are taking place in higher education in Somalia and globally. The paper will examine the rationale, objectives, processes, outcomes, and challenges of these reforms and innovations. The paper will also compare and contrast the Somali case with other countries that have undergone or are undergoing similar reforms and innovations. The paper will draw on various sources of data, such as academic literature, policy documents, reports, surveys, interviews, and observations.

## 2. Analysis of Curriculum Reforms Globally

The Bologna Process is a reform process that aims to make higher education in Europe more compatible, comparable and coherent. It incorporates multiple European organizations as well as 49 European nations. The Bologna Process was launched in 1999 with the signing of the Bologna Declaration by 29 European countries. Since then, it has expanded to include more countries and organizations, and has adopted several communiqués and declarations to guide its implementation. The process is named after the University of Bologna, where the first declaration was signed. The University of Bologna, founded in 1088, is the oldest university in Europe. The Bologna Process has had a significant impact on higher education in Europe, leading to a number of reforms, including the introduction of a three-cycle degree structure (bachelor's, master's, and doctorate)

The curriculum reforms taking place in Europe have been aimed at modernizing education systems to meet the evolving needs of society and equip students with the necessary skills for the 21st century global workforce. Countries in Europe are recognizing the impact of globalization, technological advancements, and labor market dynamics on education. Over the past years, historical reforms have been conducted in the educational systems of the countries (Cerych, 1997; Garrouste, 2010; Hall *et al.*, 2020). In accordance with the requirements of the modern educational technologies for each subject advanced pedagogical methods, modern information and communication technologies are used on the basis of the curriculum, syllabus recommended by the experts.

The paper conducted in Poland found that the overall attitude towards the educational reform in Poland was negative, and the strength of this negative attitude increased along with being more directly affected by the changes introduced by it. While the general population held a relatively neutral attitude towards the reform, the attitude was clearly negative among parents and students. The paper discusses the reasons and consequences of these findings (Karwowski & Milerski, 2021).

Another paper discusses the extensive curriculum reform process in Finland from 2014-2017, which aimed to build on the strengths of the Finnish education system and meet the challenges of a rapidly changing and complex world. The reform focused on improving the joy and meaningfulness of learning, student agency, and educational equality. The leading principle in the Finnish educational thinking is that equal and high-quality education is the best way to respect children and childhood, and to build a sustainable future for both individuals and the whole country (Halinen I., 2018).

Campbel (2020) conducted research in USA and discusses the need for curriculum reform in education and recommends three key areas of reform, including inquiry-based learning, the social significance of science, and problem-solving-centered themes. The paper argues that these reforms can have a positive impact on learning outcomes. The study used a combination of methods to gather data that was then analyzed to examine if education and curriculum reform can impact the way we learn. The paper highlights the importance of a revised curriculum that emphasizes a more practical set of

foundational themes and concepts in the study of science. Overall, the paper contributes to the ongoing discussion on education and curriculum reform and provides recommendations for improving learning outcomes.

Another study was conducted by Tan-sisman (2021). The purpose of the study was to investigate the reflections of administrative structure and educational reforms on curriculum development process in Singapore and Turkey. The results indicated that curriculum development process is administered by the departments of Ministries of Education in both Singaporean and Turkish education system in a centralized structure. However, there seems clear differences. The structure in Singapore is hierarchically more flexible, more curriculum development oriented and more complementary when the authorized departments of the two countries and their missions and responsibilities are compared. Furthermore, the main goal of the curriculum reforms in Singapore from 2011 to present is to develop students who are self-directed learners, active contributors, and concerned citizens. The curriculum was revised to focus on the development of 21st-century competencies, such as critical and inventive thinking, communication, collaboration, and information skills. The teaching of values and character education was also emphasized (Kwek *et al.*, 2020).

Another paper describes the current shift taking place in the Korean educational system as it moves from knowledge delivery to competency development, from academic excellence to student happiness, and from centralized and detailed prescriptions to more autonomous decision making by teachers in order to overcome these problems and respond actively to twenty-first century learning ecology. The paper suggests that changes must be followed in terms of school practice, teachers' professional development, and sociocultural structures as means of achieving these reforms. Therefore, the paper concludes that the Korean education system needs to undergo curriculum reforms to achieve sustainable success and meet the challenges of the twenty-first century learning ecology (So & Kang, 2014).

In India, the Happiness Curriculum is made up of compulsory 45-minute daily lessons with the aim of developing mindfulness, critical thinking, reflection, and social-emotional skills among students in more than 1,000 government-run schools in Delhi, India. This case study outlines the inception, implementation, and impact of the Happiness Curriculum in the context of broader education reforms in Delhi (Khanna & Peterson, 2023). On the other hand, for many years, the Saudi national curriculum focused on memorization and exam-based, teacher-centered instruction. However, after recognition of the ineffectiveness of this approach, the curriculum has shifted towards a more constructivist approach (Alazzaz, 2019).

