

## A Comparative Study Between the Socratic Method and the CBC Curriculum: Towards a CBC Philosophical Theory.

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**Abstract:** Education is an essential aspect of human life, that should shape the lives of everyone in society. The Kenyan 8-4-4 system has been shaped by competition and acquiring the content of knowledge without giving more space for the learners to meditate on their studies and to relate them with their ordinary life. The purpose of education has been to pass the exams in the competition-based system. The introduction of the CBC is salvation because it makes a paradigm shift from the teacher's content centered model to a model based on learners so that they develop from within the competencies they have and so instead of focusing on competition, they focus on learning, and owning what they learn, and then applying it in life. The stages of development, however, do not require some haste within the CBC system. The giving birth of the competencies is expected early in CBC than should be. The Socratic method, which proceeds similarly to the CBC system, is a key tool to make the CBC system better from the good it is, although with consideration of some reconstitution in the curriculum.

**Keywords:** Competency Based Curriculum, 8-4-4 System of Education, Socratic Method, Paradigm Shift, Theory of Education.

### 1.0 Introduction

This study will investigate the relationship between the Socratic method of knowledge and the CBC system of education in Kenya. CBC are initials that stand for a *Competency-Based Curriculum*<sup>1</sup>, a new curriculum in the Kenyan system of education, that was introduced in the year 2017. The study aims to compare and contrast the key pillars in both the systems of learning, then after realizing that they have a greater percentage of common pillars than those that contrast them, suggest the Socratic method as a befitting philosophical theory that may guide the pedagogy in the CBC system. Furthermore, the research will evaluate the CBC system from the point of view of the Socratic method.

By the Socratic method, I mean the way of a procedure through which Socrates helped his students in learning and giving birth to knowledge from the confused ideas they held before meeting him. It is a pedagogy of questions and answers.<sup>2</sup> Socrates is not a very easy philosopher to venture into because he has not left any writing of his own, but we have his philosophy from different schools of thought that claim to have been influenced by him. Among the different schools of thought include the Megarians, the cynics, the Cyrenaics among others.<sup>3</sup> The study will open by discussing the Socratic question, which looks at the problem of the source of the philosophy of Socrates.<sup>4</sup> This study will consider Socrates' philosophy passed to us by Plato. The reason as to why Plato's philosophy will be preferred to others is because there is a consistency in what Plato presents about Socrates. It should also be noted that in Plato's dialogues, some dialogues use Socrates as a historical character while others use him just as a mere character. The research will not make a distinction between the two, because there is consistency in their doctrines. Socratic method will be discussed in its two phases: the irony and the maieutic.<sup>5</sup> The irony is a destructive phase

<sup>1</sup>Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, *Facilitator's Training Manual for Early Years of Education Curriculum*, Nairobi: April 2018, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Gary Allan Scott, *Does Socrates Have a Method? Rethinking the Elenchus in Plato's Dialogues and Beyond*, The Pennsylvania State University, 2002, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Dario Composta, *History of the Ancient Philosophy*, Vatican: Pontifical Urban University, 1990, 142-142.

<sup>4</sup> Composta, *History of the Ancient Philosophy*, 116.

<sup>5</sup> Antonio Misantone, *Compendio di Filosofia 1: Dalle Origine al Medioevo*, Newton and Compton, Roma 1999.

where Socrates breaks down through questioning the prejudices held by his students as a way of purifying them towards episteme, build up in the maieutic, the second phase. It is observed in the first part that the role of Socrates is higher than just midwifery noted in the method.

Secondly, the study will consider the CBC system of education in Kenya. This part will open up with the historical presentation of the CBC system and the reasons as to why it found favour in the Kenyan system of education over the 8-4-4 system. One of the main reasons for the introduction of the CBC system is that the 8-4-4 system would produce incompetent students that could not handle various issues in society. This was arrived at through research conducted in Kenya by the *Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality* (SACMEQ) in 2011.<sup>6</sup> The reason as to why the 8-4-4 system has failed is that it has been characterized by the content delivery, and so having the teacher at the center of the system.<sup>7</sup> Following such a procedure, the pupils do not own the ideas learned as they would do in the new system. The CBC system is centered on the learners as spelled in the *Instruction Design Theory*<sup>8</sup>, a theory adopted as a guide for learning in the CBC system of education. The work will proceed to discuss the role of the teacher, from the different theories of approach given in the guide for teachers and as shall be discussed in the second part. Just as in the discussion of the Socratic method, the chapter will conclude that the role of the teacher is greater than just being a guide and observer of the developed competencies. In the content delivery according to the work plan, the teacher participates largely in the learning of the pupils, and there is no way the pupils can filter out all the teacher's contribution to only remain with what they learn by their understanding.

The last part will be a comparative study of both the Socratic Method and the CBC system of education. Many common points will be discussed between the Socratic method and the CBC system. Among these include the centrality of the pupils in giving birth to what belongs within. In both, learning is not a matter of filling with content but through questioning, the student portrays and develops the knowledge and capacities that are within. Differences between them is the lack of content in the Socratic method and the presence of content in the CBC system. I hold strongly, however, that the students of Socrates must have had prior learning that recollected their ideas or 'impregnated' them with ideas. An empty mind cannot give the responses that they were giving. The other aspect of difference is that of the teacher as a guide just as it was in the Socratic method and I shall argue that the teacher contributes much more than just guiding.

