The Implementation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy 2009 (Education for Individual and Social Development) in Lesotho

The general purpose of the research is to analyse the text/content and consequences for implementation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy 2009 (Education for Individual and Social Development) in Lesotho. The specific objectives are as follows:

- to determine the background to and nature of Policy 2009 in Lesotho by means of analysing its content;
- to indicate the implication that Policy 2009 holds for school-typical education by analysing the consequences for implementation of this policy in Lesotho;
- to reach findings and conclusions, and make recommendations, based on the research done for a more efficient and successful implementation of Policy 2009 in schools in Lesotho.

In order to achieve these objectives, this research employed the method of literature study. The analysis of the Policy 2009 document was based on three areas:

- Context, which refers to the antecedents and pressures leading to the gestation of a specific policy.
- Text/content, which refers to the content and structure of the policy document.
- Consequences and implementation, which refer to the policy directives and their relevance to the institutions and areas they are to be implemented (Taylor et al., 1974).

Curriculum and Assessment Policy 2009 (Education for Individual and Social Development)

Rationale: Policy 2009 aims at educating all learners, regardless of their differences. The curriculum should help learners to develop a combination of skills, attitudes, values, perceptions and knowledge which are necessary for their life. The Integrated Curriculum should enable learners to assess the knowledge that they gain in schools with a new perspective and to reflect it on their future lives.

Philosophy of education: The framework is derived from the Basotho philosophical statements of justice, equality, peace, prosperity, participatory democracy and mutual co-existence which underpin their way of life.

Language policy: Policy 2009 recognises the existence of other languages besides the two official languages (Sesotho and English). As such, the document asserts that mother tongue will be used as a medium of instruction for grades 1-3, while English will be taught as a subject at these and other levels. However, the document remains silent about language of assessment in these grades, while it also doesn’t clarify whose mother tongue it refers to; that of the teacher or of the students?

Curriculum and assessment: The policy reaffirms that curriculum and assessment are closely integrated and mutually supportive. As such, it proposes Continuous Assessment (CASS) as a step towards achieving this goal.

Integrated basic education curriculum organization: Unlike the previous curriculum structure, which emphasized disciplinary knowledge, the new model envisages an integrated curriculum. As defined in Policy 2009, the term integration refers to the holistic view and treatment of issues
related to intelligence, maturity, personal and social development of the learner for survival purposes and economic development of the nation. This definition reflects the intention to make a curriculum more contextually relevant, by linking it with real life problems.

**Curriculum aspects:** Rather than traditional subjects, the new curriculum is based on:

- a) Effective communication
- b) Awareness of one’s self and others
- c) Environmental adaption and sustainable development
- d) Health and healthy living
- e) Production and work-related competencies

**Learning areas:** The new curriculum is organized into learning areas, to which all school subjects are expected to contribute. The learning areas are:

- a) Linguistic and literary
- b) Numeral and mathematical
- c) Personal, spiritual and social
- d) Scientific and technological
- e) Creativity and entrepreneurship

**Core competencies:** These indicate the capabilities which learners acquire through their education:

- a) Effective and functional communication
- b) Problem solving
- c) Scientific, technological and creative skills
- d) Critical thinking
- e) Collaboration and cooperation
- f) Functional numeracy
- g) Learning to learn

**Organization of school curriculum:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Areas</th>
<th>Core-Contributing Subjects</th>
<th>Compulsory Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic and literary</td>
<td>Sesotho, English, Arts and Craft, Drama, Music and other languages</td>
<td>Sesotho and English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numerical and mathematical</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal, spiritual and social</td>
<td>History, Religious Education, Health and Physical Education, Development Studies, Life Skills</td>
<td>Life Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific and technological</td>
<td>Science, Geography, Agricultural Science, Technical Subjects</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity and entrepreneurship</td>
<td>Business Education, Clothing and Textile, Food and Nutrition, Home Management, ICT, Accounting</td>
<td>Any subject</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pedagogy:** The learner-centred approach is adopted, which is not new to the education system of Lesotho.

**Assessment:** Policy 2009 prescribes that three strategies will be used for assessing learning. These are: formative assessment, remediation and monitoring of educational progress, with the first strategy taking the form of CASS. Despite the potential benefits of CASS, its implementation is likely to face challenges. First, teachers’ inability to implement it might pose a threat to quality in educational assessment. In addition, lack of clarity of the concept among teachers and school inspectors and lack of trust of teachers could also hinder its implementation.
Recommendations

The literature study indicated that the key driver to successful curriculum change is the development of teachers’ knowledge, skills, attitudes and the alignment of teacher training methods to the current curriculum. In this regard, a set of recommendations is suggested:

- The National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) should thoroughly research curricula of other countries.
- Teachers should be consulted about what is functional in the classroom when considering curriculum change.
- The NCDC must ensure that teachers have all the necessary information required for the implementation process.
- The NCDC must provide support to National Curriculum Development officers, inspectors and District Resource Teachers to monitor the process of curriculum change in all schools.

In addition, the following topics must be considered and addressed when designing professional development opportunities for teachers who are implementing a new curriculum:

- **Programme Philosophy:** It is important for teachers to understand the philosophy behind the programme and how it may impact learners, parents, administrators and all other relevant stakeholders. This will enable teachers to understand why new Learning Areas have been introduced.
- **Content:** Teachers may find that the curriculum introduces unfamiliar content they have not taught in a while. For instance, using a problem solving/learner-centred approach rather than a topical approach, as is the case in the integrated curriculum. It is therefore crucial to empower teachers so that they can deal with that content.
- **Resources:** Adequate resources should be available for implementing a new curriculum.
- **Mixed ability and multigrade teaching**
- **Curriculum integration**
- **Pedagogy of integration**
- **Time:** Teachers should be allowed enough time to prepare and deliver the requirements of the new curriculum and take time to understand the subject.
- **School Ethos:** The overall belief of the school in the new curriculum, for example, the fact that the school and community recognise the importance of the subject in the school curriculum.
- **Professional Support:** Opportunities for professional development, such as workshops, seminars, best teacher awards.
- **Professional Adequacy and Interest:** Teachers’ own interest, ability and competence to teach the curriculum.