

Research Article

THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS ON QUALITY IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPETENCY BASED CURRICULUM TO GRADE ONE LEARNER'S IN MBOONI EAST SUB-COUNTY, MAKUENI COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to underscore the extent to which teacher characteristics influence quality implementation of competency-based curriculum to Grade one learner. This study was guided by the Curriculum Implementation Theory and the Technology, Pedagogy and Content (TPACK) Model. The theory postulates that the success of any education programme is determined by the management of the support facilities, the teacher's ability and the clarity of the implementer. The model emphasizes the role of Information Communication Technology and content mastery in the implementation of any new educational programme. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and targets to collect data from a sample size of 77 respondents who will include the head teachers, the grade one teachers and the curriculum support officers from Mbooni East Sub-County, Makueni County, Kenya, using random sampling and census sampling techniques. A pilot study was done using 11 respondents from non-participating schools in the neighbouring Mwala sub-county. The questionnaire was the main research instrument but other instruments were an interview guide and an observation checklist. The researcher supervisors, who are subject experts, were used to check the validity of the research instruments while test-retest technique was used to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire. The researcher personally collected data using the drop-and-pick method for questionnaires, conducted interviews to key informants and also filled the observation checklist. Data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically along the specific objectives and presented in narrative forms whereas the quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 23) and presented using tables, charts and graphs. The study recommends that the Kenya Institute for the Curriculum Development should highly involve teachers in curriculum change process to create a positive attitude among them for successful implementation of Competency Based Curriculum. The TSC should also ensure that they deploy more female teachers since they are perceived as better implementers of the curriculum in lower grades. As well Ministry of Education in partnership with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development and Teachers Service Commission should organize CBC trainings more often. The trainings should also be organized during school holidays. This will give teachers a chance to attend the trainings and improve their skills on the new curriculum. Ministry of Education should come up with a program of in-service training programs to ensure continuous professional development of teachers who are the curriculum implementers. Moreover, KICD should prepare soft copies of schemes of work and lesson plans for teachers in order to ease the burden.

Keywords: Competency Based Curriculum, Grade One, Curriculum Implementation, Teacher Characteristics.

INTRODUCTION

The Concept of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) Implementation

CBC is a practical-oriented approach to any education system as it shades light on the accession of life skills and explains the mastery that is required for a person to be momentous in society (Savage, 1993). Moshia (2012) points out that CBC seeks to improve learners' skills of understanding to learn and how to engage in such a socially eclectic world. According to Wood (2001), the notion for learners to gain skill-based learning to a great extent demands that we have a learner-centered technique. Harris, Guthrie, Hobert, and Lundberg, (1995) concur that CBC is the likely answer in the current intricate economy which requires that people are skilled to become productive in this current world.

Accordingly, a competency-based curriculum should accentuate competency-based learning that centers on the apprehension of concepts, skills, and attitudes that ultimately requires some calls for alteration in the way we teach, learn, and assess (Posner, 1995). The

Tanzania Institute of Education (2010) stated that "a knowledge-based curriculum should highlight the theoretical content and should be rooted in traditional instruction and learning approaches." Most governments in conjunction with their respective educational designs are implementing either OBE or CBE primarily for boosting the academics and learning standards of all learners (Baron and Boschee, 1996). These two are ideologies and instructional strategies planned to educate all children holistically and give each student the possibility of learning and being proficient in his or her career. Academic institutions that use OBE or CBE are expected to decide a set of general outcomes or abilities that describes the learners' behaviors and qualities that graduates should possess. Some distinct proficiencies or competencies should be picked from wider results to give the basis for planning and systematizing subject curriculum, instruction, and review of the subject area content.

Teacher meditative thinking is essential in directing teachers to gain a deeper understanding of the main areas of competencies that are more often than not overlooked. These involve reflection "in action" and reflection "on action" according to Cheetham and Chiver, (2005). They declare that cognitive processing of relevant knowledge based on their interactions with both academic and non-academic circumstances they faced is important. This means that Competency Based Education does not occur in a vacuum but is impacted by the contextual and cultural factors of the localities (Pithers and Soden,

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2000). Competency-Based Education challenges learners, graduates, and practitioners to immerse themselves in an endless reflection and how they employ the competencies in the classrooms and communities (Bogo *et al.*, 2011).