The evaluative part shall observe two issues. First, the undermined role of the teacher, the study will suggest that pupils adopt even the way of thinking of the teacher to some level. This is not only in the CBC but also in the Socratic school. The students of Socrates were Socratic because they adopted from him some way of thinking. On the other side, the pupils in the CBC system are expected to give birth to competencies too early. They need some more time to be filled with ideas about different dimensions of knowledge and learning before they can be triggered to express their competencies. The CBC expects them to give birth just immediately at the conception of ideas.

The reason why I decided to carry out this research is that having known that the CBC system has not yet established a philosophical theory of pedagogy, the study finds that the Socratic method has the same procedures as the CBC system. Even though the Socratic method can be adopted as a theory guide to the CBC, the CBC is limited in expecting the pupils to portray their competencies early in life, when they may not have first filled their minds with some intellectual content. This calls for a reconstitution of the CBC curriculum.

## 1.1 The Socratic Method of Philosophy

Socrates is believed to have lived between the years 469bc and 399bc. He was born near Athens. His father Sophroniscus was a sculptor, and his mother Phenarete a midwife.<sup>9</sup> The vocations of the two helped him shape his philosophy, and especially the called Socratic method of midwifery, useful in helping others shape up their raw ideas into knowledge. Socrates died in the year 399bc by taking hemlock, after being accused of misguiding the young

<sup>6</sup> Republic of Kenya - Ministry of Education, National Curriculum Policy, Nairobi, December 2018, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, *Facilitator's Training Manual for Early Years of Education Curriculum*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> This is a theory developed by Reigeluth, that states that a proper learning should have the student in charge because he or she is the one that does the understanding. Charles M. Reigeluth – Brian J. Beatty – Rodney D. Myers, *Instructional-Design Theories and Models, Vol. IV Historicity: The Learner-Centered Paradigm of Education*, Routledge, New York 2017, 27.

<sup>9</sup> Composta, *History of the Ancient Philosophy*, 114.

people.<sup>10</sup> It is quite agreeable historically that Socrates existed but the Socratic ideas and philosophy are questionable. Socrates as a philosopher never wrote anything<sup>11</sup>, and, therefore, the Socratic philosophy we have today has been passed to us through one or other of the Socratic students and contemporaries. The reason as to why the philosophy of Socrates is questionable is that the various authors that have passed his thought have portrayed various pictures and thoughts of him.

The *Socratic question* has been caused by various reasons. Apart from his super-human capacities that questioned whether he was a real human person or not, among which includes the ecstatic phenomena of standing still for twenty-four hours absorbed in his thoughts<sup>12</sup>, and the capacities to tolerate harsh weathers, various other facts have led the historical person of Socrates questionable.

First, various well developed philosophical schools came after the death of Socrates and claimed to have been influenced by him. Among them include the Cyrenaics<sup>13</sup> that proposed some extreme forms of hedonism. The cynics proposed forbidding and anti-intellectual morals different from the Megarians philosophy.<sup>14</sup> Lastly, Plato presents Socrates to have mastery of metaphysics.<sup>15</sup> Some of these philosophies even contradict each other. It is therefore questionable whether one person could master all such different perspectives of thinking and to the worse even have contradictory opinions. There is a double possibility in such. It is either that those who produced Socrates used him only as a character after the tragic death, therefore, making the ideas we have not his, or that he changed his thinking over time. This makes the whole question of Socrates more complicated.

Considering Plato, who made wide use of Socrates as a character in his dialogues, his works are divided into various dates and categories. Following the division, there are some earlier dialogues seen to have Socrates as a true historical character and others that might have come up later with Socrates as just a character in Plato's ideas. In the first case, Plato produces the idea of Socrates and in the second, Plato gives his thinking using Socrates only as a created character.

There is great consistency of Socrates as a character in Plato's dialogue and for that reason, this research will consider several of Plato's dialogues in discussing the Socratic method. Without much investigation into the historical Socrates, the one to be considered in this research is the platonic Socrates, both as historical in the earlier dialogues and even as just a mere character in the later dialogues. Among the platonic dialogues to be considered include the *Enthyphro*, *Theatetus*, and *Meno*.

As has been discussed above, the Socratic method of knowledge is taken from the dialogues of Plato where Socrates has been used either as a historic character or even as just a mere character. In such a context, and as Plato puts it down, Socrates is practical than theoretical.<sup>16</sup> In the theoretical aspect of teaching, he resembled the sophists<sup>17</sup> but on the matter of knowledge, he did not hold that it was relative but objective. He also taught that this objective truth is attained by every person individually from within the self. Just like a midwife, the philosopher – a guide – only helps the students in giving birth to the truth but does not put the truth into the student.

The theory of knowledge developed by the platonic Socrates is not contained in one specific dialogue but joined together from different dialogues.<sup>18</sup> No one dialogue systematically puts together the theory of knowledge but there is consistency in the development of the theory in different dialogues. Among the dialogues that contain this theory of knowledge include the *Theatetus* in which Plato confutes and destructs the wrong theories of knowledge that may

<sup>10</sup>Giuseppe Cambiano, *Dialoghi Filosofici di Platone Vol. 1: Apologia*, Torino: Unione Torinese, 1970, 50

<sup>11</sup> Composta, *History of the Ancient Philosophy*, 116

<sup>12</sup> Cambiano, *Dialoghi Filosofici di Platone Vol. 11: Simposio*, 86

<sup>13</sup> Cyrenaics is a school of thought founded by Aristippus of Cyrene who was a man of bad habits, a sophist in Athens, Aegine and Syracuse. He taught hedonism based on the physical and gnoseological doctrines. In communion with Protagoras, he taught that sensation is the only criteria for truth and that good is pleasure in act. In both the moral and the gnoseological thinking, this school was opposed to the socratic teaching contained in Plato.

