

AN ANALYSIS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN COMPETENCE-BASED CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN KISUMU CENTRAL ZONE, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed early childhood teachers' involvement in competence-based curriculum (CBC) implementation in Kisumu Central Zone, Kenya. Drawing on the stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), a descriptive research approach was utilized to assess 142 private and public teachers about their engagement in the implementation of CBC and the challenges experienced in the process. The results revealed that teachers were actively involved in CBC implementation and recognized its effectiveness. However, inadequate parental support, insufficient resources, and limited time for practical lessons presented hurdles. Recommendations include improvement in staffing, parent sensitization, emphasis on digital literacy, and communication enhancement. This study contributes insights on teacher involvement to inform CBC implementation and policy.

Keywords: CBC Implementation, teachers' involvement, stakeholder theory

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Education serves as a cornerstone for societal progress, and the global shift towards high-quality education systems is evident in the transformative measures embraced by nations worldwide (David and Anna, 2015; Isa and Jailani, 2014). Among these measures, the adoption of Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) has emerged as a pivotal intervention, seeking to instill practical skills and critical thinking in learners. While the overall success of CBC is contingent on various stakeholders, this study focuses specifically on assessing teachers' involvement in the implementation of CBC within the Kisumu Central Zone, Kenya.

The Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) has a rich historical lineage, originating from teacher education curriculum reforms in the United States during the early 1960s. Its

application later extended to other professional education programs in the US, and subsequently, to European countries responding to the challenges of an inadequately skilled workforce (Brownie, Thomas & Bahnisch, 2011; OECD, 2016). As nations worldwide, including Kenya, adopt CBC, the role of teachers becomes paramount in translating curriculum goals into effective classroom practices.

In the contemporary educational landscape, stakeholder involvement is recognized as indispensable, with teachers standing as the linchpin in the successful execution of CBC (Freeman, 1984). Stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and the government, work collaboratively to achieve the curriculum's objectives. The significance of teachers in curriculum reforms is underscored by the shift from traditional roles as 'knowledge transmitters' to the contemporary roles of 'coach' and instructional designer (Sudsomboon, 2010).

Understanding the intricacies of teachers' involvement is critical for evaluating the efficacy of CBC implementation. This study concentrated on examining the extent of teachers' engagement, their grasp of CBC principles, and the challenges they face within the Kisumu Central Zone.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

Underpinning this study was Freeman's Stakeholder Theory (1984), a theoretical framework that defines stakeholders as groups or individuals who possess the capacity to influence or be influenced by an organization's objectives. This theory, as articulated by Phillips, Freeman, and Wicks (2005), posits that stakeholders must actively participate in the process of implementing organizational goals, and their engagement significantly impacts the realization of these objectives.

In the realm of education, stakeholders, as described by Adebayo (2013), are individuals or entities with substantial concern and vested interests in the education sector. These stakeholders encompass a diverse range of actors, including school administrators, teachers, parents, community members, parent-teacher associations (PTAs), and non-governmental organizations, school management committees, elected officials, students, and Boards of Management (BOM).

Within the context of this study, the primary stakeholders are identified as teachers, parents, and the government. The study posits that the active involvement of these key stakeholders plays a pivotal role in shaping the successful implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC).

One of the major strengths of Freeman's Stakeholder Theory lies in the dynamic and synergistic relationships it fosters among stakeholders to achieve organizational goals. Specifically, within the CBC framework, teachers, parents, and the government collaborate closely, each contributing distinct yet interdependent roles. Teachers, in their capacity as implementers, bring practical insights into the classroom, while parents identify unique needs, and the government, as the overseer, provides resources and ensures their effective deployment in CBC implementation.

Despite the distinct responsibilities assigned to each stakeholder in the educational process, the theory highlights their unity in pursuit of the shared goal of successful CBC implementation. This interconnectedness reinforces the notion that the effectiveness of CBC relies on the collaborative efforts of teachers, parents, and the government.

1.2 Related Literature

Teachers play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), impacting students' learning outcomes and curriculum fidelity. Colgrove et al. (2012) identified a significant association between teaching approaches, classroom environment, and children's science learning in the USA. In Sweden, Sundberg et al. (2016) explored cultural factors influencing preschool teachers' activities with science content, utilizing Activity Theory.

