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Influence of Curriculum Reforms on Students' Academic Performance in International Schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate influence of curriculum reforms on students' academic performance in international schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya. It was guided by one research question: To what extent have curriculum reforms in international schools influenced students' academic performance in Nairobi City County? The study was anchored on Educational Production Function Theory. Mixed Methods approach was used. Convergent design of mixed methods approach was applied. In the quantitative aspect, cross-sectional survey was used whereas under the qualitative aspect, phenomenology design was used. The study targeted 50 international schools, 50 Principals, 50 executive heads, 690 teachers and 8,850 students. Stratified and simple random sampling were used to select 10 schools, systematic sampling to select 383 students, criterion purposive to include 10 principals and 10 executive heads, and simple random sampling to select 87 teachers. The study employed questionnaires for teachers, interviews for principals, and executive heads, focus group discussions for students, document analysis guide, and observation guide to gather data. Reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.83. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics while qualitative data was subjected to thematic content analysis. Ethical considerations were observed. The study found that curriculum reforms influence students' academic performance in international schools through improved teaching approaches, assessment strategies, and learner engagement. It concluded that successful curriculum implementation requires adequate teacher preparation, resources, and stakeholder support. The study recommends continuous teacher training, effective curriculum monitoring, and collaboration among stakeholders to ensure that curriculum reforms enhance students' academic outcomes in Nairobi City County.

Key Words: Curriculum Reforms; Curriculum Implementation; Curriculum Overhaul; International Schools; Teaching Approaches; Assessment Strategies; and Learning Outcomes.

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Background to the Study

Curriculum reforms refer to deliberate modifications introduced within education systems involving curriculum restructuring, adoption of new teaching methodologies, changes in assessment strategies, and integration of emerging educational approaches to improve learning outcomes (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023). Students' academic performance refers to measurable educational outcomes demonstrating mastery of intended learning objectives, including examination scores, competencies, and progression levels (UNESCO, 2022). In international schools, curriculum reforms often involve transitions between different educational frameworks, such as British, American, International Baccalaureate, and hybrid models, which influence teaching philosophies, assessment practices, learner competencies, and academic achievement (Alsaleh, 2020; Hayden & Thompson, 2021). Effective curriculum reforms enhance learner engagement, critical thinking, and academic performance, while poorly implemented reforms may disrupt learning continuity and reduce expected educational benefits (World Bank, 2021).

International education stakeholders recognize curriculum reforms as essential mechanisms for improving educational quality, inclusivity, and learner achievement. UNESCO (2021) emphasizes that adaptive curricula and inclusive pedagogies improve learning outcomes by addressing diverse learner needs. Similarly, UNICEF (2022) highlights that learner-centered reforms and resilient school systems promote student engagement and achievement in changing educational environments. The World Bank (2020) further associates improved academic performance with systemic improvements in teacher quality, accountability, and institutional support. Education International and the International Labour Organization also stress that supportive policies, professional development, and effective teaching conditions are necessary for sustaining quality learning outcomes (ILO, 2021; EI, 2023).

Globally, curriculum reform has become a major concern as education systems attempt to respond to technological advancement, globalization, changing workforce demands, and the need for twenty-first-century competencies. International schools have increasingly shifted from traditional content-focused approaches toward flexible curricula emphasizing creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. However, the effectiveness of these reforms depends on alignment among curriculum content, teaching approaches, assessment methods, teacher preparedness, and available learning resources. Although curriculum transformation can improve academic outcomes, inconsistent implementation, inadequate teacher capacity, and resource limitations may reduce the intended benefits of reforms (World Bank, 2021; Bunnell, 2022).

In developed countries, curriculum reforms have demonstrated significant effects on students' academic performance. In the United Kingdom, Ofsted (2022) examined curriculum reforms emphasizing deeper subject understanding and high-stakes examinations such as GCSEs and A-Levels. The study found that curriculum restructuring improved academic rigor and conceptual understanding among learners, although concerns regarding learner adaptability and examination-related anxiety remained. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2021) investigated learner-centered curriculum approaches and continuous assessment models within the United

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States K–12 education system. The findings indicated improvements in critical thinking, student engagement, and academic achievement, although inconsistent implementation created differences in learner outcomes.

Further evidence from developed countries demonstrates the importance of pedagogy and instructional approaches in curriculum reform outcomes. In Finland, Sahlberg (2021) found that student-centered and inquiry-based learning approaches increased learner autonomy, collaboration, and achievement. In Australia, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2022) examined blended and technology-supported instructional approaches and found that while such reforms improved learner engagement and personalized learning outcomes, unequal access to digital resources created disparities among learners. These findings suggest that curriculum reforms require strong teacher capacity, adequate resources, and contextual adaptation to achieve sustainable improvements in academic performance.