<sup>14</sup> Composta, *History of the Ancient Philosophy*, 117

<sup>15</sup> Composta, *History of the Ancient Philosophy*, 117

<sup>16</sup> Misantone, *Compendio di Filosofia 1: Dalle Origine al Medioeva*, 90.

<sup>17</sup> Misantone, *Compendio di Filosofia 1: Dalle Origine al Medioeva*, 86.

<sup>18</sup> Misantone, *Compendio di Filosofia 1: Dalle Origine al Medioeva*, 90

lead to prejudice, especially the sensation,<sup>19</sup> and *Meno*, in which Plato discusses true knowledge, giving its grades in the *Republic*.<sup>20</sup>

From those dialogues, the Socratic method of knowledge can be constructed in two of its phases: the irony and the maieutic.<sup>21</sup>

In the dialogues of Plato, which involve different parties arguing, one of the parties is the main guide of the dialogue, who does the questioning. In our dialogues of consideration, that main interlocutor is Socrates. He aims at helping the student come up with the knowledge. In the first part of the dialogue, the questions that Socrates raises aim at deconstructing the prejudice held by the student. This destructive part is the irony.<sup>22</sup> This process aims at liberating the one guided from the ignorance and the prejudice he or she may have held prior.

Socrates believed that the unexamined life is not worth living. In the ironical part of his method, Socrates aimed at helping his interlocutors through questioning, to realize by themselves, the inconsistency that could be there in what they held as knowledge.<sup>23</sup> Questions such as 'What is?' posed to the interlocutor by Socrates helped the student to realize the uncertainties of their knowledge, preparing them for a better understanding.

[In the dialogue *Theaetetus* Socrates first says he wants to ask what knowledge is (145ce with note ad loc.). And when *Theaetetus* gives his first answer to that question (146cd), it is a list of branches of knowledge or areas of expertise, both theoretical (geometry and the mathematical sciences) and practical (cobbling and other crafts). Yet in reply Socrates insists (146d147c) not only that a plurality of examples is something quite different from the unitary definition he requested, but also, more strongly, that they are in no position to know any examples of knowledge until they know what knowledge itself is.<sup>24</sup>

This first part opened the way to investigate the understanding of *Theaetetus* and other interlocutors concerning knowledge, and given that it failed, *Theaetetus* was allowed to further define the knowledge and ended up saying that knowledge is sense perception, an idea that was as well confuted. The dialogue ended up negative by saying what knowledge is not than what it is.<sup>25</sup> The positive response of what is knowledge happened in the *Meno*.

The irony part of the dialectic in the Socratic method helped the student to realize that he or she was ignorant in that aspect of knowledge. The awareness of ignorance is a virtue, according to Socrates, just as knowledge is a virtue.<sup>26</sup> This is because only the person who is aware of his ignorance will be ready to involve himself or herself in research. Thinking that one knows, makes him blind from the truth. This opinion is well illustrated in the allegory of the cave in the *Republic* where the prisoners thought that the shadows cast on the wall were the real things, and found it difficult to leave the opinion because the change meant new research with its harsh conditions. It is until they went through the fatigue of realizing that the shadows were not the reality that they knew the true reality.<sup>27</sup> The irony is purification and preparation towards knowledge. It does not give any knowledge in itself except the awareness of not knowing.

After the destructive part, there is a constructive part called the maieutic.<sup>28</sup> They follow each other in the Socratic method. As has been discussed, the irony destructs the prejudice that the learner may have and purifies him or her to build a new kind of knowledge – episteme. The process of building up knowledge is maieutic in the Socratic method of knowledge.

<sup>19</sup> Misantone, *Compendio di Filosofia 1: Dalle Origine al Medioevo*, 90

<sup>20</sup> Misantone, *Compendio di Filosofia 1: Dalle Origine al Medioevo*, 90

<sup>21</sup> Composta, *History of the Ancient Philosophy*, 129

<sup>22</sup> Composta, *History of the Ancient Philosophy*, 129

<sup>23</sup> John Beversluis, *Cross-Examining Socrates: A Defence of the Interlocutor in Plato's Early Dialogues*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Myles Burnyeat, *The Theaetetus of Plato*, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1990, 3-4.

<sup>25</sup> Misantone, *Compendio di Filosofia 1: Dalle Origine al Medioevo*, 90

<sup>26</sup> Misantone, *Compendio di Filosofia 1: Dalle Origine al Medioevo*, 72.

<sup>27</sup> Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Republic: A Study*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005, 255.

<sup>28</sup> Composta, *History of the Ancient Philosophy*, 129.



Socrates, in *Theaetetus*, claims to have learned this method of helping the learner come up with knowledge from the mother's profession in an analogous manner<sup>29</sup> – the mother as a midwife. In this part of the method, the interest is much on the truth that the learner must bear from within. The role of Socrates in such a method and the role of a philosopher, in general, is not to implant the truth in the soul of the learner, because the truth is already implanted there, and the learner needs only to be probed to produce it. The probing happens through the Socratic questioning. To stress the self-bearing of the truth and being involved in the process of knowledge, Socrates in *Protagoras* insists that the first person 'I', and the second person 'you', should be used in the dialogue. "No! I do not need to discuss this 'if you wish', this 'if it seems to you', but 'me' and 'you' convinced that only then will reasoning be best discussed, when we will go through the self."<sup>30</sup>

The Socratic method is based on communion and unity between him and the student without the imposition of knowledge on the student. Even though the process is communal, the understanding is individual. The teacher, in that case, the philosopher, is not one who knows everything and empties his intellectual content on the others, but one who only guides so that the truth might be realized together.

