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Teacher- competency a precursor of effective implementation of the competence-based curriculum among pre-primary schools in Kenya

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Abstract

Competency based curriculum is a new programme in Kenya whose implementation faces a myriad of challenges amid the posted successes. The curriculum was rolled out in the year 2017 and quite some successes cannot be underestimated. This study examined the teacher-level of factor as a precursor of effective implementation of the CBC. The study focused all pre-primary school centres in Embu County against the teachers' competencies besides exploring the CBC implementation levels since its inception. The study was anchored on the theory of curriculum implementation (Gross, 1971). Purposive sampling was employed in identifying the study locale whereas simple random sampling was employed to draw a study sample size of 10%. Ex post facto research design was adopted since there was no manipulation of the study variables whose influence was already experienced. An exploratory survey methodology was utilized in collecting data. Data was collected using questionnaire, a check-list and an interview schedule. Data was analyzed using descriptive techniques with the help of the SPSS version 29. Results indicated low levels of CBC implementation and recommended teacher related factors to be addressed to mitigate the low level of CBC implementation particularly at the lower primary school grades. Pre-primary school teacher-competencies were found wanting despite indication of rigorous training sessions for lower primary school teachers. Meaning more emphasis was laid on lower primary school teachers than on all lower primary grades pre-primary school center teachers. All teachers require the training on CBC particularly those at foundational grades including Pre-primary teachers. The study therefore recommends that the government should scale up a series of induction/training programs in order to retool teachers' pedagogical competencies. This will enhance CBC implementation and up take at all levels.

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Introduction

Globally, countries are fast realigning their educational programs to innovative curricula which promote the development of desirable competencies and skills. The implementation of the Competence-Based Curriculum can be traced back to the United States of America during the 1960s (Takahashi, Waddell, Kennedy & Hodges, 2011). Initially, the competency-based approach was introduced in teachers' training colleges as part of efforts to reform teacher education. The United States has since witnessed implementation of several concepts related to competency-based education, including competency-based assessments, at the different educational levels (Njeng'ere & Ji, 2017) ^[8].

According to Johnstone and Soares (2014), Competency-Based Education (CBE) is a transformational force and innovation. Accordingly, CBE fundamentally reshapes the educational landscape of a country by emphasizing on the mastery of and practical application of essential knowledge and skills in real-time contexts. The approach emphasizes on connections between academics

and employment markets thus leading to a clearer comprehension of the competencies necessary for students to thrive in both their professions and real lives.

In Africa change in educational programs is slow to due to the technological limitations and the issue of globalization. Most African countries are experiencing challenges in keeping up with the dynamic international standards and the advances of the knowledge economy (Cheptoo and Ramadas 2019). Therefore, the adoption of Competency-Based Curriculum should be accelerated to bring new trends to the African education in order to be at par with the global trends. The CBC lays emphasis on competencies of the graduate that are fundamental in employment and the job market. Teachers form an integral component in any curriculum process. Kenya is in the middle of rolling out CBC effective 2017. This process has been faced with a number of teething challenges among them teacher efficacy and readiness, school-related factors and teacher/child ratio.

Studies on CBC implementation shows that teachers' pedagogical preparedness plays a vital role in ensuring smooth roll-out of any curriculum (Momanyi, & Rop, 2019; Muchira, Morris, Wawire, & Oh, 2023) ^[6, 7]. This paper reviews the teacher-related factors that plays a precursor to effective implementation of CBC in Kenya. The study was conducted in Embu County Kenya.

Aim of the Study: The aim of the current study was to assess teacher-related factors that affect smooth implementation of the CBC in Kenya. Specifically, the study aimed at determining the extent of CBC implementation among lower grades of primary schools in Embu County Kenya.

Literature Review

The concept of competence-based education is fast catching up to developed and developing nations alike. This is due to the dynamics experienced in the job market particularly among developing nations. Nations are aligning their educational programmes in a manner that ensures the graduates have the requisite competencies to carry out tasks innovatively and with passion.

Teachers in this regard play a crucial role in curriculum implementation as they provide essential guidance and support. Pedagogically the teachers must be read and prepared for this to help the learner acquire the skills as intended. Tutors impart in the learners the necessary skills and concepts that help to develop their potentials (Syomwene, 2013) ^[10].

Countries like New Zealand, the new thinking that all Curricula focuses on the how and what the learner should achieve through the schools. The shift in education is now more focused on the future thus laying greater emphasis on enabling learners acquire pertinent competencies outlined in the government's the 2007 document (Harris, E. (2017).

Komba and Mwandaji (2015) study in Tanzania uncovered that a significant majority (86%) of the teachers lacked the necessary understanding of CBC content and pedagogical skills as observed in the curriculum implementation.