Within African countries, curriculum reforms have also been implemented to improve learner outcomes, although challenges related to implementation remain evident. In South Africa, Bantwini (2021) examined curriculum changes in international schools and found that reforms contributed to improved learner achievement; however, inadequate teacher preparation and limited resources affected successful implementation. In Ghana, Akyeampong et al. (2022) evaluated competency-based curriculum reforms and established that they increased learner participation and critical thinking. Nevertheless, weaknesses in teacher training and assessment alignment reduced the effectiveness of the reforms.

Other African contexts provide additional evidence regarding the relationship between curriculum reforms and academic performance. In Nigeria, Ogunode (2022) examined blended curriculum implementation that combined national and international curriculum elements. The study revealed that curriculum diversification and continuous assessment improved learner engagement and performance, although inconsistent pedagogical delivery reduced effectiveness. In Rwanda, Uwizeyimana et al. (2021) investigated competency-based curriculum reforms and found improvements in academic achievement and critical thinking; however, teacher preparedness and resource shortages remained significant challenges. These findings indicate that curriculum reforms can improve learning outcomes when they are aligned with local contexts and effectively implemented.

In Kenya, curriculum reforms have received increasing attention as schools transition toward competency-based and globally aligned educational approaches. Evidence from Kiambu County indicates that curriculum and pedagogical reforms positively influence students' engagement and academic achievement. Wanjiru (2022) found that improved curriculum integration and learner-centered teaching approaches enhanced subject mastery and critical thinking among students. However, inadequate teacher preparation and ineffective evaluation processes limited the full benefits of these reforms. The findings demonstrate that curriculum transformation requires continuous teacher professional development and alignment between curriculum objectives, teaching methods, and assessment practices.

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Similarly, studies from Mombasa County demonstrate the influence of curriculum reforms on learner outcomes. Ali (2023) established that competency-based assessment approaches and student-centered teaching strategies improved learner participation and academic success. However, students experienced difficulties adjusting from examination-oriented systems to continuous assessment models, affecting short-term academic outcomes. The study emphasized that curriculum reforms must be supported by adequate teacher preparation, effective resource distribution, and alignment between instructional approaches and assessment systems to maximize their impact on academic performance.

Within Nairobi City County, international schools have experienced significant internal curriculum transformations involving adoption of learner-centered approaches, transitions between British and American curricula, and modifications in assessment systems. These reforms have contributed to improved student engagement and academic performance when supported by effective leadership and teacher professional development (Timotheou et al., 2023). However, evidence from professional development workshops at Rosslyn Academy indicates that students transitioning between curriculum systems may experience challenges adapting to different assessment expectations, which can negatively affect external examination outcomes (Rosslyn Academy, 2022). Therefore, curriculum reforms in Nairobi international schools require careful implementation to balance innovation with learner adjustment needs.

Despite extensive research on curriculum reforms globally, several gaps remain unresolved. Previous studies have often examined curriculum changes, pedagogical approaches, or assessment reforms independently rather than examining their combined influence on students' academic performance. Limited research has explored how transitions between British, American, and hybrid curriculum systems affect learner-centered practices and academic achievement within international schools in Nairobi City County. This study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining the influence of curriculum reforms, teaching approaches, assessment strategies, and learner-centered practices on students' academic performance in international schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and learner-centered approaches should be part of a well-aligned internal educational system to enhance the academic performance of students in international schools. As an example, the transition of the British system which is more exam-oriented to the American system which is more of a continuous assessment and learner-centered pedagogy is expected to enhance critical thinking and student involvement. Nevertheless, ineffective teacher training, lack of cohesion in the reforms of the system and the lack of consistency in the methods of instruction and the assessment systems do not support this ideal in the international schools of Nairobi. Teachers and students have expressed worries about ambiguous assessment systems and evolving teaching objectives that cause confusion and unequal learning opportunities (Timotheou et al., 2023).

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International organizations support these concerns. UNESCO (2024) emphasizes that poorly managed changes in the system jeopardize the further spread of educational inequalities, whereas UNICEF (2021) warns that the constant upheavals and inconsistent reforms may lead to losses in learning. Unless these issues are eradicated, the performance of international schools, unfair outcomes, and lower student adaptability can persist. Regardless of these concerns, there is little empirical research regarding the effects of curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation changes that occur simultaneously in this environment on academic performance. To close this key gap and offer some guidance on how to better implement the reform measures, this research focused on how Curriculum Reforms on Students' Academic Performance in International Schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Research Question

To what extent do curriculum overhauls in international schools' influence students' academic performance in Nairobi City county?