[Socrates, in the dialogue *Meno*] asserts that the soul is immortal and has had many previous lives; what we call learning is in fact the recollection of knowledge that the soul had before. At *Meno's* request, he offers to provide some support for these claims, and summons one of *Meno's* slave boys to join them. Drawing some figures in the sand, he sets the boy a geometrical puzzle: take a square with sides of two feet and an area of four-square feet. What would be the length of the sides of the square whose area is double the original? In response to Socrates' questioning, the boy first gives two wrong answers. But eventually, after continued questioning, he gives the correct one. Socrates argues that, as he has only questioned the boy and never taught him, the answers must have been in him all along. In fact, they must have been in him before birth. Finally, Socrates mounts an argument to show that the truth was in him for all time and that his soul is immortal.<sup>31</sup>

Socrates argued that the ideas are already contained clearly and distinctly within the soul before its unification with the body, an act that clouds all the ideas and leaves it upon the person, unity of body and soul, to rediscover and uncloud the already covered ideas. My argument is that after analyzing the Socratic method of clearing the prejudice and building up knowledge, the process starts only after reminiscence for a person can have ideas only when they have been uncovered already. I am not of the idea that the soul pre-exists before its unification with the body, but I am convinced that the intellectual soul has a priori categories like the categories discussed in the *Critique of Pure Reason* of Kant. These categories help in acquiring and organization of the knowledge, and without them, - which is an impossibility for any normal human person – one cannot acquire any knowledge.

The theory of the categories of sensation and those of intellect, I strongly hold, goes in line with the Socratic theory of the pre-existing soul that has ideas, only that Socrates could not explain the phenomenon in the same way that Kant did two thousand years down the line. I am, therefore, in agreement with Socrates that the teacher guides the student to acquire knowledge using his – the student's – own intellect with its categories, and that even in a class of many students, each of the students understands by himself or herself, and no one can understand for the other. This does not, however, mean that the philosopher guide or the teacher does not know the truth he guides the others towards, for without knowing it first he cannot guide anyone towards it.

I affirm that in the whole of that process, there is also a room where within the dialogue, the student may also give an insight to the philosopher guide, an insight that the philosopher may not have had before. In the end, also, I hold that the truth arrived at by the guided student is not identical to the truth of the master, because each of them is unique in the way of understanding and in the way of using the knowledge acquired.

## 1.2 The Competency Based Curriculum in Kenya

<sup>29</sup> Composta, *History of the Ancient Philosophy*, 130.

<sup>30</sup> Composta, *History of the Ancient Philosophy*, 130.

<sup>31</sup> Dominic Scott, *Plato's Meno*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 1.

The CBC curriculum of education in Kenya has been inspired by various policy documents in the country. These include the *Kenya Vision 2030*, the *Constitution of Kenya 2010*, the task force on the *Re-alignment of the Education Sector* chaired by Professor Odhiambo, and the Sessional paper No. 2 of 2015 on '*Reforming Education and Training*' among other minor documents.<sup>32</sup> The reason why the government of Kenya in 2014 embarked on a consultative process to prepare a policy document that saw the CBC come to light and be implemented was the social, economic, and technological demands in the workplace<sup>33</sup>, that could not be sustained by the old 8-4-4 system of education that was in place until then, and that is slowly moving out of place today in the education sector of Kenya. The aim of the reforms in the system is "to empower the young Kenyans to thrive in a competitive industrializing and closely networked globalized world."<sup>34</sup>

The curriculum reform is a flagship project of the Kenya Vision 2030. The policy is organized in five thematic areas. The first discusses the issue of access to quality and relevant education; the second deals with a competency- based curriculum; the third focuses on the pedagogical approach for all learners; the fourth deals with the issue of assessment while the fifth one dwells on resource mobilisation and management. Each theme spells out the goal, the policy statement and strategies of implementation of the curriculum reform process.<sup>35</sup>

The policy document has discussed the different ways of implementation of the CBC system, considering the relevance of such kind education in Kenya, the system itself distinguished from the 8-4-4 system in the pedagogy, assessment, and the resource mobilization. The CBC system has the following goals and objectives:<sup>36</sup>

- i. Foster nationalism, patriotism, and promote national unity
- ii. Promote social, economic, technological, and industrial needs for national development.
- iii. Promote individual development and self-fulfillment
- iv. Promote sound moral and religious values
- v. Promote social equity and responsibility
- vi. Promote respect for and development of Kenya's rich and varied cultures
- vii. Promote international consciousness and foster a positive attitude towards other nations
- viii. Promote a positive attitude towards good health and environmental protection.

Among the goals and the objectives of the CBC system, there is a good interplay of the usefulness of knowledge and the knowledge as a value in itself. The dimension of knowledge as use seems to be more stressed but considering the objective iii stated among the objectives, there is room for knowledge as a value to the individual who owns it, especially on the part of self-fulfillment, because fulfillment does not come only at the use of knowledge in practical life and work, but may as well come from meditation.

The Government of Kenya, after investigating the 8-4-4 system that was the only one in use before the CBC system was introduced, realized that:

The 8-4-4 curriculum envisaged that, based on the designed objectives, the learner would be able to exhibit behavior commensurate with the aspects taught at each level. This has, however, not been the case as learners complete the levels yet they do not display the expected level of competence. Results from SACMEQ-III (2011) show that Kenya's basic education system is failing to produce graduates with skills and competencies that satisfy the needs of a participatory society and the knowledge economy. SACMEQ-III (2011) shows that 40 percent of Standard 6 learners cannot interpret information included in various parts of a given text in association with external information, while only 6.4 percent are proficient in critical reading, i.e. can read from various parts of a given text, evaluate and make inference about the author's message. Furthermore, 70 percent

<sup>32</sup> Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, *Facilitator's Training Manual for Early Years of Education Curriculum*, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Republic of Kenya - Ministry of Education, *National Curriculum Policy*, i.

