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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# A HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE TESTING IN KENYA

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### ABSTRACT

In an attempt to trace the development of English language teaching and testing in Kenya, this paper looks at language in education in Kenya. Language in education aims at defining three major issues. Firstly, it defines the role of English language in teaching and testing in the pre-independent era. Secondly, it assesses the place of English in teaching and evaluation during post-independent Kenya, during the 8-4-4 system and finally in the newly rolled out Competency Based Curriculum (CBC). Unlike other literature which focus on language policy, this paper traces the history of English language in the Kenyan education with a special focus on language testing; a component of teaching and learning process. The paper concludes that although, efforts have been made in improving the teaching and testing of English language in Kenya since the colonial era, there seem to be some form of rigidity in testing in that very little changes can be cited compared to the art of teaching. Teaching of English language has progressively changed in its approach, however, language testing has not been adaptive to these changes, for example, testing at secondary school level is more of the structuralism approach yet the teaching approach is communicative. Speech work is not overtly examined both at primary and at secondary school levels. All examinations are wholly written. This disregard for speech work leads to poor communicative competence yet it is the main objective of the English syllabus.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Pre -independence period

Language in education in Kenya has had direct influence from the government policies which have been changing over time. To address the issue of language in education one has to trace the historical perspective starting from the pre-colonial era. As Mazrui and Mazrui (1998) note, the pre-colonial era several stakeholders were involved in the formulation of a language policy. Language in education policies in Kenya date back to 1901 when missionaries at the Kenyan coast developed a policy that favoured local languages which they felt could not be replaced by English language. The question relating to the use of Kiswahili and English and vernacular languages took centre stage for a long time in Kenya. It was tabled for discussion in conferences, for instance, the United Missionary Conference in 1909. In this conference it was resolved that the elementary code for teaching in village schools provided

for instruction in the vernacular language for the first three years and Kiswahili for the two of the middle classes in primary, while English was used in the rest of the classes up to university (Gorman 1974). The advanced code for central mission schools provided for the teaching of Kiswahili starting from class three and for optional instruction in English between standard four and five. The missionaries desired to impart their religious ideas to the native people thus wanted a language that would facilitate their mission. Whitely (1974:405) however records that some people especially the settlers were against this policy and in particular the use of vernacular. To them a language that would promote trade and various needs of their occupation would be the best. Others, especially government officials, were of the opinion that the teaching of Kiswahili was a waste of time rather vernacular should be taught in all native schools and that this would later be succeeded by English. Their argument was that Kiswahili was foreign both to them and to the locals. Ambiyo (2016), however, observes that there was also fear that Kiswahili would unite Kenyans against colonial rule. The Phelps-stoke commission's second report of 1924 gave attention to the unfortunate divergence in the attitudes of the missionaries, the settlers and the government officials towards education to the native Kenyans.

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The commission recommended that vernacular be used as the language of instruction in elementary school and then English be used in intermediary school. The commission noted that the appeal to the native mind cannot be effectively made without the adequate use of the native language. Thus the commission recommended that the language of instruction should be the local language in the early primary classes, while English was to be taught from upper primary to university. Schools were urged to make all possible provisions for instructions in the native language. The commission, however, recommended that Kiswahili be dropped from the curriculum, except in areas where it was the first language. In 1929, during a conference held in Dar Es Salaam, the council through the Department of education in Kenya raised issues concerning the language situation in the country. It came up with regulations, which were communicated through a circular, that vernacular would be used for the first four years of school during which Kiswahili would be introduced as a subject. English was to be taught in those schools where there are competent teachers of English. After the first four years, Kiswahili would be the medium of instruction. After the completion of six years of school, English would then be introduced as the medium of instruction. Following these regulations a new syllabus was implemented on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1935 in which English and Kiswahili were required subjects in both the course and exams from standard four to seven. Of importance to note here however, is that the medium for the course and for the examination was Kiswahili. If a school wished to use English as the medium of instruction, it was to apply for approval from the Director of Education.

