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**The Challenge Face in the Implementation of Competency-Based
Curriculum in Northern Kenya**

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Abstract

Purpose: Kenya is in the process of changing its educational system from one that is content-based to one that is competency-based. When implementing a new curriculum, teachers are likely to encounter difficulties, particularly with regard to the divisions of material and subjects, underlying presumptions, objectives, teaching strategies, and assessment techniques. In this regard, this study aimed to look into the challenges that northern Kenya had in implementing the competency-based curriculum successfully. The study's particular goals were to: Analyze the potential of the competency-based curriculum (CBC) and its effects on the stability of the education sector in northern Kenya, which will depend on the infrastructure available for its implementation; the results of this assessment will assist the government in implementing the competency-based curriculum. The 8-4-4 curriculum which is planned to be replaced by CBC had been implemented mostly by applying the transmission approach and children were reported to be attending primary school and not learning (KNEC, 2010 & UWEZO, 2013).

Methodology: The study employed a descriptive research design. Simple random sampling was employed. The study had a sample size of 45 primary school teachers and 15 head teachers. A questionnaire and interview schedules were used to collect data from the respondents.

Findings: Teacher quality determines the quality of curriculum implementation and one means of ensuring teacher quality is by making continuing teacher professional development available for teachers. The country should take into consideration teacher preparedness for the implementation of the new curriculum and whether the country is fully prepared to organize a teacher professional development program for sustained teacher quality.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study's foundation was Dewey's Social Constructivism Theory, which highlights how interaction and experience are the fundamental building blocks of human experience. The study suggests that in order to foster a positive attitude among teachers and successfully implement a competency-based curriculum, the Ministry of Education should increase its investment in teacher training and involve them in the curriculum change process. The study established that there was little extent of parental involvement in curriculum implementation in schools. Similarly, Sifuna and Obonyo (2019) examined the challenges hindering the effective implementation of CBC in Kenya. The study highlighted that there was an inadequacy of instructional materials and a lack of participation by parents in the curriculum implementation process.

Keywords: *Challenges, Implementation, of Competency-Based Curriculum and Professional Support*

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INTRODUCTION

The implementation of a competency-based curriculum is a crucial educational reform that aims to foster a more holistic and skills-oriented approach to learning. In the context of Northern Kenya, where educational challenges are compounded by socio-economic disparities and cultural diversity, the adoption of such a curriculum presents a unique set of challenges. This study aimed to reach a pro on Competency-Based Education (CBE) through the opinions of Educational Sciences experts and to review the literature on CBE. In this study, convergent design, one of the mixed methods research, was used, and a semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data. This paper explores the challenges teachers face in the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in public primary schools in Mandera County. Kenya rolled out the CBC in primary schools in 2018 with the aim of equipping learners with competencies and skills to meet the human resource aspirations of Kenya's Vision 2030 blueprint for development. However, studies have reported minimal use of CBC teaching-learning approaches in public primary schools. Therefore, the researcher has to establish the challenges hindering the effective implementation of the Curriculum in the schools. Most of the teachers are products of the old 8-4-4 system of education. This makes it difficult for them to know what is required to be taught to students undergoing a different curriculum. Inadequate professional preparation the Kenyan teachers. The new education system, unlike the 8-4-4 system, would have to take a different approach which is a strong pupil-centered teaching method. The teachers are not yet familiar with the approaches hence this might sabotage the learner's knowledge.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Challenges Facing Teachers in Implementing CBC in Schools

According to the theory behind competency-based curriculum (CBC), most students will become competent in the designated subject matter if they are allowed to move at their own pace and have their learning experiences tailored to their needs and interests (Priest, Rudenstine, and Weisstein 2012; Steele, Lewis, Santibanez, Faxon-Mills, Rudnick, Stecher and Hamilton 2014; Sturgis and Casey 2018). This hypothesis refutes the idea that learning occurs in a specific location and at a specific pace (Le, Wolfe, and Steinberg 2014; Ryan and Cox 2017; Spady 1977). Under the competency-based curriculum (CBC), every student aims to reach the intended level of proficiency. Some people will be able to complete this quickly, while others will require more time. Furthermore, it's possible that some students already possessed the information and abilities before enrolling in their present course of study. It's possible that their prior experiences helped them acquire these competencies. To advance in their learning, they will only need to demonstrate that they have mastered these competencies. It is clear that time is viewed as the variable and performance as the constant in CBE, an outcomes-focused methodology (Stafford 2019).