Teacher Characteristics and the Implementation of Grade One CBC

Teachers are educators. Professional educators should develop as lifelong learners, reflective thinkers, and ethical leaders exemplifying the ideals of literacy, scholarship, and social justice in a diverse and ever-changing world (Albee & Piveral, 2003). The dispositions or the characteristics of the educator thus have a direct impact on all with whom he or she connects. Teacher traits can be defined as a particular teacher's special qualities; this can also be a teacher's perception of CBC. Teacher characteristics may also include the teacher's preparation for the implementation of the curriculum. This may include training which has to be a priority to actualize reforms in education (Gatlin, 2009). The teacher should be able to prepare all professional documents, for instance, schemes of work and lesson plans for effective teaching and learning in class.

Teacher's Attitude and the Implementation of Grade One CBC

The concept and knowledge of CBC should be circulated to all teachers and relevant professionals in a more detailed manner. This could be done by cultivating critical reflections that would assist professionals to question their CBC speculations on the existing social, political and cultural, ethical, and moral beliefs. Roberts and Palviak (2002) indicated that CBC has not been embraced by many educators because of reasons that include and are not restricted to a lack of understanding of the CBC concept, lack of understanding of competence-based pedagogy practices, fear of change, cultural conditions and the use of different methodologies. Educators are critical and important stakeholders that decide how the school policies and curriculum is implemented (Porter, Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2015). However, this would rely on their perspective and how they look at the curriculum. In a study carried out in Tanzania on the change from a knowledge-based to a competence-based curriculum among secondary schools, it was documented that some teachers took the newly published textbooks as irrelevant while others took them as unserviceable and complex (Luhambati, 2013). Eggen and Kauchak (2002), assert that teachers' stances and mindsets are vital for the effective teaching-learning process as they influence trainees' achievements. This is because, teachers determine activities based on their attitudes, experience, and opinions based on core functions in the school. The competency-based curriculum does not exist in a vacuum but is influenced by contextual and artistic factors in some localities (Pithers and Soden, 2000). The contextual and community's cultural practices, for example, challenge teachers to make reflections on their perspectives, perceptions, and understanding of CBC, and how these constructs influence the teaching of competence skills (Eraut, 1994). This shows that CBC does not only perform on learners' behaviors but at the same time their meditative practices, cognitive processes, logic, and use of the competencies; knowledge, values, and skills. It can be concluded that for the CBC curriculum to be victorious, educators ought to own the curriculum (REB, 2015). McMillan (2000), asserts that teachers require that they have sufficient knowledge and understanding in teaching to be able to conduct students' assessments. Research has shown that teachers who have enough knowledge of pedagogy and assessment are in a position to combine it effectively into their teaching and learning. They were likewise found in utilizing effective strategies, tactics, and strategies to improve students' abilities and competencies. Implementation of the CBC needs technology and particularly ICT. A study carried out in Canada by Hardy (2003), explained that pre-

service and in-service teachers explained that they were not well prepared with the ICT skills that are important for handling and use of ICT tools that are required for the effective implementation of technology in their teaching and learning. It was established that happened although teachers had been formally acquainted with how to use computer technologies in teaching and learning they could not do so practically.

Teacher Training and the Implementation of Grade One CBC

A teacher can also be directed to as a curriculum implementer. A teacher's role is to translate the curriculum technique into an operating curriculum by combining efforts with those of the learners and other key stakeholders as explained by Mkpa (1987). The teacher's role is to implement the curriculum and the content. This is not done as it is but by breaking the content into manageable units. The teacher decodes the curriculum intentions for the learners into a reality. It should be borne in mind that the implementation of the curriculum depends on understanding the curriculum design well. Suffice it to say that teachers may need to create lesson plans and schemes of work within a given framework. The teacher always should implement a curriculum that meets the needs of students (Carl, 2009). Competencies and curriculum changes require that radical changes be made in teacher training, and teacher reflections on professionalism. It also requires the process of educational institutions' reflections on pedagogy and assessment (Halpern, 1999). CBC is concerned with teacher reflections on national objectives, and competencies, and constantly looking for different means of ensuring adequate professional performance. For graduates and experts to be to succeed in their work, they need to have these capabilities. These are understanding the subject matter, scope, and ability to do the needed empirical or theoretical skills (Stewart *et al.*, 1983; Cook, 1963). Content abilities in CBC and competency are important in teaching and specifically thinking skills and listening skills. The success of identified competencies in any educational institution would rely on the competency and proficiency of professionals. Suffice it to say, that instructors who possess efficacious listening capabilities play a major function in classroom teaching (Arcavi and Isoda 2007; Findlay and Drake, 1989). School significance depends on the personality of the teacher in terms of the skills and knowledge he or she possesses. This means that a teacher who comprehends the needs of the learner is capable of making learners have good outcomes. The usefulness of a teacher is central to reforming the education system. According to UNESCO (2014), preschool teachers' capability in implementing CBC in teaching and learning, will lead to the efficacy of curriculum implementation. Teachers need meaningful knowledge, skills, and the ability to interact with all the learners setting a manageable standard, with the knowledge on selecting instructional materials that can acclimate learners at different levels (Zeiger 2018). This encourages learning that is practical even in the future, thus calling for all teachers to be well-trained to implement CBC. Chishimba (2001) states that the competence-based teacher education program development should assure that the competencies to be developed and demonstrated are specified in advance. In a CBC curriculum, the designer identifies what the learners are supposed to attain well in advance.