The memorandum on language in African school education in 1943 with regard to the teaching of English stated that the point at which such teaching was introduced must depend on the decision of the local education authorities. It however, asserted that this would only be when sufficient progress had been made to give the child ability and a fair degree of facility in reading and writing their own vernacular. There were attempts to shift English and vernacular to take the place of Kiswahili as the medium of instruction. However, this move was faced with challenges of lack of suitable school texts in vernacular languages and lack of qualified teachers of English. This situation necessitated for the training of teachers of English as advocated for in the Ten year plan for the development of African education in 1948. After World War II, the colonial master saw the looming loss of power in Kenya because Kenyans had united against colonialism and were bracing for freedom (Wendo, 2009). As a result, the then government set up the Beecher Education Commission in 1949 to chart the way forward. The Beecher report of 1949 reinstated Kiswahili and made it an alternative medium of examination and that it be the language of instruction and literature in primary schools in towns. English was retained as the medium of instruction from intermediate school while vernacular continued to be the medium of education for the 1<sup>st</sup> three years of primary school. The Beecher report of 1949 regarding the teaching of English called for attention to the fact that at the moment it was difficult to introduce spoken English in the primary schools for lack of competent teachers of English in this skill. The implementation of this policy started in 1953-1955. Thus the Beecher commission was mandated to examine the scope, content, methods, administration and financing of African education (Wendo 2009). It reinforced the recommendations of the Phelps-Stokes and the Ten Year Development Plan on the provision of

practical education to Africans which later formed the basis of the government's policy on African education. The Prator-Hutasoit commission of 1952 endorsed that English be the only language of instruction in all school grades at the expense of local languages. This commission heralded the New Primary Approach also called the English medium scheme (Sifuna, 1980, 142). So to implement the new curriculum, teachers were to be trained in English while their first languages were viewed as a premium in teaching the lower primary schools (Mukuria, 1995). This kind of education were resisted by Africans for they felt it was racist and did not promote development, especially, of Africans. This then prompted the setting up of African independent schools. In 1953, a tentative syllabus for African intermediary school was issued by the department of education in Kenya. In this syllabus, English was to be the main subject of the curriculum for its general educational value. The main aim of the syllabus was to enable the child to read, write and speak simple idiomatic English suited to his/her environment. The teaching of English however, was not uniform. It was only taught in some schools which had trained teachers, and in some schools it was taught right from standard one while in others after standard three but in African schools it was taught from the sixth year of schooling. English was later made a compulsory medium of examinations that were held at the end of the eighth year. This exam would determine those who would be selected to join the secondary grammar school and the secondary technical course. Since teaching of English was done on racial grounds, examinations were also set on racial grounds. Africans sat for KAPE (Kenya African Preliminary Examinations), Asians sat for KAPE (Kenya Asian Preliminary Examinations) while European settlers did KEPE (Kenya European Preliminary Examinations). The KAPE became the KPE after school integration which in turn became the CPE examination after independence. The focus of teaching and examination was only on reading and writing. According to Mazrui and Mazrui (1998) and Kioko (2013), this was only to enable a few Africans to communicate with the white masters for the sake of administration. English was to be taught to Africans guardedly so that not many got to secondary school and beyond, a move that created economic classes in the country (Wendo, 2009:124). Ambiyo (2016) notes however that when the local Kenyans realized that English would open doors to white collar jobs, they set up their own independent schools where they encouraged their children to learn English. This to some extent contributed to spread of English in the country. The greatest challenge was that English was introduced to Africans too late in their primary education.

There were other pre-independence education reports such as Binns Report of 1952 and Drogheda Report of 1952 which recommended that English should be introduced from lower primary school as a subject and be taught alongside the recommended mother tongue in early primary classes. Mazrui and Mazrui (1998) explains that the colonial master dropped Kiswahili from the education syllabus altogether because it was seen as the medium of mobilization for the struggle for independence. This boosted the status of English. As it has been observed above, the language policy was often ambivalent before independence. This was because the three languages: English, Kiswahili and vernacular, were encouraged and discouraged frequently for different interests. Since the language policy was quite unstable it was equally impossible to create teaching and learning personnel and

resources with the same vigour. This as well compromised standards of education in the country. In 1957, the English medium project was launched to introduce English as the medium of instruction throughout the school system right from standard one. This was done first in the Asian schools and later in the African schools as well (Oluoch 1982). Since the English medium project was going to be a major curriculum development work including preparation of curricular materials and massive in-servicing of teachers, English Special Centre was set up to beef up the project. At independence, this project became increasingly sensitive and even its name was changed to "New Primary Approach (NPA). The NPA recommended the use of English as a subject right from standard one. It also advocated for English as the language of examination. The NPA helped in the publication of a series of teaching materials such as the Peak series for lower primary and Safari English course for upper primary. These two series had the content as well as briefings for the teacher on how to teach the language. Oluoch (1982:43) observes that at the stage of its implementation, the NPA was taken with great enthusiasm. It was believed that it would provide the children with more appropriate education and it would open chances of passing the Kenya Primary Examination (KPE) a leaving examination. The KPE English paper was wholly written and its focus was on vocabulary building and on form of the language. The spoken form was still neglected. Initially, the English paper in the KPE examinations was one paper multiple choice type that only focused on comprehension and grammar.