Theoretical Framework

The Educational Production Function (EPF) Theory was introduced by Eric Hanushek in the 1970s and explains how different educational inputs contribute to students' learning outcomes. The theory views education as a production process where inputs such as curriculum, teacher quality, teaching methods, school resources, and institutional policies interact to produce educational outputs, including academic achievement. Hanushek (1979, as cited in Glewwe & Muralidharan, 2016) argues that changes in educational inputs can be examined to determine their influence on student performance. In this study, curriculum reforms represent educational inputs, while students' academic performance represents the output. The theory therefore provides a basis for examining how curriculum changes influence learning outcomes in international schools.

One major strength of EPF Theory is its empirical approach, which allows researchers to examine measurable relationships between educational inputs and student outcomes. The theory supports evidence-based decision-making by helping identify which educational factors contribute most to improved achievement (Woessmann, 2021). It is also flexible because it accommodates different variables, including curriculum structures, teaching practices, school resources, and institutional factors (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020). This makes it suitable for studying international schools where different curriculum systems, instructional approaches, and assessment models exist. The theory enables researchers to evaluate whether educational reforms produce measurable improvements in students' academic performance.

Despite its usefulness, EPF Theory has limitations because it may oversimplify the complex nature of education by presenting learning outcomes as direct results of educational inputs. Burgess (2020) argues that education involves social, psychological, and contextual factors that cannot always be quantified. Additionally, Glewwe and Muralidharan (2016) note that isolating the influence of specific educational inputs can be challenging because factors such as family background, school culture, learner motivation, and socioeconomic conditions may also

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affect academic performance. Therefore, while curriculum reforms may influence achievement, their effects cannot always be separated from other internal and external factors affecting students' learning experiences.

The EPF Theory is applicable to this study because it provides a framework for examining the influence of curriculum reforms on students' academic performance in international schools in Nairobi City County. The theory helps explain how curriculum content changes, teaching approaches, assessment strategies, and educational innovations function as inputs that contribute to learning outcomes. It guides the investigation of whether reforms introduced in international schools improve students' achievement, competencies, and academic progression. By linking curriculum reforms with measurable academic outcomes, the theory supports the generation of evidence on the effectiveness of curriculum transformation within the context of international education.

Review of Related Empirical Literature

Smith and Brown (2022) conducted a study in the United Kingdom to explore the effects of curriculum enhancement using the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum on student achievement in international schools. The aim of the research was to establish whether curriculum changes enhanced academic achievement and critical thinking. A quantitative study design involved a correlational technique. The target group comprised of IB students in international schools and 320 students were selected as the sample using stratified sampling. Data were collected using standardized test results and structured questionnaires. The reliability of the instrument was tested with Cronbach alpha (= 0.87), whereas the validity was tested by experts. Two ethical considerations included confidentiality and informed consent. Findings indicated significant improvement in examination performance and critical thinking. The research proposed that IB curriculum enhancements be applied in a broader manner.

The research being more quantitative in nature did not help in understanding the perception of the stakeholders, such as the educators and school administrators. Moreover, the research was conducted in the circumstances of well-developed international schools, which are radically diverse with underdeveloped countries such as Kenya in terms of infrastructure and resources. To address such gaps, the present research adopted a mixed-method design which involved questionnaires and interviews. It also focused on Kenyan schools to ensure that contextual differences in learner performance and curriculum execution are captured.

Johnson et al. (2021) investigated the connection between Australian standardized test scores and STEAM-based curriculum inclusion. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the impact of multidisciplinary curriculum methods on academic results. In this study, 280 secondary school students participated in a quasi-experimental study design. Teacher surveys and standardized assessments were used in the data collection process. Pilot testing was used to ensure construct validity and establish instrument reliability (α = 0.81). Anonymity and voluntary participation were two ethical concerns that were noted. The results showed that learners' performance and problem-solving abilities were greatly enhanced by STEAM integration. To

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improve academic attainment, the study suggested expanding multidisciplinary curricular models throughout schools.

The study primarily focused on teachers and students, excluding other stakeholders like legislators and school principals. Additionally, the non-random sampling in the quasi-experimental approach restricted generalizability. To provide a clear picture of curriculum implementation, the current study involved a number of stakeholders, including principals, instructors, and learners. It also used a more representative sampling approach to improve the findings' generalizability and relevance in the Kenyan international schools educational setting.