Research emphasizes the importance of understanding teachers' roles during curriculum implementation (Hall & Hord, 2015). Teacher fidelity, consistency in implementing the curriculum, is crucial but varies among teachers (Loflin, 2016). Jess et al. (2016) stressed the need to prepare teachers for curriculum development, aligning it with learners' needs. Curriculum fidelity involves adherence to the curriculum's purpose and design, impacting learner outcomes (McShane & Eden, 2015).

Studies on CBC implementation reveal challenges. In Cameroon, Anane (2013) highlighted the importance of teacher development through seminars and workshops. Mahamat (2011) found ineffective implementation of CBC in Early Childhood Education due to teachers' indifference and challenges in adapting to new concepts.

Teachers' attitudes and beliefs influence curriculum fidelity (Budak, 2015). Piasta et al. (2015) identified dimensions like adherence, exposure, quality of delivery, and participant responsiveness for assessing fidelity. Teachers' multidimensional loyalty influences curriculum implementation (Budak, 2015; Hondrich et al., 2016; Piasta et al., 2015), affecting students' literacy skills positively (Piasta et al., 2015).

Brighton et al. (2015) discovered conflicts in fidelity expectations between teachers and administrators. In Tanzania and Uganda, CBC faces challenges with teachers complaining about time constraints and the pedagogical approach (Senyondo, 2016; Tilya & Mafumiko, 2010). Kangori (2014) identified teacher-related factors impacting preschoolers' science activity achievement.

Moodley (2013) stressed the central role of teachers in educational change, emphasizing the need for expertise. However, reports from KICD (2018) indicate that many teachers feel ill-equipped for CBC, highlighting a significant gap in preparation and training.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Design

This study utilized a descriptive research design within a mixed methods framework to assess teacher involvement in CBC implementation. Mixed methods allowed for collecting both

qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2014).

Specifically, questionnaires with closed and open-ended items were administered to teachers in Kisumu Central Zone public and private schools to quantify teacher understanding, preparation, attitudes, challenges, and support needs regarding CBC implementation. The questionnaire provided numeric data on teacher experiences and also allowed for expansion on certain responses (Williams, 2007). In addition, focus groups were conducted with parents and interviews held with education officials to gather qualitative insights into parental participation and government support for CBC rollout. The descriptive design enabled an in-depth portrayal of the CBC implementation phenomenon based on data triangulation from these sources (Lambert & Lambert, 2012).

2.2 Target Population and Sampling Technique

The target population comprised 377 individuals including 174 public school teachers, 108 private school teachers, 94 parent representatives, and 1 Curriculum Support Officer (CSO) in Kisumu Central Zone. To determine an appropriate sample size, Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) method was applied, yielding a sample of 190 participants.

Stratified proportional sampling was used to ensure representation of teachers, parents, and government official across strata. The teacher stratum was divided into public (174) and private (108) schools. The "Proportional Allocation Formula" calculated sample sizes of 88 public school teachers and 54 private school teachers randomly selected within strata. The parent stratum of 94 yielded 47 randomly selected parents. The CSO stratum comprised 1 individual who was automatically included.

This stratified proportional random sampling allowed for representation across key stakeholder groups involved in CBC implementation in the target region. The calculated sample sizes ensured feasibility within the study timeline and resources while maintaining rigor.

2.3 Research Instrument and Data collection and Analysis

Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires administered to 142 teachers, encompassing 88 from public schools and 54 schools in Kisumu Central Zone. Questionnaires were delivered in both paper format and as a Google Form to facilitate ease of completion and submission. The questionnaire underwent expert review at Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University for validity. Each item was assessed for alignment with study objectives. Face and content validity were evaluated to ensure logical links and comprehensive coverage of the research aims.

A pilot study was conducted in three neighboring schools with five teachers completing the questionnaire. The test-retest method assessed reliability, administering the questionnaire twice over a 2-week interval. Based on feedback, adjustments were made before the retest.

Reliability was determined using the Rosenberg scale (1965), yielding a test-retest coefficient of 0.731. Values above 0.7 are considered reliable, indicating the instrument had sufficient reliability. Collected data underwent editing to resolve inconsistencies and missing values.