### Post-independence period

When Kenya attained its independence in 1963, English was declared the official language and so, it was to be used in all important government sectors (Wendo, 2009). The Kenyan government drafted a Session paper Number 10 in 1965 which acted as a document for examining the immediate needs and goals of post-independence Kenya. This sessional paper saw education much more of an economic than social service, a key means of alleviating shortage of skilled domestic work force and of creating equal economic opportunities for all citizens. The Kenya education commission of 1964 (the Ominde commission) observed that most Kenyans preferred the use of the three languages; mother tongue was preferred for verbal communication especially in rural areas while English and Kiswahili were preferred for education from lower primary to university. Kiswahili was recommended as a compulsory in primary schools, and was favoured in education for purposes of national and regional unity (Njoroge and Gatambuki, 2017). The Ominde commission supported English and argued that it would expedite learning in all the subjects. English was therefore introduced in beginners' classes in primary schools through the New Primary Approach (NPA). Later in 1973, composition writing was introduced and the number of items in the exam paper were reduced to seventy and later to fifty. The NPA, however, collapsed in March 1976. This was due to lack of funds to manage it but its methodology still operates to date at primary school level, thanks to the introduction of the new curriculum, the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC). The model of setting the English examination has remained the same from the certificate of Primary Examination (CPE) to

The 8-4-4 system which is currently in place and being phased out. The major International Labor Organization (ILO) Report

of 1972, *Employment, Income and Equality*, highlighted three basic criticisms for the three major CPE examination sections- English, mathematics, and the general paper. First, the CPE was basically a tool for secondary school selection. Relatively little attention was devoted to the needs of terminal primary school pupils. Many items focused on skills presumably necessary for secondary schools. Second, many test items simply required memorization of facts; therefore, pupils were justified in practicing patterns of rote learning. Third, many questions tended to cite examples that were more familiar to urban than rural students. For example, only 17 of the 250 questions in the overall 1971 CPE examination related to agriculture. In short, the CPE examination was not an effective selection mechanism, did not encourage innovative teaching and learning, and was biased in favor of urban youth. This called for reforms in the CPE curriculum. The English section of the CPE examination was the first part to be revised beginning in 1971 which incorporated multiple measures of assessment. Twenty verbal reasoning items were substituted for the same number of English grammar items. Nevertheless, these items favoured urban youth who are exposed to more formal English than their rural peers. For example, expressions such as "plucked up his courage," "not of his standing," and "in their teens" were still used in the 1973 and 1974 papers. The 1975 papers were revised to eliminate such formal expressions and the proportion of comprehension questions rose from 25 to 50 per cent, while the percentage of grammar and syntax items fell accordingly. These percentages still remained in the 1978 tests. Since English comprehension is a fundamental prerequisite for learning other subjects, this section of the CPE examination received more critical evaluation than the mathematics and general section papers. Teachers and examiners sought for a relative balance among comprehension, syntax, and grammar. The current trend was to weigh equally the composition component (which should assess all features of English language usage) with the objective part (which focuses on grammar and syntax). Examiners assessed two main qualities when marking the CPE English composition: accuracy and imaginative language usage. Candidates also earned extra points for varying sentence structure and writing in a lively and original manner. The following illustrative sentences from a 1978 CPE English composition received 38 of a possible 40 points.

Tap! Tap! Tap! What is that on the roof? Is it the rain? We obtain water in very many different ways, for example from the rain, from rivers, and from underground wells. Water is essential to all animals, plants and human beings. No living thing can survive without water . . . (Ministry of Education, *CPE Newsletter* 1979, pg13)

