

English Teachers' Attitudes and Challenges Towards the Implementation of Competency-Based Curriculum Lesson Planning and Assessment Strategies – A Case Study from Machakos Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes and challenges faced by teachers of English when implementing the CBC lesson planning and assessment strategies in primary schools in Machakos Sub-County. The study was guided by the Theory of Visible Learning by John Hattie. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The target population included 91 primary school head teachers, 2 Curriculum Support Officers, and 364 Teachers of English. The study used simple random sampling to select eleven (11) primary schools in the Machakos Sub-County. A total of eleven (11) head teachers were purposively sampled from the eleven schools, and forty-five (45) grade one to grade six teachers of English were purposively sampled. One curriculum support officer was purposively sampled from among the three educational zones in the Sub-County. The research instruments used in the study included: questionnaires for head teachers, teachers, and Curriculum Support Officers. The quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages and presented in tabular format. Chi-square tests run using SPSS 27 were used to evaluate the association between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The findings of the study show that the teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of CBC did not significantly influence the quality of specific learning outcomes. The study identified four key challenges to CBC implementation which included: inadequate time for preparation and assessment; inadequate teaching materials/ resources; confusing curriculum guidelines and some degree of lack of experience among teachers. The study recommends that there is a need for teacher training institutions in Kenya should swiftly incorporate CBC training courses in their curricula.

Keywords: competency-based curriculum, competency-based language teaching, learning outcomes.

1. Introduction

Kenya began CBC implementation in January 2017. The implementation of CBC is in the pre-primary and primary classes (Pale & Amukowa, 2020). Previously, teachers have had concerns about the CBC pilot implementation citing several

challenges. These challenges include information handling on digital devices, guiding parents on assessment and homework, grading according to assessment rubrics, changing from a thematic to an inquiry-based approach, large classes, and generating key inquiry questions (KICD, 2017).

KICD (2017) also highlights the long time it takes to plan and assess individual learners as a key challenge. The implementation of a competence-based curriculum in schools has been complex because teachers still focus on developing content hoping that the learners would develop their competencies automatically. The teaching of a competence-based curriculum requires the understanding of teachers' attitudes and challenges towards planning content, pedagogy, and assessment so as to improve the quality of learning outcomes.

A. Statement of the Problem

The current Basic Education Curriculum Framework in Kenya as developed by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) requires the use of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) Approach. The critical emphasis of the CBC is the acquisition and application of knowledge, skills, attitudes, competencies, and values learned in real-life situations. Such a comprehensive change in the instructional approach from content-based to outcome-based in terms of planning, teaching, learning, and assessment requires both a change in attitude and dealing with challenges in the implementation of the new strategies.

Therefore, it is necessary to carry out more research to establish how Teachers' attitudes and challenges towards CBC strategies during the planning and assessing of English lessons influence learning outcomes. This will help identify the specific problems or deficiencies in English teaching and learning within the new curriculum.

B. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the attitudes and challenges of teachers of English towards the implementation of the CBC lesson planning and assessment strategies in primary schools in Machakos Sub-County Kenya.

C. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was

1. To determine the attitudes of teachers of English towards the implementation of the CBC lesson planning and assessment strategies in primary schools in Machakos Sub-County.
2. To explore the challenges faced by teachers of English during lesson planning and assessment in primary schools in Machakos Sub-County.

D. Research Questions

To achieve the above objectives, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of English teachers towards CBC planning and assessment strategies in Machakos Sub-County?
2. What challenges do English teachers face in adopting CBC planning and assessment strategies in Machakos Sub-County, and how can these challenges be addressed?

2. Literature Review

The attitudes of teachers are not solely responsible for the learning outcomes in any curriculum implementation. However, attitudes are important in encouraging and motivating teachers. This is in light of the numerous changes that impact the curriculum change and implementation process. Motivation and appraisal of both learners and teachers are vital in a learning institution.

Several studies suggest that more examination is needed of ways to cultivate positive attitudes toward using lesson planning, teaching materials, and assessment during pre-service and in-service training sessions. This study will, therefore, research the Teachers of English' attitudes towards the planning and assessment strategies of English lessons.