Data were then numerically coded for analysis in SPSS Version 25. Descriptive statistics including means, frequencies, standard deviations, and percentages were calculated for each study variable.

3.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Findings

The study yielded a 70.9% response rate (96 teachers, 38 parents) enabling insightful analysis. Teachers were predominantly female, aged 31-40, from public schools, with over 20 years' experience.

All teachers were CBC trained, mostly in one termly session. Majorities felt proficient integrating competencies like communication, critical thinking, and citizenship into instruction. But 48% required digital literacy support.

Most rated their CBC lesson planning abilities positively. However, 44.8% said balancing planning and teaching needed development. 70.8% identified understaffing and 64.6% had oversized classes. Instructional materials and digital devices were deemed inadequate by most.

While 31.2% saw positive learner attitudes to CBC, 41.7% reported negative attitudes. 64.6% had very high enrollment. Handbook availability was considered inadequate by 62.5% though 53.2% thought textbooks were adequate.

In terms of confidence, 54.9% were moderately confident in CBC implementation, 29% quite confident. But at onset, 48.4% felt slightly prepared, 38.7% not at all prepared. Around 86.3% were willing to adapt teaching methods for CBC. Most had neutral perspectives on CBC effectiveness compared to prior curriculum.

Overall, the findings revealed that teachers were actively implementing CBC but needed more training, resources, reasonable class sizes, and stakeholder participation to address challenges like negative learner attitudes, inadequate materials, and minimal preparation support during transition.

4.0 DISCUSSION

The findings of this study resonate with the extensive body of literature on the pivotal role that teachers play in the successful implementation of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). As highlighted by Colgrove et al. (2012), the association between teaching approaches, classroom environment, and children's science learning underscores the multifaceted nature of teachers' impact on students' educational experiences. Similarly, Sundberg et al.'s (2016) exploration of cultural factors influencing preschool teachers in Sweden aligns with the acknowledgment that teachers' practices are intricately linked to contextual elements.

The emphasis on understanding teachers' roles during curriculum implementation, as underscored by Hall and Hord (2015), is reflected in the challenges and strengths identified in this study. The varying levels of teacher fidelity, as discussed by Loflin (2016), indicate the need for nuanced approaches to support teachers in consistently implementing the CBC. The

call by Jess et al. (2016) to prepare teachers for curriculum development and align it with learners' needs is echoed in the positive self-assessment of CBC lesson planning abilities by a majority of teachers in this study.

Curriculum fidelity, as highlighted by McShane and Eden (2015), emerges as a critical factor in impacting learner outcomes. The challenges identified in CBC implementation, such as those highlighted by Anane (2013) in Cameroon and Mahamat (2011) in Early Childhood Education, underscore the importance of ongoing teacher development and adaptation to new concepts. Teachers' attitudes and beliefs, as noted by Budak (2015), resonate with the findings of this study, where teacher confidence in CBC implementation and willingness to adapt teaching methods varied among participants.

The challenges faced in Tanzania and Uganda, including time constraints and pedagogical concerns (Senyondo, 2016; Tilya & Mafumiko, 2010), mirror the contextual challenges identified in this study. The teacher-related factors impacting preschoolers' science activity achievement in the study by Kangori (2014) further emphasize the need to address teacher-specific challenges for effective CBC implementation.

Moodley's (2013) stress on the central role of teachers in educational change resonates with the findings of this study. However, the reports from KICD (2018) indicating that many teachers feel ill-equipped for CBC highlight a significant gap in preparation and training. This suggests that while teachers are recognized as central players, addressing the existing gaps in teacher preparedness is crucial for the successful implementation of CBC.

5.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, this study illuminates the intricate dynamics of early childhood teachers' engagement in implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Kisumu Central Zone, Kenya. The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of teachers' roles, emphasizing the necessity for continuous training, resource support, manageable class sizes, and collaborative efforts from other stakeholders. This study contributes valuable insights for policymakers and educators, offering targeted recommendations to enhance the implementation of CBC. As education systems globally evolve, recognizing and addressing the complexities of teacher involvement becomes pivotal for the success of progressive curriculum frameworks. The implications of this research extend beyond the Kenyan context, providing a foundation for further studies and discussions on refining educational practices and policies to better serve the needs of early childhood learners in the CBC era.

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