It is notable that the CPE English examinations were taken while none were administered for the national language, Kiswahili, or any other African language. Curricula revisions to incorporate Kiswahili and some other African languages started in primary schools. Devoting attention to this area was crucial because languages are fundamental cultural components of societies. At the secondary school level since independence, the number of students increased drastically due to the massive intake at primary school. This increase in number however, created problems of finance and staffing of the schools. There was need to train teachers, especially African teachers, to handle the increasing enrolment (Goman, 1970) and many of those recruited to teach English, lacked experience not only in the teaching but also in any kind of

teaching situation. This was a major drawback to English considering the fact that there was variation in proficiency in secondary school students attributed to poor teaching in primary schools. It was noted for instance, that some students were only trained in doing the tick-tests hence could not write a sentence, use capital letters or write any kind of connected composition (Whiteley, 1974). The four skills were taught but still it was noted that the child's ability to write, read and speak were inadequate in that order. The teaching took the structural approach where no poetry was integrated in language. The importance of literature was underscored by many practicing teachers of English. Five or more lessons in a week were devoted to reading while three lessons were spent on written and oral skills. This over-emphasis on reading at secondary school level led to a considerable number of teachers in form one to overlook the principle that oral language is key and prerequisite to reading. The pitfall was because of the assumption teachers had that secondary school students should be able to use 'normal' English by the end of standard two. In other words, at primary school level, teachers needed to have conception of the sequence of grammatical and to less-significant extent lexical elements which are to be taught or revised in the time available and of the objective in terms of language performance. Gorman (1970) notes that the majority of students were deficient in listening comprehension skills. It was therefore suggested that it would work better if it was introduced early in secondary school and be married with reading comprehension exercises. These two skills were believed to be supplementing each other. For instance, training in auditory discrimination can serve to improve the child's skill in word recognition and to remedy forms of spelling errors which derive from the effect of interference from the sound systems of their first languages. English at secondary school level was a service course, according to the Ministry of Education 1980, pg.12 and therefore radically affects the content of the initial course for pupils entering secondary school.

At secondary school level, students sat for a Cambridge Overseas School Certificate examination at the end of the four year course. The English examination was in three papers. Paper one had section A and B. section A had eight or nine items on writing to choose from while section B was in sections i and ii, the former having descriptive topic items while the latter having situational topic items or directed topic items among which a candidate had to choose from. The candidate was to do either section A or B in which s/he was well prepared. Paper two tested the candidate's ability to summarize content, argument and infer information and meanings from a passage and lastly the ability to handle language Art, that is, its structure and vocabulary. Paper three was an oral English examination for East African candidates. It was not an optional paper. Again as noted earlier speaking skills were not given much weight. There was a literature paper too which had sections A and B. section A was on play and novel while section B tested candidates on other works intended for general reading. Language was treated separately from literature in English. Literature was taught under Humanities until later on when the East African Examinations Council (EAEC) was formed to set local examinations in collaboration with the Cambridge Examinations council, when literature was treated as a language though still it was taught separately. African writings were considered for study. The Bessey report of 1972 observed that half of Kenyan schools used vernacular as their medium of instruction.

The report noted that there are important developmental benefits to the children and cultural benefits to the community when school life begins without the shock of confrontation with a new language. The report therefore recommended the use of mother tongue, English and Kiswahili in schools. The primary schools curriculum was to be revised so as to suit the needs of Kenyans and African contexts. The National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policy of 1976 (The Gachathi Report) with regard to language, recommended the use of language of instruction to be the predominant language spoken in the schools' catchment area for the first three years of primary education. It also recommended that English be taught as a subject from standard one and then as a language of instruction from the fourth grade in primary schools to university. Although Kiswahili was declared an important subject in both primary and secondary classes, it received inferior status in terms of allocated hours per week. The supremacy of English was enhanced in all the commission reports. The Mackay report of 1981 was set up as the Presidential working party to establish the second university in Kenya and to reforming the entire education system (Republic of Kenya, 1988). The Mackay commission maintained the Gachathi Report language policy. It made Kiswahili a compulsory subject in both primary and secondary education. This led to the production of teaching and learning materials in Kiswahili. The commission also advised that mother tongue be used in lower grades of primary schools, in areas where this was possible (Njoroge, 1991). In summary, Between 1964 and 1985, an education structure 7-4-2-3 (seven years of primary school, four years of secondary school, two years of high school, and three years of university education) was modeled and adopted (Kinuthia, 2009). This then ushered in the 8-4-4 system of education.

