

Challenges Facing the Implementation of Primary Secondary School Competence-Based Curriculum in Same District, Tanzania

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Abstract: Competency-based curricula are increasingly popular in schools due to global challenges in science, technology and global market demand. This study explored challenges facing the implementation of a competence-based curriculum in public primary schools to pupils in Same District -Tanzania. The study employed mixed methods and convergent design, using a sample of 289 respondents from 32 public primary schools in Same District. The methods of data collection were questionnaires and interviews. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics in terms of percentages and frequencies while qualitative data was analyzed using the thematic approach. Based on the findings, the study concluded that, the implementation of CBC is rendered ineffective due to lack of learner-centred interactive teaching strategies as required by the CBC. The study suggests that the government should organise in-service training for primary school teachers on CBC. It is also recommends provision of adequate instructional resources, such as ICT equipment and audio-visual materials.

Keywords: Challenges; competence-based curriculum; quality education provision.

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Introduction

Global challenges posed by science, technology and global market demands have led to the adoption of competency-based curricula in schools. The focus on Competency-Based Curricula (CBC) stems from a growing recognition of the necessity of direct competence development, rather than merely knowledge acquisition, as a requirement for employability (ORINA, 2022). According to UNESCO (2023), a considerable number of children, especially those who are enrolled in schools, are failing to develop basic literacy abilities. The report further elaborates that in poor and middle-income nations, a significant proportion of 10-year-olds (57

percent in 2019) could not read and comprehend a basic text, which increased to 70 percent in 2022, despite the implementation of CBC.

UNESCO (2023) report adds that Education systems are inadequately equipped to provide the knowledge, experience, skills and values necessary for a rapidly changing world. The emergence of competency-based education in the United States of America in the early 1970s marked the beginning of the history of competency-based curricula worldwide (Muchira et al., 2023). The movement then expanded throughout European nations in the 1980s, including Germany and the United Kingdom. Australia adopted the CBC in the 1990s and since

then, other countries have been motivated to implement the competence-based curriculum due to the ever-changing technology and global market (Kilipamwambu, 2021)

In Sub-Saharan Africa, CBC has been incorporated into the educational systems of various nations, including Zambia, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria and South Africa (Machila et al., 2022; Muneja (2015). With this adoption, the African nation hoped to develop graduates who could tackle challenges of the twenty-first century (Akinrinola, 2020). Nevertheless, obstacles, including lack of knowledge and skill among education officials in the implementation of CBC and inadequate infrastructures have made the adoption of CBC difficult (Ruth & Ramadas, 2019). In 1998, CBC was first implemented in South Africa as a way to address the lack of specialists in three sectors: engineers, technicians and artisans (Komba & Mwandanji, 2015). The CBC initiative aimed to equip citizens with essential 21st-century skills; however, its successful implementation was limited by insufficient funding and lack of structured approach for professional development and support services (Ruth & Ramadas, 2019).

Kenya adopted CBC in 2017 to align education with global standards (Nyaboke et al., 2021). The adoption of CBC in Kenya sought to develop 21st-century skills like collaboration, creativity and competence, generating jobs and improving living standards. However, existing challenges include limited resources, limited teachers' pedagogical and content knowledge and unsatisfactory collaboration of the government with other education stakeholders, like teachers in designing and implementing the new CBC (Nyaboke et al., 2021).

In Tanzania, the 2005 curriculum adjustments shifted from a content-driven curriculum to competence-based curriculum (Kilipamwambu, 2021; Mathias et al., 2023; Muneja, 2015; Ndimbo, 2023; Nyoni & Studies, 2023). The content-driven curriculum was based on traditional teaching and learning methods and placed a strong emphasis on theoretical content. While teachers were traditionally the main implementers of the content-based curriculum, the goal of the shift was to improve the quality of education by providing students with the skills they need for real-world scenarios (Komba & Mwandanji, 2015). As a response to issues with the training system that negatively affected the calibre of graduates entering

the labour market, the shift became necessary (Muneja, 2015).

Since CBC has been in use in Tanzania since 2005, a question arises: Can a significant number of primary school pupils learn these abilities in a classroom setting and schools with insufficient teachers? Are schools infrastructures enough for the implementation of CBC? With an emphasis on leadership, interpersonal, flexibility, adaptability, self-drive initiative, responsibility, productivity, accountability and cross-cultural abilities, CBC prepares students for life and career skills. These qualities are crucial for quality education and a competitive work force in the country.