The impact of competency-based curriculum modifications on student outcomes in South Africa was examined by Mokoena and Dlamini (2023). The goal was to determine whether academic achievement and competences were enhanced by the departure from typical subjects. Surveys and interviews were combined in a mixed-methods study approach. The study had a sample size of 250 participants and was aimed at secondary school students and teachers. Questionnaires and interview guides were used as data collecting tools, and their reliability was verified at $\alpha = 0.85$. Validity was ensured by triangulation. Ethical considerations were consent and data confidentiality. Findings revealed that competency-based changes enhanced learner engagement and skill acquisition. To enable the effective implementation of the curriculum, the study proposed continuous teacher training.

Although mixed methodologies are used, the study failed to examine the scenarios of private and international schools where the curriculum as IB is applied; rather, it focused primarily on the public schools. Moreover, comparison of curriculum models was not done. The study helped fill this gap by studying IB and other curriculum models at Kenyan international schools and provide comparative insights into how curriculum works in different institutional settings.

Owusu and Mensah (2022) conducted a research in Ghana to determine the impact of curriculum restructuring on student engagement and academic achievement in the private schools. The descriptive survey design of the study involved two hundred students and 50 teachers. Data were collected using questionnaires and classroom observations. Reliability was estimated by use of the alpha, or Cronbach alpha (= 0.79) and validity was ensured by expert validation. Ethical factors were confidentiality and voluntary participation. The findings indicated that reorganization of the curriculum remarkably increased academic performance and student engagement. To address the needs of the students and the international standards, the study proposed continuous curriculum change.

The small sample size and the sole focus of the study on private schools was a constraint to the generalizability of the research to the broader educational setting. It also utilized a lot of observations and questionnaires as opposed to in-depth interviews. The current study addressed these gaps and provide more perceptions into curriculum implementation and outcomes in Kenya by using a larger and more representative sample and a combination of different data collection methods, including interviews.

Njoroge (2023) looked on how academic achievement in Nairobi international schools was affected by the IB curriculum. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the connection between

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student achievement and the implementation of the IB curriculum. 180 pupils and 40 teachers were the focus of a correlational study design. Academic records and surveys were used to gather data. Pilot testing proved validity, and reliability was determined at $\alpha = 0.83$. Confidentiality and informed consent were two ethical factors. The results showed a significant beneficial relationship between the IB curriculum and enhanced academic achievement. The report suggested that IB techniques be implemented more widely in Kenyan schools.

The study did not examine the qualitative perspectives of stakeholders like principals and curriculum implementers because it was mostly quantitative. Additionally, it limited geographical diversity by concentrating just on Nairobi. In order to capture the various socioeconomic and cultural contexts that affect curricular efficacy, the current study used a mixed-methods approach and broaden its scope to encompass several international schools in Nairobi City County.

The impact of hybrid CBC/IB curriculum on overall academic performance in Kenya was investigated by Wanjiku and Otieno (2021). The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effects of curriculum combination on both cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes. A sample of 220 students and 60 teachers was used in a descriptive study approach. Performance evaluations and questionnaires were used to gather data. Expert evaluation ensured validity, and reliability was verified ($\alpha = 0.80$). Data privacy and voluntary involvement were ethical considerations. The results showed that blended curricula enhanced overall development and academic achievement. Competency-based approaches should be included into current curriculum, according to the report.

The study did not show a causal relationship between student outcomes and curriculum integration; instead, it was mostly descriptive. Furthermore, it concentrated on hybrid models without separating the unique contribution of IB curriculum components. The current study isolated IB curriculum components to ascertain their distinct impact on academic achievement within the Kenyan setting and used an analytical design to investigate causal links.

Research Design and Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods convergent research design to examine the influence of curriculum reforms on students' academic performance in international schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The design involved the simultaneous collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, which were integrated during interpretation to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The quantitative approach employed a cross-sectional survey design to establish the relationship between curriculum reforms, including curriculum changes, pedagogical approaches, assessment practices, and learner-centered strategies, and students' academic performance. The qualitative approach explored the experiences and perceptions of principals, executive heads, teachers, and students regarding curriculum implementation and its influence on learning outcomes. The convergent design enhanced triangulation and strengthened the reliability of findings by combining statistical evidence with contextual explanations (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; McLeod, 2025).