Most countries that have adopted CBC identified challenges initially with the implementation. According to Kavindi (2014), these challenges are related to the shortage of qualified teacher educators, overcrowded classes, poor lesson planning, inadequate teaching and learning resources, and challenges in the evaluation of competencies.

A study by Ekawati (2017) examined the implementation of CBC challenges during lesson planning, applying steps of learning activities, preparing media, and making assessments.

Ekawati (2017) suggested more research and stakeholder involvement in addressing the making of detailed lesson plans and assessment of abstracts like the aspects of students' attitudes and speaking skills. While Kavindi (2014) and Ekawati (2017) focused on CBC in general, this study will emphasize English teaching CBC planning and assessment.

A. Theoretical Framework

The study derives its theoretical basis from the Theory of Visible Learning. This theory has led scholars to innovate teaching and learning activities to be constructed by learners.

B. Theory of Visible Learning

The theory of visible learning is a teaching and learning theory by John Hattie. The theory revolves around the idea that the impact of teaching and educational strategies should be visible, or evident, in students' learning outcomes and that teachers should be made aware of student learning so they may assess their influence (Hattie, 2017). Additionally, it refers to making instruction visible to pupils so they can develop the critical lifetime learning skill of becoming their teachers. The necessity to think of teaching with learning at the forefront and with the idea that we should consider teaching primarily in terms of its impact on student learning is the "learning" portion of visible learning and a constant topic throughout the theory (Hattie, 2017). The theory of visible learning is mainly concerned with 3 key elements of teaching and learning. These include: Preparing the Lesson, the Flow of the Lesson and Learning and, the End of the Lesson.

C. Research Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative approach. The quantitative method entailed the collection and analysis of data to gain a bigger picture and a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2011).

D. Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey design as it is aimed at a description of the state of affairs as they exist (Kombo & Tromp, 2007). Descriptive research design describes the key features of an occurrence, people, society, or a target population (Chandran, 2004). Descriptive research design is more of a fact-finding enterprise, focusing on relatively few dimensions of a well-defined entity (Klein, 2011).

E. Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The target population included 91 primary school head teachers, 2 Curriculum Support Officers, 364 Teachers of English, and grade one to six pupils. The study used simple random sampling to select eleven (11) primary schools in the

Table 1
Sample size

Respondents	Target population	Sample size	Percentage	Sampling Technique
Schools	91	11	12%	Simple random
Headteachers	91	11	12%	Purposive
Teachers of English	364	45	12%	Purposive
CSOs	2	1	50%	Random
Grade One to Grade Six	7,000	1,993	28%	Purposive
Total	7,457	2,050	27%	

Machakos Sub-County. A total of eleven (11) head teachers were purposively sampled from the eleven schools, and forty-five (45) grade one to grade six teachers of English were purposively sampled, 1993 grade one to grade six pupils were purposively sampled from the eleven schools. One curriculum support officer was randomly sampled from among the three educational zones in the sub-county. A sample size of 10% - 30% of the target population is adequate for generalization (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

F. Research Instruments

The instruments used for this study included a Questionnaire for Headteachers, CSOs, and Teachers of English on the effects of CBC planning and assessment on learning outcomes.

G. Questionnaire for Head Teachers, CSOs, and teachers

The questionnaire had a 5-point Likert scale where respondents ticked the choice box that matched their responses on planning, assessment, attitudes, and challenges from given responses that ranged from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Not Sure (NS), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

H. Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected in this study was analyzed using descriptive statistics. This approach involved summarizing the data and presenting it through tables and percentages to align with the research objectives and questions. The use of descriptive statistics facilitated meaningful conclusions by highlighting key patterns and trends in the data.