Competency-based teaching-learning approaches have gained popularity among stakeholders in the education sector globally. However, studies have demonstrated that many countries that have implemented competency-based approaches to teaching and learning have experienced a number of challenges that have hampered the smooth and effective implementation of the curriculum. For instance, in Ghana, a study was carried out by Acquah, & Frimpong (2017) who sought to establish the challenges facing the implementation of Competency Based Training Programs (CBT) in training institutions. The study reported that implementing the Competency-based approaches had contributed immensely to the training of highly skilled graduates. Further, the study highlighted that in spite of the realized positive outcomes, the curriculum had not been effectively implemented in some of the training institutions due to inadequate funding of the institutions, lack of infrastructure development, and lack of policy

guidelines in the institutions. The findings from this study imply that the implementation of CBC can be challenged by a number of factors in the schools; however, the findings may not apply in the Kenyan context. Therefore, there was a need for a study to be conducted in Kenya to unravel the challenges affecting the implementation of CBC in schools. The study was based on the Concern-Based Adoption Model by Hall and Rutherford (2008) and targeted all 150 public primary schools in the Mandera sub-county.

In Tanzania, a study by Makunja (2016) investigated challenges facing teachers in implementing the Competency-based Curriculum in Tanzania. The study established that teachers faced a lot of challenges that impeded effective implementation of the curriculum in teaching and learning. The study highlighted the lack of in-service training of teachers on CBC, lack of sufficient instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, and low ability of children as the major challenges hindering effective implementation of the curriculum in Tanzania. In light of the findings, the study recommended that teachers should be allowed to participate in developing the curriculum. The study also recommended that the Ministry of Education should devise ways of providing instructional materials that are consistent with the CBC. This implies that training teachers on how to implement the curriculum, provision of instructional materials and enough classrooms are crucial for the effective implementation of CBC.

In Kenya, Momanyi and Rop (2020) conducted a survey in Kilif Sub-County which sought to establish challenges faced by teachers when implementing CBC. The results showed that teachers' lack of adequate knowledge and skills on how to implement the curriculum was the major factor hindering the effective implementation of the CBC. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education and KICD should provide more in-service training sessions for teachers. This will help bridge the capacity gaps in pedagogy, assessment, and preparation of teaching materials. This means if teachers lack adequate knowledge and skills on CBC, they will experience challenges when implementing the curriculum.

Teachers are likely to face challenges when implementing a new curriculum as highlighted by Wambua & Waweru (2019) who conducted a study to establish the challenges facing the implementation of CBC in all public primary schools in Machakos County. The study established that teachers were not fully prepared for the implementation of CBC and there were inadequate staff, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of adequate teaching and learning resources. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education should invest more in teacher training and involve teachers in the curriculum reform process to change their attitudes towards the curriculum for effective implementation. The study highlights a number of challenges hindering the effective implementation of CBC but it only focused on lower primary schools, it is, therefore, important to establish the challenges facing pre-primary school teachers in implementing the Curriculum.

Though research on CBC lags behind practice, interest in CBC is growing in both in primary and post-secondary education due to advancements in learning technologies (Ryan and Cox 2017). Past research has looked at how CBC is implemented and how various CBC strategies affect student achievement. Furthermore, a number of characteristics that support and impede the application of CBC have been studied. These investigations, however, have not been able to combine the pertinent literature or add to the body of scientific knowledge regarding CBC. Research that has been done also doesn't tell us what is known about CBC or how to move forward with the study of the variables influencing implementation. According to Morrison

(2018, 25), "the lack of a common framework and vernacular" is the reason why competency-based learning and CBC are used interchangeably.