The study was conducted in Nairobi City County**,** Kenya, which serves as an important educational hub hosting diverse international schools offering curricula such as British, American,

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and International Baccalaureate systems. The target population comprised 50 international schools, 50 principals, 50 executive head-teachers, 690 teachers, and 8,850 students in Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12, giving a total population of 9,640 participants. A sample of ten international schools was selected using stratified and simple random sampling to ensure representation of different curriculum systems, school categories, and institutional characteristics. The study sample consisted of 10 principals, 10 executive heads, 87 teachers, and 383 students. Purposive sampling was used for principals and executive heads due to their leadership responsibilities, while teachers and students were selected through probability sampling techniques to enhance representativeness (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Data were collected using questionnaires, interview guides, focus group discussion guides, observation guides, and document analysis guides. Teacher questionnaires generated quantitative information on curriculum reforms, including curriculum changes, instructional approaches, assessment strategies, and learner-centered practices, and their influence on academic performance. Interviews with principals and executive heads provided detailed explanations regarding curriculum implementation, institutional support, and challenges experienced during reform processes. Focus group discussions with students captured learners' experiences concerning how curriculum changes affected their academic achievement. Classroom observations and document analysis were used to examine actual instructional practices, curriculum implementation records, lesson plans, assessment reports, and student performance records. The use of multiple instruments supported methodological triangulation and enhanced the credibility of the findings by comparing evidence from different sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Bowen, 2022).

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Version 28 through descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize respondents' views regarding curriculum reforms and academic performance, while Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis were applied to determine the relationship and predictive influence of curriculum reforms on students' academic outcomes. Qualitative data obtained from interviews, focus groups, observations, and documents were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to identify emerging patterns related to curriculum implementation and learner achievement. Ethical considerations included obtaining approval from relevant authorities, securing informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and storing data securely. Participants were informed of their voluntary participation and right to withdraw from the study, ensuring adherence to ethical research standards (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Saunders et al., 2023).

Presentation, Interpretation, and Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings concerning how changes in curriculum influenced students' academic performance in international schools. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements related to the extent to which changes in curriculum have

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influenced students' academic outcomes. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale (5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Not sure, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree). The results are presented in frequencies and percentages, means and standard deviations to show the respondents' perceptions on the relationship between curriculum changes and academic performance. The findings are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1
Teachers' Responses to Curriculum Changes and Academic Performance

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std. De.
Curriculum changes can improve students' academic performance.	14 (20.0%)	23 (32.9%)	9 (12.9%)	13 (18.6%)	11 (15.7%)	3.23	1.38
The current curriculum meets students' academic needs effectively.	15 (21.4%)	24 (34.3%)	8 (11.4%)	12 (17.1%)	11 (15.7%)	3.29	1.40
Frequent curriculum revisions positively influence student outcomes.	18 (25.7%)	26 (37.1%)	5 (7.1%)	13 (18.6%)	8 (11.4%)	3.47	1.36
The curriculum content is relevant to students' academic success.	16 (22.9%)	28 (40.0%)	10 (14.3%)	9 (12.9%)	7 (10.0%)	3.53	1.26
Changes in curriculum structure enhance understanding of subjects.	15 (21.4%)	26 (37.1%)	11 (15.7%)	10 (14.3%)	8 (11.4%)	3.43	1.29
The curriculum promotes critical thinking skills among students.	16 (22.9%)	26 (37.1%)	12 (17.1%)	9 (12.9%)	7 (10.0%)	3.50	1.26
Curriculum changes lead to improved examination results.	13 (18.6%)	23 (32.9%)	11 (15.7%)	13 (18.6%)	10 (14.3%)	3.23	1.34
The integration of global curricula improves student performance.	12 (17.1%)	20 (28.6%)	12 (17.1%)	14 (20.0%)	12 (17.1%)	3.09	1.37
Curriculum flexibility supports better academic achievement.	17 (24.3%)	25 (35.7%)	8 (11.4%)	11 (15.7%)	9 (12.9%)	3.43	1.36

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Curriculum changes align well with students' learning abilities.	15 (21.4%)	26 (37.1%)	9 (12.9%)	11 (15.7%)	9 (12.9%)	3.39	1.33

Source: *Researcher (2026)*

The results in Table 1 show that the curriculum changes have an overall positive influence on students' academic performance in international schools in Nairobi City County. Regarding the statement "curriculum changes can improve students' academic performance", 14(20.0%) of the teachers strongly agreed and 23(32.9%) agreed. 9(12.9%) were uncertain, 13(18.6%) disagreed and 11(15.7%) strongly disagreed. The mean for this item was 3.23 with a standard deviation of 1.42, indicating a moderate level of agreement with some variability in perceptions. The positive answers show that many teachers see curriculum changes as important factors in better academic achievements. This finding is consistent with the Educational Production Function Theory put forward by Hanushek in the 1970s which states that educational outputs depend on the effective combination of educational inputs such as quality of curriculum, teaching methods, and learning resources. Curriculum changes are therefore an important educational input that, if properly implemented, can improve student achievement. This is consistent with the findings of Smith and Brown (2022) who found that improving the curriculum with the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum produced substantial improvements in examination performance and critical thinking skills among international school students in the United Kingdom.