<sup>34</sup> Republic of Kenya - Ministry of Education, *National Curriculum Policy*, i.

<sup>35</sup> Republic of Kenya - Ministry of Education, *National Curriculum Policy*, ii.

<sup>36</sup> Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, *Facilitator's Training Manual for Early Years of Education Curriculum*, 4.

of those students are not numeracy competent, i.e., cannot translate verbal, graphic, or tabular information into an arithmetic form in order to solve a problem.<sup>37</sup>

Among the reasons put forth for the failure of the 8-4-4 system is that it aimed at the pupils and students receiving a uniform content of knowledge from the teachers, and the role of the student was to use memory. The better the memory was, the better the student because the assessment method involved reproducing of what had been given. The CBC system focuses on the competencies other than the content.<sup>38</sup> The learning burden is placed more on the pupil than the teacher and the studying methodology has a practical part. The questioning involved does not serve to see whether the pupil has understood the content, as in the 8-4-4, but to see from his response the developed competencies from within. These competencies are not placed by the teacher on the pupils but are within them, and the questions “what? why? How?” among other spelt key inquiry questions help the students portray their competencies.<sup>39</sup> The role of the teacher is similar to that of Socrates, which does not dictate the content of knowledge but allows the student to arrive at knowledge through questioning done by the guide.

The CBC system has been in use since the year 2017. It is being used together with the 8-4-4 system which is in the process of elimination, and already with the eight years of use, it can be evaluated in terms of strengths and weaknesses, an evaluation that is the key purpose of this research. There has not been a set philosophical theory of pedagogy for the CBC system, and I have opted to use the Socratic method and theory with the CBC system because it should be the best theory related to it.

Just as the name of the curriculum suggests, it is a curriculum that is based on the competencies of the pupils. It is a competency-based because the main goal and objective of the curriculum are to help the learners develop competencies that they will own as theirs and also be of help to them and the nation at large.

The new system portrays a paradigm shift from the 8-4-4 system to the CBC system, a shift that is not only nominal but also in the content of the two systems. To understand better how the new system is based on competencies, we will discuss here the methodology of the CBC system in comparison to the older system.

First, it does not focus on the content, and the capacity of the pupil or student to reproduce it, but it focuses on how a learner can be helped to realize the competencies he has and develop them.<sup>40</sup> The competencies in that regard belong to the pupil and are to be developed by the pupil with the aid of the teacher. That system of education is not dictatory and it has an understanding that for any content passed, the learner understands it differently from the other, depending on the perspective that the learner listens to the teaching, which in turn is affected by the sharpness of the competency that the learner has. Different perspectives will come out from the learners, even though the teaching content is the same. In that case, the difference of learning does not lie in the content of the teaching, but in the capacities of each learner.

How do different results come from the same learning process? This I think comes because all people are not gifted the same, and that understanding is an act that happens to each individual, not dependent only on the external content of the learning and experience, but also shaped from some internal intellectual categories that shape the knowledge. Teachers, in the CBC system, are expected to develop within their work plan special questions for inquiry, that help them understand the perspective from which the pupil has approached and understood the lesson, and that helps the teacher and the pupil to understand the capacities and competencies of the pupil. The inquiry questions used as the key to opening the learner's competencies have some special characteristics that enable them to serve that purpose. Among them include focusing on the learning outcome, putting learning into context, open-ended, and non-judgmental to allow the learner to explore ideas, helping the learners to construct knowledge by themselves, and also collaboration in the process of learning, even though understanding is individual.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Republic of Kenya - Ministry of Education, *National Curriculum Policy*, 7.

<sup>38</sup> Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, *Facilitator's Training Manual for Early Years of Education Curriculum*, 5.

<sup>39</sup> Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, *Facilitator's Training Manual for Early Years of Education Curriculum*, 14.

<sup>40</sup> Republic of Kenya – Ministry of Education, *Early Years Education Curriculum Facilitator's Training Manual on Competency Based Curriculum*, Nairobi, April 2019, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Republic of Kenya – Ministry of Education, *Early Years Education Curriculum Facilitator's Training Manual on Competency Based Curriculum*, 16.

Secondly, based on competencies, the CBC system focuses on learning and education other than teaching and schooling.<sup>42</sup> The teaching and schooling have been identified with the old 8-4-4 system of education, in which at the center of the schooling system was the teacher ready to transfer the content they have to the students, and that the best a student could do is to be like the teacher. The new system realizes that each person has their understanding, and the understanding of the teacher cannot be the same as that of the student, even though the student learns from him.

The third aspect of the competency-based curriculum is the method of assessment. The teacher does not put questions across for the learners to repeat the content he had passed to them because the system is not based on the content. The assessment is based on a balance between a formative and summative assessment, and excellence.<sup>43</sup> This method of assessment is different from the 8-4-4 one that was primarily focusing on summative assessment and competition. The one that had their base on content assumed that all the learners are the same and that the intellect was like a container to be filled with content. Competition is not the key in the CBC system, because the system already realizes that every individual is unique and different from the other in the manner of learning and understanding and that the difference in perspectives depended on the difference in competencies, helps majorly in complementing what the other person knows with one's knowledge, for there is no one person who will ever understand all things from all perspectives.

