**NEW CURRICULUM IN EDUCATION**

**Introduction**

Rwanda is striving to build a knowledge-based economy, with particular emphasis on science and technology as engine socio-economic development. One of the national priorities in the education system in Rwanda is to ensure that the quality of education continues to improve through closer integration of curriculum development, quality assurance and assessment, improved supply of learning materials, particularly text books, and improved teaching and learning strategies. The Government of Rwanda has detailed plans to review programs and teaching methods in order to equip a critical mass of the population with knowledge, skills and attitudes to be highly competitive in the global market. It is envisaged to put in place a curriculum that will propel Rwanda to the economic development it desires. This curriculum framework has been developed through various consultations with stake holders including learners, teachers, parents, private sector organizations, local administration and policy makers. Their views and recommendations form the basis of the content of the framework.

The document has several sections a part the introduction:

* An analysis of curriculum in education
* Policies that guided the curriculum framework development
* Recent reviews, reports and national curriculum conference
* Rationale for reviewing the curriculum
* Role and purpose and principles of the curriculum frame work
* Competences in the curriculum
* Assessment
* Subject syllabus components and overviews
* Implementation of the curriculum

**AN ANALYSIS OF CURRICULUM IN EDUCATION**

The following terms are used throughout this document and refer to generic educational definitions

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| Curriculum | The learning provided throughout the education system consisting of learning areas, subjects including knowledge and competences, cross cutting issues, basic and generic competences, skills and attitudes. |
| Curriculum Framework | A set of policies, regulations, directions and guidelines central for the development of curriculum, syllabi and other related documents that govern the development and the implementation of the curriculum, syllabi and other guidance, including teacher manuals, parent manuals, standards for the preparation of textbooks. The framework also guides the development for other teaching materials, standards and benchmarks for the evaluation of the quality of student achievements and school operations. |
| Syllabus | A document describing the learning objectives, learning outcomes, content and learning activities related to a specific subject. It provides guidance on teaching and assessment methodologies |
| Cross-cutting issues | Important curriculum content that does not belong to any one subject or learning area exclusively but which is best taught and learned in a number of subjects |
| Competencebased Curriculum | A curriculum designed to develop learners’ competences rather than just their knowledge. The focus on what learners can do ensures their learning has greater purpose and is deeper than it would be otherwise. A competence-based curriculum is characterised by approaches that are largely learner-centred, criterion-referenced, constructivist, and focused upon learning outcomes (rather than content definition) and with an emphasis on formative assessment. |
| Competence | Competence is ability to use an appropriate combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behaviour to accomplish a particular task successfully. That is, the ability to apply learning with confidence in a range of situations. |
| Generic Competence | Generic competences are the competences which are transferrable and applicable to a range of subjects and situations including employment. |
| Learning Outcomes | Learning outcomes describe what learners are expected to know, understand and be able to do at the end of the learning process. |
| Learning Objectives | Learning objectives describe what the planner or the teacher intends to deliver and what the learner is expected to learn. |

**The Structure of Education in Rwanda**

The chapter highlights how the levels of education are organized, the aim of education

at a particular level and the language of instruction used in particular levels.

**Pre-primary Education**

Pre-primary is organized in nursery schools for a period of three years for children

between the age of 3 and 6 as the preparatory phase for entrance to primary schooling.

**Primary Education**

Primary education in Rwanda is free and compulsory for 6 years. The official school

enrolment age at this level is from 6 or 7 years to 11 or 12 years. All children sit for

national examinations at the end of primary 6 for selection into secondary education.

**Secondary Education**

Secondary education in Rwanda is for 6 years, composed of 3 years of lower secondary

or ordinary level (O- Level) and 3 years of upper secondary or advanced level (A-Level).

The official school age for this level is from 13 years to 18 years although there some

children who start school early and join secondary by the age of 12.

Lower secondary education is free and compulsory and the government, in partnership

with the community, is building additional classrooms to increase access into upper

secondary so that it also gradually becomes free and compulsory. All children sit for

national examinations at the end of lower secondary for selection into upper secondary

or technical and vocational education.

All children at the end of upper secondary sit national examinations after which they

may be selected for universities, professional and technical colleges or they may join the

labour market.

**Language of Learning**

The constitution of Rwanda states there are three official languages of communication

in Rwanda. Kinyarwanda is the mother tongue and national language. English and

French are the official international languages.

Kiswahili has also been embraced by virtue of Rwanda being a member of the East

African Community (EAC) and the protocol signed between members’ countries

emphasize Kiswahili as a regional language that must be taught in schools.