Makunja and Science (2016) highlighted that Students selected to join secondary schools had a low academic ability in such a way that it made it difficult for the teachers to use learner-centered approaches to teaching and learning as per competence-based curriculum requirements. The education system fails to bridge this gap, hindering learners' ability to use their education beyond school.

The World Bank Report (2023) reveals that learning outcomes in Tanzania are problematic when examined by globally benchmarked early reading and numeracy examinations at Standard 2. For example; Only 5% of Tanzanian Standard 2 children can be regarded as proficient readers, with their average reading fluency of 26.18 correct words per minute (CWPM) falling short of the global criterion of 50 CWPM. Just 17.5% of boys and 16.7% of girls achieved the Level II addition and subtraction criterion in Maths. Furthermore, about 20 percent of students failed the Standard Four National Assessment (SFNA), the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE and the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (CSEE). Students failed to develop literacy abilities, which increased the illiteracy rate (UNESCO, 2023).

The Tanzanian basic education curriculum, which was last reviewed as competency-based in 2015, has yet to be implemented in its entirety (World Bank Report 2023) as a result of discrepancies in the coverage of core competencies in the syllabus and textbooks (Komba & Shukia, 2022). In addition, a considerable number of teachers lack training in the latest curriculum and textbooks and the implementation of student-cantered pedagogy is impeded by the size of their classes.

In Same District, the effectiveness of CBC remains questionable as annually, more than 20 percent of students failed the PSLE and SFNA for the year 2021, 2022 and 2023 in comparison to other Districts in Kilimanjaro Region. High failure rates may indicate that the curriculum is not effectively equipping students with the necessary skills. For example, inadequate implementation of CBC or lack of support may leave students poorly prepared for examinations, particularly if they are expected to demonstrate proficiency in practical skills, problem-solving, and application in ways that were not clearly communicated or adequately practiced (Same District Council, 2023). Limited studies have investigated the effectiveness and challenges of CBC in Tanzania's public primary schools. These gaps offer rich potential for research to improve the implementation, effectiveness, and equity of CBC. This study aimed to explore the specific challenges facing the implementation of CBC in Same District, Tanzania.

Although several years have passed since the Primary School CBC was last reviewed in 2015, and despite the efforts made by the government of Tanzania, the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) is not in an optimal state. There is no clear evidence that teachers are effectively implementing CBC teaching approaches when benchmarked against the standard of quality education attained by learners. In Tanzania, studies focused on how CBC has been implemented in different subjects, the learning materials used for delivery, pedagogical and subject content knowledge and teachers' perceptions of their influence in secondary schools (Nkya et al. (2021), Makunja & Science (2016), Muneja (2015), Kafyulilo et al. (2012), Komba & Mwandanji (2015), Lubagumya (2018) in KANGALAWA (2019), World Bank (2023), Ndimbo (2023) and Chacha & Onyango (2022). Although these studies took place, there is slight information about challenges facing the implementation of the CBC in public primary schools. For instance, Ndimbo (2023) investigated on the implementation of competence-based curriculum for pupils' learning in public primary schools in Mpwapwa and Dodoma. Furthermore, the study employed qualitative approach with small samples, making the result not generalizable beyond the studied context. In addition, some studies in Tanzania like of that of Komba and Shukia (2022) established that the implementation of basic education curriculum is not effective. None of the

reviewed studies were conducted in Same District. Therefore, this study sought to establish challenges facing the implementation of CBC in public primary schools in Same District, Tanzania due to the fact that Records from NECTA database indicates that the average academic performance of the public primary schools is lower as annually, more than 20 percent of students fail the PSLE that restricted some of them from joining secondary education.

Literature Review

The educational environment changes quickly due to forces of globalization, technology breakthroughs, and shifting societal demands. Many educational systems like those in Finland, Singapore and Australia adopted CBC in response to these developments as a way to guarantee that students have the information and abilities required for success in the globalized world (Clément, 2023; Gulled, 2023; Muchira et al., 2023). A groundbreaking book released by UNESCO emphasized the need for traits and abilities including critical thinking and collaboration to help people become better citizens in increasingly diverse democracies (Anderson-Levitt & Gardinier, 2023; Catacutan et al., 2023; Kurt, 2023).