**The 8-4-4 system of education:** The 8-4-4 system of education Eight years of primary school, four years of secondary school and four years of university was later introduced in January 1985, following concerns that the basic education provided previously lacked the necessary content to promote widespread sustainable self-employment. The Kenyan primary curriculum is approved for all public schools and private schools except for international schools which usually offer the British or American curriculum, followed by the corresponding examination certificates, the subjects provided in the primary level are; English, Kiswahili, Mathematics, Science, Social studies, Religious education, Creative Arts, Physical education and Life skills (Kinuthia, 2009). The introduction of the 8-4-4 system came along with its two major projects targeting teachers of English. The projects were the SELP (Secondary English Language Project) and the SPRED (Strengthening of Primary Education). SELP was set up between 1988 and 1992 and trained from the UK 45 teachers of English and inspectors of English and also in-service over 3000 teachers of English in Kenya. The SPRED project on the other hand, was set up between 1992 and 1994 with the aim of improving the teaching of English as well as Mathematics and Sciences in primary schools in Kenya. These two projects were managed by the British Council which set the pace for the ministry of education. The ministry then also did in-service training for teachers and send out inspectors of English to assess the standards of English language teaching. It also carried out reviews through the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) and other commissions. For instance, the Mackay education report of 1981 recommended the promotion of English across the curriculum. This enhanced the role of

other subject teachers in the improvement of English. The KIE came up with the Integrated Approach to teaching English. This approach encouraged the teaching of English language and literature in English as one subject. This was adopted by the Ministry of Education which recommended that literature is concerned with the place of reading in the English course and with what should be read and that it also serves as a source of cultural knowledge. Literature was also believed to contribute to fluency in learners, particularly to the understanding of concepts in all fields of secondary education whether academic or technical, artistic or scientific. In the 8-4-4 system, the teaching of English has also been supplemented by media projects. For instance radio programmes for primary schools, video and tapes of speech and listening for secondary and tertiary institutions. The Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) took over the role of setting examinations when the east African examination council collapsed. The first 8-4-4 examination was sat in 1989. However, this English examination was not any different from the earlier exam set by the EAEC. The English examination was in two main papers: paper one and paper two. Paper one had sections A and B. Paper one A was on composition writing in which candidates were to write two compositions; a descriptive type was compulsory while the other was to be chosen from the situational topic items given. In paper one B, the candidate was tested on the ability to summarize a text, to comprehend information from a passage and knowledge of language structure and vocabulary (grammar). The answers were either in expressive or objective form. Paper two on the other hand, was on literature in English in which candidates were to answer three questions with at least a question on play, novel, short stories, oral literature and poetry. Later on in 2001, composition writing and objective paper are papers one and two respectively while literature is paper three.

Besides the final examinations, the KCPE and KCSE, the 8-4-4 system introduced the idea of CATs (Continuous Assessment Tests) which were to be progressively assessed in every subject throughout the student's school career. Teachers and heads of schools provide reliable reports on each pupil's overall progress from one term to the other. The 8-4-4 also insists on non-formal learning activities that are an integral part of child's development of psycho-motors skills. These activities include games, sports, music and dance, drama, debating among others. Teachers of English make use of these activities to impart speaking and listening skills in learners. Such activities have proved more motivating in learners, especially, when they are brought into the classroom situation. Brumfit (1989), refer to this approach to the integrated approach as the Communicative Language Teaching approach. The presidential working party on education and man power training was established to look into the shortcomings of the 8-4-4 system of education. The Kamunge report observed that youth un-employment and examination oriented culture were the major shortcomings. The commission recommended that English be used as the medium of instruction. The commission noted that in order to improve the learners' proficiency in English and to ensure development of good reading habits, primary school libraries should be established in all schools and be equipped. The commission however, remained non-committal on the role of indigenous languages in the curriculum. The Koech Commission of 1999 was later formed to make recommendations on ways of achieving quality education in the country. This commission recommended that the language of the catchment be used as the medium of

instruction in lower primary and Kiswahili be the medium of instruction in cosmopolitan urban areas. This would enhance concept formation and articulation of linguistic communication (Njoroge and Gatambuki, 2017). The commission recommended that Kiswahili and English be taught as subjects but English be used as the medium of instruction throughout the country in upper primary.

### **The Competence Based Curriculum (CBC)**

In a major departure from the 8-4-4 system, the proposed system of 2-6-3-3-3 was launched in 2017 which was designed to take two years in preprimary, six in primary education, three in junior secondary education, three in senior secondary education and three at the University. The new Competence Based Curriculum is an education programme that is based on learners demonstrating the ability to apply the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they are expected to acquire as they progress through their education. The paradigm shifts in the education curriculum from content based to competency based curriculum calls for a new mode of assessment. According to the Basic Education Act 2013 section 84 on examinations and assessments. KNEC is mandated to conduct public examinations as provided for under the KNEC ACT 2012. KNEC has developed a draft Competency Based Assessment Framework (CBAF) that gives guidelines on assessment of basic education. In the draft, CBAF recommended a formative (continuous) assessment which provides continuous feedback to all the stakeholders, learners, teachers, parents and quality assurance officers for purposes of improving learning and teaching. In this mode of assessment, head teachers are to ensure that data on the progress of a learner is accumulated over time and will be useful in writing the school year report that gives a comprehensive account of each learner on the achievements in each learning area, values acquired in each given year.