The findings also showed positive perception of teachers on the current curriculum to address adequately the academic needs of students. Specifically, 15 (21.4%) strongly agreed and 24 (34.3%) agreed while 8 (11.4%) were uncertain, 12 (17.1%) disagreed and 11 (15.7%) strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.29 and standard deviation of 1.41 indicate that respondents generally agree that the curriculum meets the academic needs of learners, though there were differences among teachers. The positive responses indicate that the alignment of the curriculum to the needs of the learner is viewed as an important factor in supporting academic success. This result confirms Theodore Schultz's (1961) Human Capital Theory, which posits that investing in education enhances people's knowledge, skills, and productivity. Curriculum improvements in international schools, therefore, can be understood as investments in the intellectual capacities and future capabilities of students. The finding is in agreement with Njoroge (2023) who found that the implementation of the IB curriculum in international schools in Nairobi had a significant positive relationship with improved students' academic achievement.

The results showed strong support for frequent curriculum revisions to improve student outcomes. The majority of teachers 18(25.7%) strongly agreed and 26(37.1%) agreed that frequent curriculum revisions have a positive influence on student outcome, while 5(7.1%) were not sure, 13(18.6%) disagreed and 8(11.4%) strongly disagreed. The statement had the highest mean score of 3.47 (SD=1.35), indicating that the respondents tended to agree more with this statement than with the other items. The results reveal that teachers see the need to adapt the curriculum as necessary to respond to the changing educational demands. This finding supports the assumptions of the Educational Production Function Theory, which stresses that improvements in educational inputs, under proper management, can lead to better learning outcomes. The finding is consistent

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with Owusu and Mensah (2022) who reported that restructuring of curriculum in private schools in Ghana enhanced students' engagement and academic performance. However, the disagreement of some respondents shows that curriculum revision may not be enough to get better results without adequate support for implementation.

The results show that teachers viewed the relevance of curriculum content to students' academic success very positively. The results show that 16 (22.9%) strongly agreed and 28 (40.0%) agreed that curriculum content is relevant to students' academic success. Additionally, 10 (14.3%) were not sure, 9 (12.9%) disagreed and 7 (10.0%) strongly disagreed. The mean score for the item was 3.53 with a standard deviation of 1.27, suggesting that teachers generally viewed the curriculum content as suitable for promoting academic achievement. These findings suggest that relevant curriculum content equips learners with the expertise and abilities they need for academic progression. According to Lewin's Three-Stage Change Model (1947), successful educational change involves a process of unfreezing existing practices, implementing new approaches, and subsequently refreezing improved practices. Therefore, curriculum content changes are more likely to lead to better outcomes when schools are able to successfully manage the change process. This finding supports Mokoena and Dlamini (2023) who found that modifications to a competency-based curriculum in South Africa enhanced learner engagement and skill acquisition.

The results of the effect of curriculum structure change on subjects' understanding show that most teachers perceived positive effect of structural changes. Specifically, 15 (21.4%) strongly agreed and 26 (37.1%) agreed, while 11 (15.7%) were unsure, 10 (14.3%) disagreed and 8 (11.4%) strongly disagreed. The mean score was 3.41 (SD=1.35) indicating moderate level of agreement and some variation in the opinion of the teachers. The results suggest that curriculum structures which organize learning experiences well may enhance comprehension and academic achievement. This is consistent with Educational Production Function Theory that considers curriculum organization as an important educational input that influences student achievement. This finding is also in agreement with Johnson et al. (2021) who found that the inclusion of curriculum based on STEAM in Australia enhanced the academic performance and problem-solving skills of learners. Nevertheless, the negative responses suggest that some teachers might find it difficult to adjust to the new curriculum structures.

The findings show that curriculum changes have a positive impact on the development of critical thinking skills of students. The results indicated that 16(22.9%) strongly agreed and 26(37.1%) agreed that curriculum changes enhance critical thinking as against 12(17.1%) not sure, 9(12.9%) disagreed and 7(10.0%) strongly disagreed. The mean of 3.49 and standard deviation of 1.33 imply that generally the respondents supported the role of curriculum reforms for developing higher order thinking skills. This finding supports Human Capital Theory as educational investments that develop analytical abilities increase learners' intellectual capital and future capabilities. Curriculum approaches that emphasize inquiry, creativity and problem-solving therefore have a contribution beyond examination achievement. This result supports the study of Smith and Brown (2022) who claimed that IB curriculum improvements improved critical thinking

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among students in international schools. However, the uncertainty among some respondents may suggest variations in the implementation of the curriculum in different schools.