CBC began with the introduction of Competency-Based Education in the United States in early 1970s (Dodge et al., 2023; Mohamed, 2023; Muchira et al., 2023). The movement then spread to other countries; case studies from various regions highlight diverse approaches to CBC implementation. In Finland, for example, the national curriculum emphasizes transversal competencies, such as critical thinking and problem-solving (Deng et al., 2023; Hautamäki et al., 2023; Kilag et al., 2023). In Singapore, CBE is tightly integrated with technology, enabling personalized learning experiences (Catacutan et al., 2023; Derseh et al., 2024). These examples underscore the adaptability of CBE to different educational contexts and the importance of considering local needs and priorities.

Even with its potential, CBE faced a number of difficulties in Singapore. Competency assessment and cultural and linguistic diversity continue to be challenging issues in the use of CBE (Catacutan et al., 2023). In sub-Saharan African countries, competency-based teaching and learning strategies have been accepted by education sector players. CBC has been introduced in several countries, including Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya,

Cameroon, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Ghana, and South Africa (Atuhura & Nambi, 2024), as part of a larger effort to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to equip future generations of Africans with the skills they need to work and innovate in today's job market (Cheruiyot, 2024).

Studies have shown that many African countries that adopted competency-based approaches to education encounter a variety of difficulties. For example, in Uganda, Atuhura and Nambi (2024), Namubiru et al. (2024) and Tumuheise et al. (2023) observed that teachers encountered inadequate preparation and limited teacher participation challenges in workshops and seminars, inadequate classroom infrastructure, time constraints and shortage of housing options for teachers. Thus, in a way, the introduction of CBC was preceded by insufficient teacher preparation and those other challenges (Kidega et al.; 2024; Wambi et al., 2024).

In Kenya, Muchira et al. (2023) revealed that CBC models improved problem-solving, lifelong learning, self-efficacy and autonomy in learners. However, Kenya had limited evidence of CBC's impact on learners' key competencies. Challenges included lack of teacher training opportunities, low funding, inconsistent pedagogical approaches, *lack of clear educational policies for effective implementation of the CBC curriculum, lack of validity and reliability of learners' scores and lack of ICT infrastructure* (Cheruiyot, 2024; Kubai, 2023; Njiru & Odundo, 2024a). According to Hussein (2023), there is a direct correlation between the success of curriculum implementation and the calibre of teachers. In order to ensure long-term teacher quality, the nation should evaluate how ready its teachers are to apply the new curriculum and whether it is ready to set up a program for their professional development (Cherotich, 2023; Njiru & Odundo, 2024b).

In Tanzania, the findings by Issa et al. (2024; Mathias et al. (2023 and Ndimbo (2023) highlighted the optimistic prospects and challenges of CBC implementation as perceived by both students and teachers; the curriculum is acknowledged for emphasizing skill development, critical thinking and real-world application. However, they identified significant some challenges teachers faced. Pupils informed overcrowded classes, shortage of textbooks and desks and shortage of teaching resources as challenges. External pressures, often driven by political and educational authorities,

hindered effective CBC adoption, leading to rushed syllabus coverage (Issa et al., 2024).

Similarly, Nyoni and Studies (2023) indicated that although teachers possess knowledge regarding the transition from KBC to CBC, implementing it frequently proves difficult due to obstacles, such as inadequate resources, inadequate language skills and lack of in-service training for teachers on a competency-based curriculum. Likewise, The World Bank Report (2023) highlighted that Tanzania's efforts to successfully adopt a competency-based curriculum have encountered obstacles. These barriers include a mix of inadequate resourcing, especially in the provision of educational materials, and limited teachers' competence. Regular in-service training and sufficient resources were suggested as a means to support the competency-based curriculum's implementation.

Key findings from the reviewed studies in Tanzania only focused on public secondary schools; thus, the challenges of implementing the competence-based curriculum in public primary schools is not well known. This gap informed the current study to explore challenges facing the implementation of competence-based curriculum in public primary schools in Same District, Tanzania.

Methodology

Design

This study used a mixed-method design known as concurrent design or triangulation. With this research design, researchers collect, analyse and compares quantitative and qualitative data in a single phase to determine whether the results corroborate or contradict one another (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). For validation and verification, the concurrent design enables researchers to triangulate the methodologies by directly contrasting quantitative statistical data with qualitative findings (Creswell et al., 2011). For the goal of corroboration, the concurrent design was favoured since it enabled the study to gather both quantitative and qualitative data.