In Kenya, a study conducted by Waweru (2018) ^[13] examined the implementation of CBC in lower primary schools and found that 98.8 percent of the teachers were unprepared to implement the competency-based curriculum. This brings into question the readiness and effectiveness of teachers to implement CBC in our schools. Another study in Kenya by Momanyi and Rop (2019) ^[6] investigated teachers' levels of understanding and preparedness to re-align teaching/learning approaches to the demands of CBC. The study established that teachers were inadequately prepared and ready for CBC curriculum implementation. This explains the need to interrogate the teacher as a precursor CBC implementation. This study presents a study on teachers' preparedness as a precursor associated with the CBC implementation in Embu County, Kenya.

Methodology

Ex -post facto design was used to review teachers as a precursor to effective CBC roll-out in the study locale the study was conducted among pre-primary school centres in Embu County one of the counties whose reading and numeracy assessment has consistently been reported to below the national index (Uwezo, 2012-2019). The design was deemed appropriate since the study could not envisage manipulation of the study variables whose effects have already been felt. It is also known as "after-the-fact" defined as a research methodology in which the researcher focuses on how an independent variable affects a dependent variable. Mixed methods approach was employed that enabled the researchers to collect, collate and analyses both qualitative and quantitative data.

Findings of the Study

The paper reports on the following two null hypotheses; There is no a significant difference in the implementation of CBC between public and private pre-primary schools in Embu County.

There no significant relationship between teachers' competency in CBC and its implementation among pre-primary schools.

The following section below presents the results and discussions of the findings.

Implementation of CBC in both public and private pre-primary schools' analysis showed that although overall CBC implementation was still below expectation, public pre-primary schools emerged better compared with their public counterparts. The table below illustrates the findings.

Table 1: Implementation of CBC in Public and Private Pre-primary Schools

Independent Samples Test										
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
CBC	Equal variances assumed	12.3	.001	2.2	60	.033	.228	.105	.018	.437
	Equal variances not assumed			2.7	59.0	.011	.228	.086	.054	.401

Table1 above shows a mean difference of 0.228 in the implementation of CBC between public and private pre-primary teachers' responses while the p-value of 0.033

indicates some difference of CBC implementation between the two categories of schools, with a significance level of P=0.001. The null hypothesis was rejected meaning that

public pre-primary school teachers had an upper hand on CBC implementation as opposed to those in private pre-primary schools. To further understand the levels of curriculum

implementation the researchers conducted a non-participant observation on how teachers prepared and conducted their day-to-day classroom lessons in the CBC context. Table 2 below further illustrates the findings.

Table 2: Classroom observation Mean Scores on Teachers Implementation of CBC

Individual Mean Scores in Teachers Implementation of CBC					
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Draws CBC schemes of work	62	1	3	2.74	.510
ii. Develops CBC lesson plans	62	1	3	2.56	.643
Uses CBC lesson plans	62	1	3	2.35	.680
Uses learner centered approaches in teaching	62	1	3	2.66	.571
Understands the CBC core values	62	1	3	2.31	.692
Evaluates learners using competency-based assessments	62	1	3	2.29	.755
Keeps up-to date individual records	62	1	3	2.53	.646
Engages learners in hands on experience activities	62	1	3	2.60	.613
Infuses pertinent and contemporary issues	62	1	3	2.32	.647
Employs collaborative learning	62	1	3	2.69	.531
Promotes critical thinking	62	1	3	2.39	.636
Uses individualized learning	62	1	3	2.24	.803
Uses criterion assessment	62	1	3	2.05	.858
Uses formative evaluations	62	1	3	2.34	.676
Uses collaborative learning	62	1	3	2.47	.646
Engages parents in enhancing learning activities	62	1	3	2.26	.571
Uses digital devices to enhance learning	62	1	3	1.37	.683
Valid (N)	62				

Teachers were rated on a scale of 1- 3 regarding various aspects of implementing CBC where, 1 was never, 2 rarely while 3 always. Of particular importance are the items; the teachers used CBC lesson plans which had the mean of 2.35; whether the teachers understand the CBC core values with a mean of 2.31 and whether they engaged learners in hands on experience activities. All the means across the activities shows that none of them scored near the expected maximum mean score. This means that CBC implementation is still far from being fully embraced and implemented by the teachers. The study is consistent with Komba and Mwandaji (2015) who explored the challenges teachers encountered in implementing the competence-based Education curriculum in secondary schools in Tanzania where a total of total of 102 teachers from six public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality participated. Besides, six heads of schools and six academic masters/mistresses were included to participate in the study. The study findings indicated that teachers encountered various challenges hence did not effectively roll out the CBE as would be expected, partly due to inadequate training. Similar challenges are evident in other similar studies (Muchira, Morris, Wawire, & Oh, 2023) ^[7].

Recommendations

The paper bases its recommendations on the afore going findings that there is a lot yet to be done to achieve the whole object of the CBC in Kenya. The findings reveal some level of apathy and ill-preparedness to ensure seamless roll-out of CBC in Kenya.

Therefore, the paper recommends to the government to take necessary measures to ensure teachers are properly prepared and sensitized on both content and pedagogical approaches appropriate for the curriculum.

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