This criterion, however, does not look down upon the content. There is no knowledge without some content passed from one individual to the other. It is, however, important to note that the content aims at putting across the ideas and re-organizing the ideas that the pupil might have had to come up with a consistent knowledge free of prejudice.

The other aspect that is key in the CBC is the well-spelled role of the teacher in the system. The teacher does not aim at passing the content of his or her knowledge to the learners, but probes them through giving some content of the topic of concern, then raising inquiry questions within the learning, and from the responses of the learners being able to identify their competencies and nurture them to develop.

There are four theories that the teachers in the CBC system are encouraged to be conversant with so that they may better know how to conduct the learning.

The first theory is the *Instructional Design Theory*.<sup>44</sup> This theory was invented by Gagne and Dick in the year 1983, but later in the year 1999 Reigeluth developed it and gave it the shape that best fits the CBC system. He defined it as a theory to guide the teachers but that is based on the learners. The teacher only helps the learners to develop in different dimensions: intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual.<sup>45</sup> This theory, therefore, considers the whole man which is the same aim stressed in the CBC system. Any practical activities that are integrated with the theoretical learning are not referred to as extra-curricular activities, but are co-curricular and therefore are part and parcel of the learning.

In this theory of learning where the learner is at the center of the learning, the roles of the teacher include the following:<sup>46</sup>

- i. Assist the learner's in setting goals
- ii. Assist the learners in designing and selecting tasks to reach the goals
- iii. Facilitate task performance
- iv. Facilitate learning
- v. Help Evaluate the tasks and the learning
- vi. Mentoring the learner

<sup>42</sup> Republic of Kenya – Ministry of Education, *Early Years Education Curriculum Facilitator's Training Manual on Competency Based Curriculum*, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, *Facilitator's Training Manual for Early Years of Education Curriculum*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, *Facilitator's Training Manual for Early Years of Education Curriculum*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Reigeluth – Beatty – Myers, *Instructional-Design Theories and Models*, 13.

<sup>46</sup> Reigeluth – Beatty – Myers, *Instructional-Design Theories and Models*, 27.



In the above-enumerated roles of the teacher, it is important to note that the learning is done by the student, and the role of the teacher is only to guide. It is similar to the midwifery role of the Socratic philosophers. The role of the teacher is to oversee the learning by the student, intellectually probing him or her, and ensuring that the student learns in the right direction.

This theory also puts into consideration the prior knowledge of the learner. This is so because the theorists believe that all knowledge is a unitary whole and not some scattered goals. The learner's goals are set individually because the prior knowledge may be different from one learner to the next and also that their competencies are always different.

Secondly, the CBC proposes *Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory*.<sup>47</sup> The theory was developed by Lev Vygotsky who believes that the social factor of interaction with others is the basis for learning. After the interaction, however, the content learned is assimilated at an individual level.<sup>48</sup> The point of stress for Vygotsky was the social factor that greatly influences each one's learning.

This way of thinking is very much in line with the CBC system because it insists on the communal nature of sharing the communicable knowledge, but then never forgetting that such a sharing does not mean that learning happens at the communal level but the individual level. This is very much insisted upon by the CBC system, which foresees the pupil followed on an individual basis for the development of the competencies held than seeing all learners as the same.

There is also the proposed *Gardener's Multiple Intelligences Theory*.<sup>49</sup> Gardener developed this theory proposing an individual approach to learning because all people are not the same and that there are multiple intelligences in people, and each person has their kinds different from that of others.<sup>50</sup> To ensure that every person is competent, then each person should be allowed to realize the potentials within the self and be able to develop them to what he wants to become.

All those teaching theories proposed, stress the position of the learner to be at the center of the learning and not the teacher. The role of the teacher is only to guide towards the realization of the potential within the learners, which may develop in so varied ways between the learners of the same class and level. This is what is meant by a curriculum based on learner's competencies.

As already emphasized in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, practical interaction helps learners to develop their potentials better than just a theoretical transmission of the learning content. It is therefore suggested in the CBC system that there must be some organized practical activities that involve the learners together, not just as an extra-curricular activity but as co-curricular, meaning that they are an indispensable part of the learning process.

This does not, however, mean that the lesson is all practical. In a lesson plan, the teacher is supposed to introduce the lesson in a way that stimulates the curiosity of the learners, considering their prior knowledge and helping organize it better in case it had some prejudices and then introducing the lesson content that should have within it the practical experience, that will help learners to develop their knowledge better.<sup>51</sup> The stress has mainly been put on the centrality of the learners in the CBC system and giving the teacher only the role of accompaniment. I propose that there is downplaying of the teacher's role in the system because the teacher does more than just accompanying.

In the first place, there cannot be the observation of the competencies without some content given to the pupils. In as much as the new system works against a content-based curriculum, there can never be any curriculum that does not involve the content. It is well indicated in the lesson plan that the teacher should make an interplay between the content delivery, the inquiry questioning, and the practical activities. The teacher, therefore, must know all the

<sup>47</sup> Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, *Facilitator's Training Manual for Early Years of Education Curriculum*, 5.

<sup>48</sup> L. S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society, The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, Harvard University Press, Harvard 1978, 24-25.

<sup>49</sup> Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, *Facilitator's Training Manual for Early Years of Education Curriculum*, 5.

<sup>50</sup> Howard Gardener, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, Basic Books, New York 2011, xiv.

