

The structure of the new Lower Secondary curriculum

By NCDC

In the previous article we described that the new Lower Secondary curriculum aims to cater for our present changed situation, where we are aiming for all students to go to Lower Secondary school, not just a small minority as in the past.

To cater for this, the new curriculum has four parts: *Core Values and Key Learning Outcomes*, *Generic Skills*, eight *Learning Areas* and five *Cross-cutting issues*.

All of us have Values: that is beliefs in what is right and wrong, good or bad. We may not always follow these, but we all have them. Where did you obtain your values from: your parents, your family, your community, your religion or your school? Unless you went to a religious-based school, you probably did not acquire your values mainly from school. The new curriculum aims to change this by putting more emphasis on values as the basis of education. It therefore has a list of *Core Values* which should be taught through all the Learning Areas. Linked with these are *Key Learning Outcomes*, which tell us what type of people we hope our learners will become.

The *Core Values* and *Key Learning Outcomes* underlie the whole curriculum and all Learning Areas. Many of these may be included within the aims of some of the present subjects, but they tend to get ignored in the present emphasis on knowledge. In addition, each subject at present is seen separately, so there are no Core Values or Outcomes for the whole curriculum. In the new curriculum these Core Values and Key Learning Outcomes form the basis for the whole curriculum and will be included in all Learning Areas as far as possible.

The *Core Values* are:

Peace and Harmony

Integrity and Honesty

Patriotism

Positive Attitude towards Work

Respect for Human Rights

Tolerance of Difference

These *Core Values* cannot be included in every topic we teach, but the syllabuses for the new Learning Areas have been written so they are included in each Learning Area where ever appropriate. They are achieved not only in the content of what we teach but in the way we teach it.

In addition the curriculum lists *Key Learning Outcomes* which every Learning Area should try to achieve, both through its content and the methods of teaching. The *Key Learning Outcomes* are based on the qualities we want young people to develop through their education.

The Key Learning outcomes suggest that young people should become:

Self-assured individuals who demonstrate self-motivation, self-management and self-esteem; know their own strengths and limitations and know how to act in different situations.

Responsible and patriotic citizens who promote the development of indigenous cultures and languages, appreciate and respect the diversity of cultures, respect the environment and contribute to the wellbeing of themselves, their community and the nation.

Lifelong learners who can plan, reflect and direct their own learning and actively seek lifelong learning opportunities.

Positive contributors to society who can apply the Generic Skills learnt in school; contribute to the needs of the economy and community; design, make and critically evaluate products and processes to address needs; appreciate the physical, biological and technological world; and make informed decisions about sustainable development and its impact on people and the environment.

All of these elements of the curriculum, *Core Values, Key Learning Outcomes* and *Generic Skills* will be developed through the eight *Learning Areas* which form the basis of the curriculum. These have been chosen to link related areas of knowledge, understanding and skills. At this level, when we are giving a good general education to all, *integration* of learning is more important than specialization. All the essential content of the old curriculum subjects has been retained, but the emphasis is on the links between them and the relationships between concepts and understandings across all learning areas. Learners should understand how their learning contributes to their own lives, the community and environment they live in, and the development of Uganda as a whole. The aim is a holistic curriculum rather than one divided into separate sections.

The eight Learning Areas are each divided into *Strands* which link similar concepts and topics within the Learning Area. The Learning Areas are:

1. *Languages*: This includes English and Swahili, both of which are compulsory, and either a local language or a foreign language. Each language will be taught through strands which practice language needed in different contexts: language used for personal or public communication and language needed for education and employment. Each language will also be related to its literature.
2. *Mathematics*: This is very similar to the present subject, but emphasizes the usefulness of mathematics in everyday life and employment, as well as further education. There is a Core programme for all learners and an extended programme for higher achievers likely to go on to further education.

3. *Science* includes all three traditional Sciences - Biology, Chemistry and Physics- but with an emphasis on the links between them and scientific methods and thinking. It will look at the natural world and the processes which support life, and how science can contribute to the economic future of Uganda, emphasizing those aspects most important in the lives of Ugandans. There are six strands (Processes, Diversity, Interactions, Energy, Systems and Earth and Space) each of which contain elements of all three Sciences. All strands emphasize learning through experiments and observation. Each topic within the syllabus has Extension material for those most likely to go on to further studies.
4. *Social Studies* helps learners to understand the society they are living in and to contrast and learn from other societies in East Africa and the World. It includes elements of History, Geography, Economics, Sociology, and Political Science. It is arranged in four Strands: *Society and Leadership* includes traditional and modern leadership and government; *Time and Continuity* includes the traditions and history of Uganda, East Africa and other areas of the world; *People and their Environment* studies the physical environment and the effects this has had on people's lives and how they have adapted to the environment; *Resources and sustainable development* looks at the resources we have and how we can use them. All strands start from the local area studied through field work, move to Uganda and East Africa and study other parts of the world through case studies.
5. *Religious Education* includes a choice of strands on Christian Education and Islamic Education. They examine the beliefs and values of each religion, study of their holy books and the development of morality and the meaning and purpose of life.
6. *Technology and Enterprise* helps learners to acquire a range of skills useful in both employment and self-employment and in helping their home communities. It includes understanding and practice of Information and Communication Technology (LCT), including the use of computers and mobile phones. Strands are *Self-employment and Money*; *Crop production and Animal Husbandry*; *Food production and Food Security*; *Water, Sanitation and Hygiene*; *Housing and Construction*; and *Machines and Technology*.
7. *Life Education* helps learners with their personal lives: physical, mental, emotional and social. It helps them to develop as adolescents and develop good relations with others. It includes physical education, including sports and games, and health education.
8. *Creative Arts* combines Music, Dance, Drama and Visual Arts. These are taught separately and integrated together where appropriate. They help learners to communicate their ideas, emotions and feelings through the Arts, and also to appreciate their own traditional cultures and understand the importance of the Arts in people's lives and the economy.

Finally there are five *Cross-cutting issues*. These are issues which are important in the lives of the learners and the development of Uganda. They cut across many Learning Areas and will be taught in relation to all these areas.

The *Cross-cutting issues* are:

- Environmental awareness
- Health awareness
- Diversity and inclusion
- Socio-economic challenges
- Citizenship

In the next article we will look at how each Learning Area syllabus is structured to ensure an emphasis on understanding, skills and values as well as knowledge, and how a new examination will assess all these aspects of the curriculum.