Population and Sampling

The targeted population had a total of 1165 people. The sampling procedures employed in selecting the required sample for the study were probability and non-probability. Simple random sampling was used to get 32 out of 188 public primary schools. Under non-probability sampling, a purposive sampling procedure was used to select the District School

Quality Assurance Officer (DSQAO) and Heads of schools because of their uniqueness in the area. Under probability sampling, simple random sampling was used to select Teachers from 32 public primary schools to reduce biases. The study used a sample of 289 respondents based on Krejcie and Morgan's Table involving one (1) DSQAO, (32) heads of schools and 256 teachers.

Validity and Reliability

To determine the validity and reliability of the research instruments, the study employed content validity and Cronbach Alpha (with a reliability coefficient of 0.8). Pilot testing was conducted at one public primary school which was not among the sampled schools, where various categories of respondents were included for ensuring validity. The result enabled the researchers to modify the instruments to make them appropriate for valid and reliable data. The use of the two approach guaranteed data triangulation.

Instruments

Semi-structured interview and questionnaire were used in data collection. Data from such respondents as heads of schools and DSQAO were interrogated using interview guide questions. Open and closed-ended questionnaire was directed to teachers. The questionnaires administered return was 100%.

Treatment of Data

Analysis of quantitative data was done descriptively (frequencies and percentages) and then presented in a table with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative data was coded as

collected from the open-ended questionnaire and in-depth interview. Their responses were summarized to get categories and descriptions given in narratives.

Ethical considerations

The researchers requested authorization from Same District Executive Director (DED) to gather data from the target population while complying with ethical conditions. In addition, the participants' free and informed consent were considered. Furthermore, considerations were given to participants' concerns regarding their anonymity, confidentiality and privacy.

Results and Discussions

The study sought to establish challenges facing the implementation of competency-Based Curriculum in Same District, Tanzania.

In summary, as seen in Table 1, teachers were asked to put a tick against statements/phrases about challenges facing the implementation of CBC. Results show that close to half of the teachers (45.7%) considered all the listed items as challenges facing the implementation of CBC. The challenges include large class sizes, limited teachers' knowledge of the concept and objective of the competence-based curriculum due to lack of in-service training and inadequate teaching and learning materials. Additionally, shortage of teachers, limited school infrastructure (insufficient classrooms, pupils' furniture and electricity) in some primary schools were reported as challenges.

Table 1: Challenges Facing the Implementation of CBC

SN	Challenge	f	%
1	Large class size	46	18.0
2	Inadequate teaching and learning materials	53	20.7
3	Limited knowledge about the competence-based curriculum	40	15.6
4	All the above-mentioned	117	45.7
Total		256	100.0

Large Class Size Challenge

In Table 1, large class size emerged as a challenge in implementing the CBC. Teacher respondents reported that the number of pupils in their classrooms was too big against the existing capacity of classrooms. This suggests that there are more than 40 pupils in the classrooms. Additionally, data from interview agreed with the quantitative findings. During interview sessions, one of the head teachers commented:

Classrooms are overcrowded, making it difficult for teachers to implement the learner-centred approaches. With 90 students in standard IV and 4 students in one desk, students struggle to master reading, writing and arithmetic. This makes participatory methods difficult, leading teachers to rely on lecturing and question-and-answer methods (Semi-structured interview, HT10, June, 2024).

Presenting a similar view, a SQAQO had this to say:

My school's classrooms are overcrowded, posing challenges for teachers to implement the competence-based curriculum. Teachers need mobility during teaching and learning, allowing learners to do group discussions and demonstrate their competence. This results in the use of the teacher-centred approach (Semi-structured interview, SQAQ, 2024).

The statements show that overcrowded classrooms limit the ability of teachers to teach using participatory techniques. Similarly, Makunja (2016) revealed that overcrowded classrooms impact interactions between students and teachers as well as interactions among students during group projects in community secondary schools in Morogoro, Tanzania. For instance, due to an overcrowded atmosphere, teachers failed to help certain pupils who had learning challenges.