The findings on whether curriculum changes result in better examination results are mixed, but generally positive in terms of perceptions. The results show that 13(18.6%) strongly agreed and 23(32.9%) agreed while 11(15.7%) were neutral, 13(18.6%) disagreed and 10(14.3%) strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.23 and standard deviation of 1.43 show that there is a moderate level of agreement with a fair amount of variation among teachers. Results show that whereas many of the teachers associate the changes in the curriculum with improved examination outcomes, others are not convinced about the direct relationship. The Educational Production Function Theory states that educational inputs can influence educational outcomes. However, the success of these inputs depends on the circumstances under which they are implemented such as the teacher's preparedness, availability of resources and support systems in the school. This finding builds on Wanjiku and Otieno (2021) who found hybrid CBC/IB curriculum approaches improved academic and non-academic outcomes in Kenyan schools. Some teachers' different views suggest that curriculum revisions should be supported by structures that translated into measurable improvements in examinations.

Responses were relatively less positive in respect of global curricula being perceived as helpful in improving student performance. The findings showed that 12(17.1%) strongly agreed and 20(28.6%) agreed while 12(17.1%) were uncertain, 14(20.0%) disagreed and 12(17.1%) strongly disagreed. The mean of the item was 3.09 and the standard deviation was 1.46, showing less agreement and more variability among the respondents. The results indicate that although teachers are exposed to international standards through global curricula, some of them might doubt the relevance of such standards to local educational contexts. Curriculum internationalization requires effective transition management to be accepted by teachers and learners, as per Lewin's Three-Stage Change Model. The finding partly corroborates with Njoroge (2023), but also points to the challenges of implementation that may constrain the effectiveness of globally-oriented curricula.

The results of curriculum flexibility and academic achievement suggest that teachers were more likely to view flexibility as a positive factor. The results show that 17(24.3%) strongly agreed and 25(35.7%) agreed that curriculum flexibility supports better academic achievement. In contrast, 8(11.4%) were undecided, 11(15.7%) disagreed and 9(12.9%) strongly disagreed. The average score is 3.43 with a standard deviation of 1.37 suggesting a positive perception with moderate variation. The findings indicate that flexible curriculum approaches enable schools to respond to the varied abilities and academic needs of learners. Flexibility is an adaptive educational input that, according to the Educational Production Function Theory, can improve outcomes if it is aligned with the characteristics of the learning. These results support Mokoena and Dlamini (2023)'s argument that continuous teacher training is necessary for effective curriculum reform implementation.

Finally, the results showed that teachers generally agreed with the changes in the curriculum and the students' learning capabilities. Specifically, 15(21.4%) strongly agreed and

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26(37.1%) agreed. Whereas 9(12.9%) were uncertain, 11(15.7%) disagreed and 9(12.9%) strongly disagreed. The statement had a mean of 3.43 and a standard deviation of 1.37 indicating overall agreement among the respondents. The findings suggest that curriculum reforms are viewed as effective when they are responsive to the learners' abilities and developmental needs. Results support the principles of the Educational Production Function Theory which promotes matching educational inputs to learner needs in an effort to maximize achievement. The findings are generally supported by earlier studies by Smith and Brown (2022), Johnson et al. (2021) and Wanjiku and Otieno (2021) that indicated curriculum innovations can improve academic performance. However, the continuous presence of uncertain and negative responses on the items shows that curriculum changes need effective implementation, teacher preparation and institutional support to bring about sustainable academic changes.

The observation guide findings are in consonance with the questionnaire findings in Table 5 which indicated positive impacts of curriculum changes on teaching practices and students' learning experiences in international schools in Nairobi City County. Classroom observations showed that teachers were using a variety of instructional strategies, learner-centered activities, digital learning resources and assessment methods that were consistent with the revised curriculum expectations. These practices are consistent with teachers' perceptions that curriculum change improves academic performance, promotes critical thinking, and increases understanding of subjects. In a similar vein, document analysis of curriculum frameworks, lesson plans, schemes of work and assessment records revealed evidence of curriculum alignment with competency development and international learning standards. These findings are consistent with the Educational Production Function Theory which emphasizes the importance of increased educational inputs in improving learning outcomes.