The language of learning in pre-primary and lower primary is Kinyarwanda while the

other languages are taught as subjects. The language of learning from upper primary to

upper secondary is English with Kinyarwanda and French taught as subjects.

Previously, the language of learning from the start of upper primary was either French

or English depending on school’s preferences given the availability of qualified teachers,

the background of the learners and the wishes of the parents.

Making English the language of learning was by design.

**Rwanda Education Sector Objectives**

The Education Sector objectives are the reference point for the inclusion of education

issues into other Rwandan policy documents. These objectives are aligned with those

recommended in the Eastern African Curriculum Framework proposals. They are to:

* Educate a free citizen who is liberated from all kinds of discrimination, including

gender based discrimination, exclusion and favoritism;

Curriculum Framework 8

* Contribute to the promotion of a culture of peace and to emphasize Rwandese

and universal values of justice, peace, tolerance, respect for human rights, gender

equality, solidarity and democracy;

* Dispense a holistic moral, intellectual, social, physical and professional education

through the promotion of individual competences and aptitudes in the service of

national reconstruction and the sustainable development of the country;

* Promote science and technology with special attention to ICT;
* Develop in the Rwandese citizen an autonomy of thought, patriotic spirit, a sense

of civic pride, a love of work well done and global awareness;

* Transform the Rwandese population into human capital for development

through acquisition of development skills;

* Eliminate all causes and obstacles which can lead to disparity in education be it

by gender, disability, geographical or social group.

These objectives and associated strategies are the backbone for developments in

education including the curriculum and assessment policy and the curriculum

framework.

**Resource constraints to the curriculum delivery in schools**

* Class contact hours are very limited, especially at primary level.
* There are shortages of text books in some subjects, especially at secondary level.
* Most schools do not have electricity; very few have access to the internet.
* Classes are overcrowded, and there are not enough teachers at primary level.
* Teachers show limited capacity to prepare schemes of work, adapt teaching to the

needs of individual learners and record student progress.

**Teaching and learning**

Teaching is heavily reliant on students copying notes from the blackboard. The existing

curriculum, as delivered in schools, is highly theory based, with little time for problem

solving and written exercises, and an absence of practical activity, even in the sciences.

Extensive class time is used for testing, but little feedback is given to learners.

Lack of basic skills, in particular reading for comprehension, may be severely limiting

students’ ability to understand new concepts and to learn independently. Beyond

primary 4, where English is used as the medium of instruction, lack of English among

teachers and learners is greatly restricting learning for understanding.

Pass rates in the national examinations are high (above 80%), but girls’ pass rates are

consistently lower than those of boys.

**Implications for curriculum development**

A new curriculum document is needed that will provide an overarching set of aims,

objectives and a framework from which all aspects of the curriculum, including syllabi,

examinations, textbooks, can be developed. It should draw on the national aspirations,

but at the same time be cognisant of what can be realistically achieved given the

resource limitations in schools.

To overcome challenges of limited contact time, large teacher workload and low levels

of teacher experience, the curriculum needs to be developed in a way that will support

teachers and reduce the burden of content delivery. Rwanda could develop a highly

structured curriculum package with the details of lesson delivery and student learning

activities set at the national level and with student workbooks and readers to enable

independent learning. Cost effective options involving the use of innovative ICT

solutions and digital media in teaching and learning could be explored, including the use

of mobile phones, e-readers, tablets, video and radio. These solutions should be

designed to work ‘off grid’.

**Recommendations**

The key recommendations of immediate relevance to the curriculum review process are

listed here. Further recommendations regarding the roll-out and implementation of the

curriculum in schools are given in the main report.

**The curriculum content, delivery and aims:**

1. The new curriculum should address the needs of those leaving school after O or

A level for the world of work or technical-vocational education as much as it

addresses the needs of those proceeding to university and should therefore

Curriculum Framework.

become less academic, more practical, more skills-based, more oriented to the

world of work and to daily life.

1. The new curriculum should integrate Study Skills throughout all subjects at

Primary and Secondary levels.

1. The lack of practical problem solving should be addressed.
2. The content needs to more closely reflect real life experiences to prepare

students better with the skills needed for life.

1. Curriculum designers should ensure conformity, continuity, progression and

cross subject linkages when developing the curriculum and syllabi.

1. REB should pass drafts of the new school curricula under development to the

Academic Boards of Higher Education and Technical and Vocational Education

and Training institutions.