Taking these into account, the study's two main goals are to gather the body of knowledge on competency-based Curriculum by reviewing international literature and to conceptually come to a consensus on the subject matter based on the views of educational science experts. In order to accomplish this goal, this research aims to look into the following queries.

1. How are these ideas of skill, ability, competence, proficiency, qualification, learning outcome, and competency-based Curriculum viewed by specialists in the field of educational sciences?
2. What connection exists between competency-based Curriculum and qualifications frameworks?
3. What is the theory and practical application of competency-based Curriculum?

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Mandera County. The County was purposively selected based on the reports which indicated that there is minimal use of competency-based approaches in most primary schools in the County studies (Ondimu, 2019; KNUT, 2019). The study employed a descriptive research design. Simple random sampling was employed to sample 15% of the total number of public primary schools in Mandera County. Headteachers and teachers from the sampled schools participated in the study. Therefore, the study had a sample size of 45 primary school teachers and 15 head teachers. A questionnaire and interview schedules were used to collect data from the respondents.

FINDINGS

Challenges Teachers Face in the Implementation of the CBC

Lack of Adequate Teaching-Learning Materials

Primary school teachers pointed out that they lacked adequate CBC instructional materials. The teachers reported that they did not have adequate textbooks and activity workbooks for learners. In addition, the teachers explained that sometimes they were forced to request parents to buy workbooks for their children, but some parents did not have the financial ability to do so. In such situations, the learners without workbooks were forced to use the common exercise books to do the same work others do use workbooks. This was reported to be hectic for the teachers who were then forced to copy what was in the workbooks in the learners' exercise books.

Inadequate Training of Teachers on CBC

The primary school teachers indicated that they embraced CBC however, they were not able to effectively implement it due to a lack of adequate knowledge and skills on how to implement the curriculum. This shows that primary school teachers have not received adequate training on how to implement the curriculum. The findings agree with the findings by KNUT (2019) who reported that teachers had difficulties in implementing the curriculum because they lacked adequate training. The report further highlighted that CBC training sessions were inadequate and ineffective and the duration was short. This finding is also in line with what was reported by Rop (2019) who conducted a survey in Kilif Sub-County which sought to establish challenges faced by teachers when implementing CBC. The results showed that teachers' lack of adequate knowledge and skills on how to implement the curriculum was the major factor

hindering the effective implementation of the CBC. In the same breath, a study by Paulo (2014) on pre-service teacher preparedness in integrating competency-based curriculum in secondary schools in Tanzania, reported that the pre-service teachers were not trained on new assessment methods and how to prepare lesson plans as stipulated in the Competency-Based Curriculum. As such, they were still using traditional methods of teaching and assessment.

Large Class Size and an Inadequate Number of Teachers

In addition, the primary school teachers reported that they experienced difficulties handling many learners in classrooms. The teachers explained that the curriculum requires learning to be hands-on, which means that each learner should be involved in the learning activities. Teachers expressed that this was not practical in public primary schools where enrollment is so high with one teacher in each grade. The same sentiments were shared by the center managers as reported: This shows that the number of pupils per class is not manageable with respect to the number of teachers and facilities provided for the implementation of CBC in public primary schools. This means that the teachers are not able to implement the Curriculum as expected. This finding is in agreement with the findings of a study carried out by Wadesango and Kurebwa (2016) on the effects of large class sizes on effective curriculum implementation which found that the current teacher-to-pupil ratio of 1:100 was too large. Hence, the head teachers and teachers felt that it should be reduced to as low as 1:50. The respondents felt that a large class is not conducive to catering to individual differences. The findings also agree with the findings by Hipolite (2019) which explored the challenges of implementing CBC in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality Tanzania. The study reported that teachers were faced with many challenges including handling a large number of pupils in classes, which hindered the effective implementation of the Curriculum.