However, the observation and document analysis also revealed some challenges, which partially contradicted the very positive perceptions described in table 5. Curriculum documents clearly stated their intention to improve academic outcomes, but classroom observations revealed variations in implementation across teachers, particularly in the integration of new curriculum approaches, the differentiation of instruction, and the consistent use of innovative assessment methods. Some lesson plans showed adaptation problems, limited instructional resources, and continued reliance on traditional teaching strategies that could reduce the possible advantages of curriculum reforms. These findings are in line with the negative and uncertain responses outlined by some teachers in Table 5, especially in relation to whether changes in the curriculum have a direct impact on examination results and whether global integration of curriculum is effective. Evidence suggests that changes to curriculum require continuous teacher training, appropriate resources and effective change management to translate policy intentions into improved student performance.

According to interviews with principals and executive heads, the findings of Table 5 were confirmed, suggesting that curriculum changes were generally perceived to have a positive influence on students' academic performance. Respondents said curriculum reforms had prompted schools to introduce learner-centered approaches, competency development and a range of

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assessment methods other than traditional examinations. They pointed out that the students' critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving skills have improved with the implementation of international curricula like IB and blended curriculum models. However, the school leaders did understand that the successful implementation of the curriculum was dependent on teacher readiness, availability of resources and continuous professional development. These opinions support the findings of the questionnaire that curriculum changes have a positive effect on academic outcomes and also explain the concerns raised by teachers on the challenges of implementation.

One of the principals emphasized that curriculum changes should not only be about adding new content, but also about providing adequate support to teachers and learners during the transition process. The principal explained:

> Curriculum changes have opened up opportunities for our students to develop skills beyond academic knowledge, particularly critical thinking, communication and independent learning. However, the influence of these changes is conditional on teachers' awareness of the new requirements and on the school's ability to provide support. Curriculum changes, without proper training, resources, and time to adapt, may not lead to the academic improvements that are anticipated. "Thus, curriculum reform should be always accompanied by adequate implementation strategies and constant monitoring" (Principal, Personal Communication, July 28, 2026).

This view emphasizes the need for effective change management and is consistent with Lewin's Three-Stage Change Model which emphasizes the need for preparation, implementation and stabilization of new practices (Lewin, 1947).

In the focus group discussions, students generally agreed that the curriculum changes had enhanced their learning experiences and academic engagement. They noted that the modified curriculum models facilitated participation, research, collaboration and the application of knowledge to practice. Students valued the learning component of activities that encouraged creativity and critical thinking more than they valued rote memorization. However, some students reported challenges related to increased workload, unfamiliar assessment methods and adapting to new learning expectations. These findings complement and build upon the questionnaire findings in showing that curriculum changes can lead to improvements in academic performance but may also create difficulties of adjustment for learners. Results suggest the importance of students' experiences for understanding the practical effects of curriculum reforms.

One student said curriculum changes had made their learning experience better but involved a lot of adjustment:

> The new curriculum has enabled us to take more ownership of our learning, we are required to research, discuss ideas and solve problems, rather than just memorize information for examinations. I think these approaches have helped me understand different subjects more. However, the work load sometimes is challenging as assignments and projects require more time and efforts. Some students require further support to advance toward the new

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expectations. If teachers support it, the changes can help students to do better academically (Student Participant, Personal Communication, July 26, 2026).

The experiences of the students are consistent with Human Capital Theory, which suggests that educational practices that increase knowledge, skills, and competencies increased the capabilities and future productivity of learners (Schultz, 1961).

Conclusion

The study concludes that curriculum reforms significantly influence students' academic performance in international schools in Nairobi City County. Changes in curriculum content, teaching approaches, assessment strategies, and learner-centered practices contribute to improved academic outcomes when effectively implemented. However, the success of curriculum reforms depends on factors such as teacher preparedness, availability of learning resources, institutional leadership, and alignment between curriculum objectives and classroom practices. The study further concludes that curriculum transformation requires continuous evaluation and stakeholder involvement to ensure that reforms address learners' academic needs while maintaining quality standards within diverse international school environments.

Recommendations

The study recommends that international schools in Nairobi City County strengthen curriculum implementation through continuous teacher professional development, adequate learning resources, and effective monitoring mechanisms. School administrators should involve teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders in curriculum planning and evaluation processes to enhance acceptance and effectiveness of reforms. Schools should also establish regular assessment systems to determine the impact of curriculum changes on students' academic performance and make necessary improvements. Additionally, policymakers should provide clear guidelines and support systems that enable international schools to implement curriculum reforms effectively while maintaining alignment with global educational standards.

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