A teacher's ability and usefulness in carrying out curriculum implementation largely depend on variables such as knowledge, experience, qualifications, availability of resources, and motivational issues among others factors. Teachers should have an adequate understanding of ways of implementing curriculum and suitably using resource materials. This is because, as a source of knowledge, teaching and learning resources should help attain the various goals and objectives of teaching. Teachers should choose those fabrics that are related to the curriculum and which represent the key factors

related to a particular moment, epoch, or a particular central thorny question or problem.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which teacher characteristics affect the implementation quality of competency-based curriculum in Mbooni East Sub County, Makueni County. The study was guided by the objective to determine how teacher characteristics affect the implementation quality of competency-based curriculum in Mbooni East Sub County, Makueni County.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted an elaborate survey design. Kombo and Orodho, (2002) explains that a descriptive survey research design is used to collect information about people’s views and attitudes towards an issue through different methods and instruments of data collection. According to Awuor, (2018), a descriptive study design is one in which information is collected without changing the environment and it is used to describe the characteristics of a population and the phenomenon under study. This design will enable the researcher to determine the extent to which the variables relate with each other in the quality implementation of the competency-based education in Kenya.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

How Teacher Characteristics affect the implementation quality of competency-based curriculum in Mbooni East Sub County, Makueni County

As per the objective, the study sought to determine how teacher characteristics affect the implementation quality of competency-based curriculum in Mbooni East Sub County, Makueni County. The respondents involved were the head teachers, grade one teachers, and CSOs. In this study, 36 questionnaires were administered to Grade one teachers and, in return, 36 questionnaires were filled and returned. At the same time, the researcher also carried out an interview among 36 head teachers and 30 participated. In addition, the researcher carried out an interview to all the 5 Curriculum Support Officers. This yielded response rates as shown in Table 1

Table 1: Response Rate

Respondents' Category	Sampled size	No. collected	Return rate (%)
Head teachers	36	30	83.3
Grade one teachers	36	36	100.0
Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs)	5	5	100.0
Total	77	71	Ave (94.4%)

Table 2 indicates that the average questionnaire return rate was 94.4% which was considered adequate for analysis. Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) indicated that a response rate of above 70% is adequate for analysis. Rowley (2014) noted that a high response rate results in highly credible findings. The higher response rate was achieved due to the researchers’ effort to closely monitor the data collection process and constant communication with the respondents.

Demographic Information of Respondents

Background information of teachers focused on gender, highest academic qualification. This was to find out whether there is gender balance/parity in the teaching fraternity, and whether the teachers were qualified to teach in primary schools. Responses on teachers’ background information are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic Information of Teachers by Gender

Gender	Grade one teachers		Head teachers		CSOs	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Male	1	2.8	22	73.3	5	100.0
Female	35	97.2	8	26.7	0	0.0
Total	36	100.0	30	100.0	5	100.0
Academic achievement						
College	27	75.0	17	56.7	0	0.0
University	9	25.0	13	43.3	5	100.0
Total	36	100.0	30	100.0	5	100.0

Table 3 shows that majority of the teachers 97.2% were female and 75% had attained college education. This implies that teaching in lower primary school grades is more preferred by the females than males. This could be due to the reason that females have better abilities to deal with younger children than males. Children at the age of six years may also feel more comfortable around women who may perceive as their caring mothers. The data also show that all the teachers were qualified to teach in primary schools since they all had a diploma in teaching as recommended by the teachers’ service commission.