Addressing the country's aging population and reduced workforce in today's competitive global economy, the Government of Japan has introduced a number of measures to reform its education system. Starting in 2020, Japan designated English as a formal subject starting from the fifth grade, a change from the previous policy which began at the junior high school level. The policy also emphasizes practical English reading and writing abilities. English familiarization curricula (e.g. singing, games and simple phrases) will be adopted from the third grade. In addition to a homeroom teacher,

an assistant language teacher (ALT) will also participate in classroom teachings. Applicable education technologies and devices will be utilized to enhance students' English communication skills. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Science targets the next two years for schools and educators to prepare and adapt to new learning contents (Japan Education Reform Updates, 2020).

There is no national curriculum in Canada and each of the 10 provincial and three territorial governments is responsible for developing their own curriculum and determining major education policies and initiatives. Curriculum reform in Canada is typically initiated by provincial and territorial ministries of education, which set the vision, standards and guidelines for curriculum development. However, the actual process of developing and implementing curriculum involves various actors and agencies, such as curriculum committees, subject associations, teacher unions, school boards, schools, teachers and publishers. The degree of centralization or decentralization of curriculum decision-making varies across provinces and territories, as well as across subjects and grades. For example, Ontario's revised mathematics curriculum (2021), which aims to restore a "back to basics" approach by emphasizing foundational skills, problem-solving and financial literacy (NCEE, 2015).

Currently, China is undertaking an unprecedented nation-wide New Curriculum Reform (NCR) for school education (K-12), which involves 474,000 schools. The NCR aims to shift the focus of education from rote learning to critical thinking and creativity, and to promote a more learner-centered approach to teaching (Yin, 2013). In 2020, China implemented a "Health First" policy, which included curriculum reform in physical education. The policy aimed to promote physical fitness and health among students, and physical education teachers in one city reported experiences with the new curriculum (Meng *et al.*, 2021).

### 3. Analysis of Curriculum Reforms in Africa

Curriculum reforms in Africa have been a topic of discussion and implementation for several years now. These reforms aim to address various challenges in the education systems across the continent and strive for improved quality, relevance, and equity. According to Sebola & Mogoboya (2020), curriculum reform plays a crucial role in African academia's efforts to Africanize and decolonize knowledge production. This process involves reimagining and redefining curricula in higher education institutions to legitimize indigenous knowledge production and promote an Afrocentric approach. Moreover, curriculum reforms in Africa are also driven by the need to respond to emerging socio-economic, political, and scientific issues. The dawn of democracy in South Africa, for example, has resulted in revisions to the school curriculum in order to align with the democratic constitution and ensure that the curriculum is both student and socially accountable (Mnguni, 2019). Additionally, science curriculum reforms have been implemented in various African countries including South Africa, Rwanda, and Botswana (Kanamugire *et al.*, 2019). These reforms aim to enhance the teaching and

learning process, foster critical thinking skills, and promote scientific literacy among students.

The South African education system has undergone multiple curriculum reforms since 1994, with the introduction of new curriculum policies having a significant impact on teaching and learning practices. In South Africa, one article discusses the proposal by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) to extend the undergraduate degree structure in South Africa by one year, and argues that this provides an opportunity for a different kind of curriculum that enables epistemic access and development for students. The article also presents some theoretical tools and principles for designing such a curriculum, as well as some examples of qualification-specific curriculum models (Shay *et al.*, 2016).

Nigeria has undergone several curriculum reforms in recent years. In 2019, Nigeria introduced a new senior secondary education model that emphasizes vocational skills and entrepreneurship, in addition to academic development. This reform is aimed at preparing students for the demands of the 21st century and equipping them with the skills needed to succeed in the workforce (Ajagun, 2019). The latest curriculum reform in Nigeria is focused on vocational skills and entrepreneurship, with the aim of preparing students for the workforce. While the effectiveness of these reforms is still being debated, it is clear that Nigeria recognizes the need for ongoing curriculum reform to remain relevant and responsive to the needs of the 21st century.

The current information on curriculum reform in Zambia indicates that the government is undertaking a curriculum review to modify and change the current curriculum. The government's education strategy is to expand investment to develop upper secondary education, technical education, vocational, and entrepreneurship. The new curriculum development means that the formal education system will have a 9-3-4 structure, comprising nine years of basic education, three years of high school, and four years of university education (Shumba, 2023).

In February 2020, Uganda implemented a new direction in the educational system. It has rolled out of the ordinary old curriculum which emphasized knowledge acquisition from a theoretical approach. The learning process was known as teacher-centred. However, the revised curriculum would meet the learners' needs and aspirations, skills acquisition, training, and personal and professional development of learners. In addition, the new curriculum will help learners develop critical thinking ability, creativity and collaboration, and the spirit of teamwork and communication skills, among many skills which are no different from Ghana's current curriculum. The new curriculum would reduce content overload and contact hours in the classroom (Chemonges, 2019). This will create time for research and project work, as well as talent development and creativity. With the reduction in the number of subjects from 43 to 21 in the new curriculum, students will get adequate time to concentrate on hands-on experience work and talent development under the close supervision of their respective teachers.