<sup>51</sup> Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, *Facilitator's Training Manual for Early Years of Education Curriculum*, 24.

possible ends of the content delivered – I mean in giving out varied competencies and perspective of approach – and, therefore, take care not to just dictate the content to the student but allow them to make an understanding of their own.

On the other hand, the well-planned questioning suggested for the teacher, the questions “who? where? what? when? how? and why?”<sup>52</sup> are to be used in a planned manner, that they may serve their purpose. Given that each learner responds individually and in a specific way to the questions, the teacher has a role of also paying attention to each response and to know how to guide such individual learner on his area of competency. All that cannot be called mere accompaniment.

Lastly, even though the learner is to organize their learning process only aided by the teacher, there cannot be a complete separation between the teacher’s content of learning and the learner’s one, but a blend between what comes from the teacher and that which comes from the student’s understanding. There is no way in which the learner will filter out everything from the teacher and retain only their acquired knowledge. Even the acquired knowledge will contain such and such perspectives from the teacher. The role of the teacher is not that simple but cumbersome, in fact, more cumbersome than in the 8-4-4 system where the teacher was at the center of the curriculum.

### 1.3 A Comparative Study: Socratic Method and the CBC System.

The first part of this research considering the Socratic method has pointed out the role of the learner and the role of the philosopher guide. According to the approach of Socrates, the learner was supposed to bear the truth from within the self, not being given it from the philosopher guide – Socrates - in that case.<sup>53</sup> Through the two phases of the Socratic method, the irony and the maieutic, the role of the teacher was not to empty the content of what he knew to the students but to help them through questioning to bear the truth on their own. There was a great conviction according to them that the truth was contained within the soul that pre-exists before uniting with the body, a unity that clouds all the ideas that the soul had, that have to be recovered in course of existence. It was already discussed in the (section 1.1) that we do not borrow the idea of the pre-existence of the soul but the idea that the soul has innate a priori categories that enable it in the intellectual functions. I defend Socrates in that line that as knowledge grows in steps, if he had such way of thinking that Kant developed about two centuries after Socrates, he could not have said it in any other way than how Kant did.

In that line of thinking, the Socratic method fits well in the way of thinking of the CBC, that the pupils are believed to have the competencies given to them a priori, and that the learning process with the help of the teacher, who well uses questioning – the questions of inquiry<sup>54</sup>- enables the pupils to come up with the competencies they hold on their own. The education system makes a paradigm shift from the content-based 8-4-4 system, to the competency-based CBC system and that employs well the Socratic method.

The Socratic method opens with the irony, the destructive part of the learning process.<sup>55</sup> In this part of the learning process, Socrates could test the knowledge that the student had so far. This he did by asking some questions. If the students answered the questions in the manner he had held his prior knowledge, which in many cases contained some prejudices, Socrates went ahead to point out the weakness of the answer, allowing the student to come up with a different kind of defining the problem. This is the exact approach that the lesson plan should follow in the CBC system. The teacher is supposed to introduce the topic in a way it raises curiosity to the pupils and then through questioning get to know how each has an understanding of the topic so that he builds up from the pupils’ understanding.<sup>56</sup> In case there be a prejudice in what the pupil knows, the teacher should guide the pupil to the right understanding before he continues to develop the topic.

The learning proceeds to the maieutic, which according to Socrates is the building up of the episteme. After the pupils are set to do the learning, the teacher gives them some content, with questions in between to test how each

<sup>52</sup> Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, *Facilitator’s Training Manual for Early Years of Education Curriculum*, 14.

<sup>53</sup> Composta, *History of the Ancient Philosophy*, 130

<sup>54</sup> Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, *Facilitator’s Training Manual for Early Years of Education Curriculum*, 14.

<sup>55</sup> Composta, *History of the Ancient Philosophy*, 129

<sup>56</sup> Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, *Facilitator’s Training Manual for Early Years of Education Curriculum*, 5.

pupil understands because, in such understanding, the teacher can point out the perspective of each pupil and so their competencies.

In the end, just as Socrates would like his students to go and live practically what they had acquired in the discussion, the CBC requires pupils to do the practical experiences as part of the learning. The two ways of learning aim at the utility of the knowledge acquired in society.

I point out those common points in the two systems to show how they are of value to each other, stating that the Socratic method could be the best philosophical theory applicable to the CBC system.

There are differences on the other side of the study. Socrates' students seemed to be matured already in the different themes they had to discuss. For it was rare to find a response of ignorance from a student. In the case of the CBC system, there could be such responses from the pupils, and at that level, the teacher has to 'impregnate' the pupil with content first before going ahead to realize their potentials. The competencies cannot come from a purely empty mind, just in the same way that the categories of Kant cannot be realized without some experience.<sup>57</sup>

Socrates does not much talk about content in the dialogues. His role was that of a midwife. He states that the role of the guide is not to 'impregnate' the learner with ideas. It is more sensible to state that the part of the dialogues we have, started from an advanced stage, where the recollection of ideas, as per the platonic teaching, had already taken place. It is questionable how the slave in the dialogue *Meno* could answer any question having no prior idea at all.

The CBC and the Socratic method differ because the CBC has room for content, even if it is a means towards some end and not the end in itself as it was in the 8-4-4 system. I, however, evaluate the Socratic method in that area that there cannot be any dialectic from someone who has all ideas clouded and so a *tabula rasa*. There can be dialogue only if the person has ideas, even if they may have some prejudice. It is, for this reason, I believe that the Socratic method can only start after the recollection of ideas, and within the recollection, there must be content delivered.