Teacher Characteristics

The first objective sought to find out how teacher characteristics affect quality implementation of CBC in Mbooni East Sub-County, Makueni County. Teachers were asked to tick on the extent to which they agree with statements related to teacher characteristics. Findings are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Influence of Teacher Characteristics

Key: S-A-Strong Agree, A-Agree N-Neutral, D- Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree

Statements	SA		A		N		D		SD		M
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
I have received in-service training in readiness for the implementation of quality CBC	3	8.3	31	86.1	1	2.8	1	2.8	0	0	2.00
I visit other schools for bench-marking on the quality implementation of CBC	1	2.8	3	8.3	0	0	17	47.2	15	41.7	4.17
All grade one teachers have fully embraced the CBC	11	30.6	14	38.9	10	27.8	1	2.8	0	0	2.46
Female teachers are better suited to handle grade one learners more than the male teachers	4	11.1	22	61.1	8	22.2	2	5.6	0	0	2.22
I attend professional development programs to acquire more training on CBC implementation	16	44.4	10	27.8	4	11.1	4	11.1	2	5.6	2.26

Table 4 shows that a majority (94.4%) have received in-service training in readiness for the implementation of quality CBC (2.8%) of teachers were neutral on training in readiness for the implementation of CBC and (2.8%) of grade one teachers disagreed that they had received in-service training in readiness for implementation of CBC. However, (88.9%) of the teachers disagreed that they visit other schools for benchmarking on the quality implementation of CBC. The study also reveals that a fair majority (69.5%) of grade one teachers have fully embraced the CBC, whereas 27.8% were neutral and (2.8%) disagreed that they have fully embraced CBC. The table also shows that a majority (72.2%) were female teachers who are better suited to handle grade one learners more than the male teachers, (22.2%) of the teachers were neutral and (5.6%) disagreed that female teachers were best suited to handle grade one learners. The study established that, grade one teachers attend professional development programmes to acquire more training on CBC implementation. This view was supported by a majority (72.2%) of teachers who agreed that they attended professional development programs to acquire more training on CBC implementation. To achieve this, teachers attend recommended training to improve skills in competency based curriculum. Findings also confirm that female teachers are better competency based curriculum than male teachers. These findings agree with McMillan's (2000), study findings that indicated that educators who had adequate knowledge on assessments were capable of incorporate it well into their teaching and learning. They are positioned to use efficient approaches, techniques and strategies to improve their students' competencies. Teacher characteristics may also include teacher's preparation towards rolling out of the curriculum. This may include training which must be a prioritized in order to actualize reforms in education (Gatlin, 2009). The teacher should be able to prepare all professional documents, for instance, schemes of work and lesson plan for effective teaching and learning in class.

Thematic Analysis of qualitative Findings on the Influence of Teacher Characteristics on Implementation of CBC

The researcher conducted interviews among primary school head teachers to find out how teacher characteristics affect the implementation of CBC. The head teachers were asked whether the grade one teachers attended in-service training in readiness for the implementation of CBC. Two of the head teachers interviewed had this to say,

"Grade one has attended several in-service trainings in readiness for implementation of CBC. These trainings are organized at cluster level and zonal levels; she has received adequate training on CBC curriculum and its implementation."

"The grade one teacher is adequately trained because she attends all in-service trainings in our zone. She has never gone for benchmarking due to lack of funds and the workload in her class. She also attends a professional development programme."

The researcher was able to conduct an interview among the CSOs to establish the influence of teacher characteristics on the implementation of CBC. One of them said the following,

"All grade one teachers in this zone have received in-service training on implementation of CBC. They attend the trainings twice or thrice per term. The teachers are trained in all activity areas, so they are fully trained." The teachers do not go to other schools for benchmarking on implementation of CBC because there are no funds to support them and also, they can't leave Learners unattended and there is a lot to cover in the curriculum. All the teachers have fully embraced CBC."

Findings are in agreement with Eggen and Kauchak (2002). who indicated that teachers' views and attitudes are important for efficient teaching and as they affect learners' performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The study made the following recommendations:

1. The Kenya Institute for the Curriculum Development should highly involve teachers in curriculum change process to create a positive attitude among them for successful implementation of Competency Based Curriculum. The TSC should also ensure that they deploy more female teachers since they are perceived as better implementers of the curriculum in lower grades.
2. Ministry of Education in partnership with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development and Teachers Service Commission should organize CBC trainings more often. The trainings should also be organized during school holidays. This will give teachers a chance to attend the trainings and improve their skills on the new curriculum. Ministry of Education should come up with a program of in-service training programs to ensure continuous professional development of teachers who are the curriculum implementers.
3. The KICD should prepare soft copies of schemes of work and lesson plans for teachers in order to ease the burden.

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