Education reforms in the independent Kenya include proposals of Ominde Education Commission of 1964, the Gachathi Education Commission of 1976 that brought about 7-4-2-3 Education System, the Mackay Education Commission of 1981 that led to

the implementation of 8-4-4 Education System, and the Douglas Odhiambo (Taskforce, 2012) that proposed the Competency Based Curriculum (2-6-6-3) (Amukoa, 2003), an education reform whose implementation is on-going since its introduction in 2017. There were challenges that impeded effective implementation of these reforms, especially the Competency Based Curriculum. These include in effective assessment strategy, inadequate funding, unclear understanding of CBC, antagonism on domiciling Junior Secondary School, teacher shortages, inadequate teaching and learning facilities and parents' concern (Muricho, 2023).

#### **4. Analysis of Curriculum Reforms in Somalia**

Curriculum reforms in Somalia have been aimed at addressing the educational challenges faced by the country, as well as aligning with global best practices and priorities. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education in Somalia, the curriculum reforms have focused on several key areas. These areas include revising and updating the content of the curriculum to ensure it is relevant and meets the needs of students in terms of both knowledge and skills (Mustofa *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, there has been a focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning methods to enhance student engagement and achievement. Moreover, the curriculum reforms have also sought to integrate technology into the teaching and learning process, as well as promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity skills among students (Sun & Lin, 2022).

According to Mustofa *et al.* (2023), the curriculum reforms in Somalia have also aimed at promoting inclusivity and addressing the needs of marginalized groups such as girls, children with disabilities, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The curriculum reforms in Somalia have faced challenges and constraints due to the country's fragile state and limited resources. However, efforts have still been made to implement these reforms. One of the challenges in implementing curriculum reforms in Somalia is the lack of infrastructure and resources.

The lack of adequate teacher training and professional development programs has also been identified as a challenge in the successful implementation of curriculum reforms. According to Haryani *et al.* (2019), the involvement and support of teachers in curriculum reform are crucial for its success. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards the curriculum reform, their understanding of the changes, and their motivation to implement them are important indicators for successful implementation.

In 2019, Somalia introduced a new curriculum that covers English, Arabic, Somali, math, Islamic studies, science, physical education, technology, and social studies (Abdi Sheikh, 2019). In 2022, a report was published on the education sector in Somalia, which suggests that the sector is ready to embark on a course of development that will change the education landscape of Somalia in the next five years (MoE, 2022). Sidow & Nkomo (2023) published a paper that focused on the integration of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in schools as a tool for curriculum reform in Somalia. According to this paper, every university in Somalia has continual issues with costs and sustainability

when trying to update the curriculum or add new, complicated resources like ICT. It seems that there have been some recent efforts to improve the education system in Somalia, including the introduction of a new curriculum and the use of ICT in schools. The USAID and GPE are also working to improve access to education for marginalized children.

## **5. Conclusion**

This paper analyzed the curriculum reforms taking place in Somalia and globally. Curriculum reforms are taking place globally, driven by the changing needs of learners, globalization, and the desire to align education with global standards. These reforms aim to address social issues, improve competitiveness, and ensure the relevance of education for individuals and society. The case of Somalia is particularly important as the country rebuilds its educational system after years of instability. Curriculum reforms in Somalia focus on updating content, improving teaching and learning methods, integrating technology, and promoting inclusivity. However, challenges such as limited resources, infrastructure, and teacher training need to be addressed for successful implementation. Other countries, such as Poland, Finland, the United States, Singapore, Japan, Canada, China, and several African nations, have also undergone or are undergoing curriculum reforms to meet the demands of the 21st century. These reforms emphasize various aspects such as critical thinking, creativity, vocational skills, and cultural relevance. Despite the challenges, curriculum reforms hold the potential to shape the future of education and prepare learners for a rapidly changing world. Continued research and analysis of these reforms will contribute to ongoing discussions and inform best practices for curriculum development and implementation.

### **5.1 Recommendations**

#### **5.1.1 Prioritize Teacher Professional Development**

Teachers play a central role in implementing curriculum reforms and shaping students' learning experiences. Governments and educational institutions should prioritize ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers, focusing on equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and pedagogical strategies to effectively deliver the new curriculum.

#### **5.1.2 Embrace Technology and Innovation**

The integration of technology into the curriculum can enhance teaching and learning experiences, foster digital literacy skills, and prepare students for the digital age.

#### **5.1.3 Engage Stakeholders and Communities**

Curriculum reforms should be inclusive and engage all relevant stakeholders, including teachers, parents, students, community leaders, and policymakers.

#### **5.1.4 Foster Global Collaboration**

Given the global nature of curriculum reforms, it is essential for countries to collaborate and share best practices. Governments and educational institutions should establish

platforms for international cooperation and exchange, facilitating the sharing of experiences, challenges, and successful strategies.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest in this article.

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