Just like in the Socratic method, whose role was analogous to his mother's work, – midwifery - Socrates says that the teacher or the philosopher guide helps the students only to give birth to the knowledge within themselves but he or she does not 'impregnate' them with these ideas for they should be part of the soul in advance. It is through questioning that Socrates could guide his students, sometimes they could fail in answering the question but then patiently Socrates would guide them until they bear the knowledge.

The CBC system, as has been spelt by different theories discussed in the second part, especially the *Instruction Design Theory*, puts the pupil at the center of the learning system.<sup>58</sup> The teacher combines three aspects: giving some content, questioning, and practical activities to complete the learning system. Both the questioning and application of the knowledge are common in both the CBC and the Socratic method. There are a common set of questions in both systems; the question what? the question how? and the question why? take precedence and then are followed by others. The three types of questions characterize fundamental disciplines of Philosophy. The metaphysics, the philosophy of knowledge and ethics, the same manner in which studying progresses in both Philosophy and the CBC system.

On the other hand, both systems undermine the role of the teacher. The teacher is presented just as a guide and observer. They put the teacher in a position where he or she contributes almost nothing to the teaching process. The CBC in that aspect has a small aspect of delivering some content before guiding the pupils within their respective competencies. I feel however that it is not possible to just start questioning as Socrates does on an empty mind. No something will come from nothing. These students of Socrates must have been 'impregnated' with ideas before meeting Socrates for the delivering of knowledge. I find the 'impregnating' very important before the delivery. In a system where we greatly agree that the soul does not pre-exist to have been filled with ideas, and where we know that what is innate are categories that aid knowledge and competencies, there must be the

<sup>57</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Emmanuel Kant: Critique of Pure Reason*, Paul Guyer – Allen W. Wood, trans and Edts., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

<sup>58</sup> Reigeluth – Beatty – Myers, *Instructional-Design Theories and Models*, 13.

‘impregnating’ – filling the pupils with content – before they can be helped to organize their knowledge and realize their competencies. I also strongly feel that the system was the same for Socrates.

In that regard, the teacher has a great role to play. He does not only ‘impregnate’, but also helps in the delivery. It is a process that cannot avoid the same perspective between the teacher and the student. Making sure that the pupil has not received anything from the teacher is very difficult. It is however agreed that the teacher does not implant the competencies within the students. Instead of saying that the teacher contributes nothing to the learning, I would say that they share in percentage between what comes from the pupil and what comes from the teacher.

#### 1.4 Reconstitution of the CBC System.

Different points of concern have been pointed out within the discussion of this study, and here I spell out the concerns that could make the CBC a better system than the good it is. It will consider two aspects: the role of the teacher and the role of the students.

First, in both systems, the teacher is not given the right place. The role of the teacher is bigger and higher than just helping in delivery. I want to affirm that it was still so in Socrates, even though he could not state it due to the academic humility he wanted to display to his students and that he wanted them to imitate as well. The fatigue of guiding and questioning, correcting and re-guiding is not just helping in giving birth. This teacher also ‘impregnates’ the students and they shall have his way of thinking after the learning. In that sense, I propose that the CBC system should not just be learner’s-based. The learners cannot give out anything without cumbersome guidance from the teachers.

Secondly, concerning the learners, they cannot just come from home and start realizing their competencies. There should be a serious filling up of the mind content-wise before the pupil starts to evaluate and realize what they are competent in. It is clear from the Socratic students that they had the content, otherwise they could not give the kind of answers they gave from a mere nothing. In that case, I feel that the CBC expects the pupils to start realizing their competencies very early. A child before the age of 8 years does not know at all what he wants and what he does not. It should be a moment of purely filling the pupils with content to know different things before the system starts to observe the competencies. The competencies can be well portrayed if the pupil can distinguish between one and the other.

#### 1.5 Conclusion

This study has discussed both the Socratic method and the CBC system of education in Kenya introduced in 2017. The point of inspiration has been many common pillars between the two methods of learning that made me think that the Socratic method could be a befitting philosophical theory for pedagogy in the CBC system of education.

This discussion has proceeded in three parts. The first chapter dealt solely with the Socratic method. It opened up with a discussion on the Socratic question, a problem solved by choosing Plato as the source of Socratic philosophy that has been discussed in (section 1.1). This choice of Plato followed from a keen evaluation of his writing and finding out that there is consistency in the Socratic thought. The chapter proceeded to point out the role of the philosopher Socrates in the method, both in the irony phase and the maieutic phase. According to the theory, the teacher contributes nothing of what the pupils give birth to. The role of the teacher is that of midwifery – only helping in giving birth. I discussed in the section that the idea of the pre-existence of the soul is not adopted but that there are competencies within the pupils given a priori. A critical look at the Socratic method led to the conclusion that the work of the philosopher guide is more than just midwifery.

The second section (1.2) considered the CBC system of education in Kenya. It discussed various factors that led to the introduction of the CBC system. Among them is enabling the learner to own the knowledge acquired and have space to develop it according to the competencies of each one individually. The roles of the learners and that of the teachers have been discussed finding some similarities between the system and the Socratic method. There has been pointed out a difference of content delivery to the learners, an aspect that is absent in Socrates. Looking keenly at the procedure of the dialogues, it is clear that the students had ideas already. The role of the teacher has been considered more than what is spelled in the guide.

The (section 1.3) has carried out a comparative study of the two systems. Finding that they have their main pillars in common, and stated that the Socratic method is a befitting theory for the CBC, and (section 1.4) evaluated the CBC on the role of the teacher and the early expectation of the pupils to give birth. The evaluation concludes that the pupils need a longer time of learning the content before they can define their competencies.

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