Additionally, other authors found that while small class sizes enabled teachers to be more competent and students to perform better, crowded classrooms hindered the capacity of teachers to teach utilizing participative strategies (Mathias et al., 2023). According to Nyamwange (2020), CBC requires small classes for teachers to give personal attention to each learner. These findings agree with (World Bank Report, 2023) in that, the implementation of student-centred pedagogy is impeded by the size of their classes. Small classes improve interactions, assessment, and feedback, while large classes negatively impact students' assessment and feedback, affecting the implementation of competence-based curriculum and quality education. Consequently, the teachers did not implement learner-centred interactive teaching strategies as required by the CBC due to large class sizes.

Inadequate Teaching and Learning Materials

Inadequate teaching and learning resources emerged as challenges in the implementation of CBC as it appears in Table 1. During the interview schedule, one of the school heads had this to report:

In my school, teaching and learning materials are inadequate, particularly in science and technology subjects. Students in standards V and VI lack practical computer skills and internet use, hindering effective learning. Instead, teachers rely on tablets or borrowing from neighbouring

schools, and they sometimes use textbook-drawn or imaginary pictures.

Additionally, inadequate teaching and learning materials was expressed during the interview schedules where one SQAQ revealed,

To be honest, teachers face challenges in implementing CBC through participatory teaching due to scarcity of intellectual or scientific teaching materials. To overcome this, they are encouraged to be innovative in creating simple materials that reflect their environment. They can use resources like tablets or personal computers and group learners for easy teaching and learning.

The findings match with what Sifuna and Obonyo (2019) in Kenya, revealing that due to the low funding for education, Sub-Saharan African nations experience shortage of teaching and learning resources. As a result, rote learning occurs, which ultimately impairs learners' critical thinking abilities. Hence the absence of essential teaching resources in the public schools hinders the use of learner-centred methods.

Limited Knowledge about Competence-Based Curriculum

In Table 1, quantitative results shows that teachers had limited knowledge about competence-based curriculum. Some teachers possessed inadequate knowledge, techniques and skills required to implement CBC in the classrooms, which led them to resort to teacher-centred approaches.

Teachers' knowledge is the foundation for effective implementation of CBC. Njiru and Odundo (2024) in Kenya revealed that, for the competency-based curriculum to be applied successfully, teachers must possess the necessary knowledge and technical abilities because they are responsible for translating the curriculum's principles and objectives into classroom practice. Additionally, Chepkurui et al. (2023) examined the influence of selected teacher characteristics on the implementation of the competency-based curriculum (CBC) in primary schools in Molo Sub-county, Nakuru County, Kenya. They revealed that teachers' qualifications, knowledge, understanding of curriculum content and technical skills are important for the successful implementation of CBC. The curriculum cannot accomplish its intended aims of developing students' abilities for success in the modern world if

teachers are not aware of the CBC concepts, methods and assessments as their expertise in both subject matter and pedagogical strategies directly influences the effectiveness of the CBC.

Finally, close to half of the respondents indicated that all the items in Table 1 are challenges that face the implementation of the CBC. This finding concurs with the findings of Mathias et al. (2023), who found that teachers faced various challenges in implementing CBC in Magu District, Tanzania. The challenges included large class sizes, infrastructure shortages, insufficient staff and inadequate knowledge. In addition, Makunja's (2016) study identified challenges in the implementing CBC to include insufficient resources, overcrowded classrooms, students' readiness and low ability of secondary education students.

Since your study used mixed approach, findings had to emerge from both quantitative and qualitative sources. The rest of the findings below were from qualitative data alone. Thus, omitted.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the study concludes that the successful implementation of the Competence-Based Curriculum in public primary schools faces significant challenges that hinder its effectiveness. The teachers did not implement learner-centred interactive teaching strategies as required by the CBC due to large class sizes and absence of essential teaching resources. Some teachers did not possess adequate knowledge, techniques and skills required to implement CBC in classrooms, which led them to resort to teacher-centred approaches. Since teachers seem to resort to teacher-centred approaches, this condition reduces the involvement of learners in the teaching and learning process, which would make learners more active and engaged in various ways for effective learning and developing competencies as targeted by the CBC.

Recommendation

Based on the conclusions, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology through the Tanzania Institute of Education should organise in-service training for primary school teachers to equip and update them with the knowledge on the curriculum and competencies in using different teaching methods as demanded by the competence-based curriculum. The study also recommends that, the government should provide

adequate instructional resources, such as ICT equipment and audio-visual materials, and provide training on ICT equipment use and software application. The local government should influence public-private partnerships or non-governmental organizations to sponsor educational equipment and school infrastructure.

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