Inadequate Training of Teachers on CBC

The primary school teachers indicated that they embraced CBC however, they were not able to effectively implement it due to lack of adequate knowledge and skills on how to implement the curriculum. This was also echoed during the interviews with the center managers as reported; This shows that primary school teachers have not received adequate training on how to implement the curriculum. The findings agree with the findings by KNUT (2019) who reported that teachers had difficulties in implementing the curriculum because they lacked adequate training. The report further highlighted that CBC training sessions were inadequate and ineffective and the duration was short. This finding is also in line with what was reported by Momanyi (2019) who conducted a survey in Kilif Sub-County which sought to establish challenges faced by teachers when implementing CBC. The results showed that teachers' lack of adequate knowledge and skills on how to implement the curriculum was the major factor hindering the effective implementation of the CBC. In the same breath, a study by Paulo (2014) on pre-service teacher preparedness in integrating competency-based curriculum in secondary schools in Tanzania, reported that the pre-service teachers were not trained on new assessment methods and how to prepare lesson plans as stipulated in the Competency-Based Curriculum. As such, they were still using traditional methods of teaching and assessment.

Lack of Adequate School Infrastructure

The teachers indicated that they experienced difficulties in implementing CBC due to a lack of adequate learning facilities such as classrooms, chairs, and tables. The teachers reported that most of the public pre-primary schools had high enrollment yet, there were inadequate classrooms to accommodate the high numbers. They further explained that the situation was

getting worse each day to the extent that two learners shared one chair while others lacked tables to write on. Similarly, the center managers also indicated that the lack of adequate infrastructure in public pre-primary schools was a big challenge to the implementation of the curriculum as reported: Based on the responses, it can be concluded that most schools have inadequate facilities to cater to the teachers' and learners' needs. The situation has been aggravated by the upsurge in enrollment due to the implementation of the free primary education strategy. Similar findings were reported by KNUT(2019) who highlighted that implementation of the curriculum was a challenge due to overcrowded classrooms due to extremely high learners' enrolment and lack of permanent classrooms which has led institutions to combine some learners of different grades. The findings also concur with the findings of a study carried out by Njoroge (2013) that assessed factors affecting curriculum implementation in public primary schools in Suswa Division, Narok County, Kenya and revealed that inadequate physical facilities affect curriculum implementation. It was also established that materials and facilities were inadequate for effective curriculum implementation. The findings also agree with the findings by Makunja (2016), who investigated challenges facing teachers in implementing the CBC in Tanzania. The study highlighted lack of infrastructure and overcrowded.

Lack of Cooperation from Parents

Finally, the teachers reported that they had difficulties dealing with parents who were not cooperative. The teachers explained that the parents lacked an adequate understanding of the curriculum hence; they were not supportive of implementing it. Similarly, the Center Managers observed the same as reported;

This is an indicator that parents lack a proper understanding of the curriculum hence; they are not fully participating in the process of implementing it. This finding agrees with the findings of Kariuki's (2014) study that evaluated the influence of parental involvement in the implementation of the curriculum in public primary schools in Ndeiya zone, Kiambu County, Kenya, and found that lack of involvement of parents in school activities hinders efforts to actualize the curriculum. The same was echoed by Olibie (2014) who investigated the influence of parental involvement in curriculum implementation as perceived by Nigeria Secondary School Principals. The study established that there was little extent of parental involvement in curriculum implementation in schools. Similarly, Sifuna and Obonyo (2019) examined the challenges hindering the effective implementation of CBC in Kenya. The study highlighted that there was an inadequacy of instructional materials and a lack of participation by parents in the curriculum implementation process.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The study concluded that the implementation of CBC is greatly challenged by a lack of adequate learning facilities, lack of adequate training of teachers on CBC, large class sizes, lack of adequate teachers, lack of adequate teaching-learning materials, ignorance, and lack of cooperation from parents who argued that basic education is free in public pre-primary school so anything that demanded money made them react against the Curriculum.

Recommendation

The study recommended that the Nairobi City County Government should construct more classrooms, employ more teachers, and provide adequate teaching-learning materials to cater

to the high enrollment in public pre-primary schools. In addition, the County government in collaboration with the schools should sensitize parents to help them understand what CBC is all about and their role in the implementation process.

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