There are two categories of assessment; formative and summative. The CBC introduced formative assessment. Formative assessment also known as Assessment for Learning (AFL) is a range of formal and informal assessment procedures which uses a variety of methods to conduct in a process evaluation of a learner understanding learning needs and academic progress. Teachers use it during the learning process to modify teaching and learning activities to improve learner attainment. According to Harmer (2015), formative assessment can be as informal as observing the learner's work and as formal as a written test. This type of assessment can also include Assessment as Learning (AAL). It occurs when learners are their own assessors, they monitor their own learning, ask questions and use a range of strategies to decide what they know and can do and how to use assessment for new learning. Through this form of evaluation, a learner is assisted to develop capacity to be independent, self-directed, to set individual goals, monitor own progress or self-assess and reflect on his/her learning. For formative assessment to be effective, the parents must be involved in the learner's work. This means that teachers should work closely with parents who are to actively support their children in tackling the extended activities, give them input on the learner's portfolios and provide the necessary materials for the conduct of projects. In the CBC, the mission is to nurture every learner's potential and so head teachers are required to champion change in matters regarding the ranking of learners. Every learner has some capability and the achievements of each

should be reported as per the criteria used for assessment and not comparing a learner's performance with others. Head teachers are to ensure that they give descriptive feedback about each learner. Such feedback should elaborate the strengths and areas of improvement rather than just reporting a mere score in percentage. Core competencies such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and imagination will only be achieved if learners are given an opportunity to explore their immediate environment through varied learning experiences such as through the use of digital devices. Summative assessment on the other hand, include tests, examinations, performances, presentations, portfolios and a variety of written, oral and visual methods. They provide feedback to educators, parents and learners about a learner's achievement to make decisions for appropriate placement or further studies. In the CBC, four language areas are covered; that is, literacy, English activities, Kiswahili literacy and Indigenous languages literacy. At lower primary, literacy, Kiswahili, English and indigenous languages activities are taught as learning areas. Literacy is the ability to read, write and use language proficiently. According to UNESCO, literacy is a basic human right. Literacy as a subject addresses the ability of the learner to make meaning of letters and sounds thus making sense of written codes. It shall be taught in the language of the catchment of the learner. At this foundational level, literacy aims at equipping the learner with basic skills in reading and writing to aid in all other subjects. It is intended to assist the learner to communicate with others as well as promote to learn. Literacy as a set of skills will be useful in giving learners a headstart in essential skills that they will carry throughout their lives. The knowledge of literacy which includes the ability to understand, respond to and use forms of written language to communicate in varied contexts are important to facilitate learners' understanding of English as a second language.

At upper primary, English and Kiswahili are taught as learning areas. Foreign language (Arabic, French, German, Mandarin and Indigenous languages are elective learning areas where a learner can specialize in and pursue them to higher levels. The CBC, therefore retains written quizzes and CAT examinations as one means of assessment but also uses other means to assess attitude and skills. In designing the Competency-Based curriculum it is envisioned that at the end of the learning period every learner should have competence in the following seven core competency areas; communication and collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, imagination and creativity, citizenship, learning to learn, self-efficacy and digital literacy. However, Khan and Ramchandran, (2012) noted that, the need for a criteria or guidelines on how competencies are evaluated and attained during each phase or level of development for instance it is expected that after completion of each level, there are should be clear specifications that a learner started as a beginner level then moved to competent level and then proficient level and lastly expert level.

## Conclusion

Efforts have been made in improving the teaching and testing of English language in Kenya since the colonial era, however, there seem to be some form of rigidity in testing in that very little changes can be cited compared to the art of teaching. Teaching of English language has progressively changed in its approach for instance from essay-translation through

structuralism to communicative approach. Language testing on the other hand has not been adaptive to these changes, for example, testing at secondary school level is more of the structuralism approach yet the teaching approach is communicative. Speech work is not overtly examined both at primary and at secondary school levels. All examinations are wholly written. This disregard for speech work leads to poor communicative competence yet it is the main objective of the English syllabus.

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