3. Research Findings

A. Analysis of the Attitude of Teachers of English towards the Implementation of the New CBC

An analysis was done on the relationship between the CSO, the Headteachers' and the teachers' attitudes towards CBC strategies as presented in Table 2 to Table 9. A significant

observation is that there was no consistency between the three groups, thereby generating serious implications for CBC implementation strategies as well as the quality of supervision of such implementation. The data shows that there was a great discrepancy between the opinions of the CSO, the Headteachers, and the teachers on the various aspects of CBC implementation.

While the CSO emphasized the importance of Schemes of work and Lesson plans, only 64% of the teachers considered Schemes of work and lesson plans as very important, whereas the expectation was that all teachers should value the use of both documents. 55% of the Headteachers considered the two planning documents as very important. There was therefore lack of consistency in the level of commitment to the use of planning documents between the supervisors of teachers and the teachers themselves.

The CSO was of the view that lesson assessment was moderately important. Only 55% of the Headteachers thought it was very important and only 60% of the teachers considered lesson evaluation as very important.

The CSO confirmed that the teachers were somewhat competent in CBC. 55% of the Headteachers were of the view that the teachers were competent to a great extent. 49% of the teachers rated themselves as somewhat competent in CBC. This may imply that more training is yet to be implemented.

Only 27% of the Headteachers confirmed the level of teachers' motivation as always; the CSO thought it was seldom; while teachers themselves were at 29% for always motivated. This may suggest that we have a long way to go on teacher motivation strategies for CBC.

34% of the teachers considered curriculum changes as either very important or important.

The CSO surprisingly rated curriculum changes as moderately important, while 82% of the Headteachers rated it between very important and important.

Table 2

		Teachers' attitude towards CBC strategies on schemes of work and lesson plans				
Attitude towards CBC Strategies		Very Important	Important	Moderately Important	Slightly Important	Not Important
Schemes of Work and Lesson Plans	CSO	1				
	Headteachers	6	3	2		
	teachers	29	11	3		1

Table 3

		Teachers' attitude towards the importance of lesson assessment				
Attitude towards CBC Strategies		Very Important	Important	Moderately Important	Slightly Important	Not Important
Importance of Lesson Assessment	CSO			1		
	Headteachers	6	3	2		
	teachers	27	15	1	1	

Table 4

		Teachers' attitude towards their competence in CBC			
		To a Great Extent	Somewhat	Very Likely	Not at All
English Teachers' Competence in CBC	CSO		1		
	Headteachers	6	5		
	teachers	19	22	3	

Table 5

		Teachers' level of motivation on CBC				
		Always	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Seldom	Never
Level of Motivation on CBC strategies	CSO				1	
	Headteachers	3	3	3	1	1
	teachers	13	13	14	2	2

Table 6
Teachers' attitude on the importance of curriculum changes

		Very Important	Important	Moderately Important	Slightly Important	Not Important
Importance of Curriculum Changes in English	CSO			1		
	Headteachers	5	4	2		
	teachers	16	18	5	3	2

Table 7
Level of teachers' eagerness to adopt CBC strategies

		Very Eager	Eager	Moderately Eager	Slightly Eager	Not Eager
Level of English Teachers' Eagerness on CBC	CSO			1		
	Headteachers	2	5	4		
	teachers	7	20	12	5	

Table 8
Teachers' perception of the degree of challenges in planning and assessment of CBC

		Very Challenging	Challenging	Moderately Challenging	Slightly Challenging	Not Challenging
Degree of Challenges in planning and assessing CBC	CSO		1			
	Headteachers	1	4	4	2	
	teachers	4	16	14	9	1

Table 9
Challenges faced by teachers of English in CBC implementation

		Lack of Sufficient Knowledge/ Skills	Inadequate Experience	Inadequate Time	Inadequate Materials	Confusing Curriculum Guidelines
Schemes of Work	CSO	1	1	1	1	
	Headteachers	3	3	7	4	1
Lesson Plans	CSO	1	7	26	14	9
	Headteachers	3	3	7	4	1
Setting assessment criteria	CSO	4	7	25	18	9
	Headteachers	1	1	1	4	2
Using rubrics	CSO	3	11	29	13	6
	Headteachers	1	1	1	4	2
Notifying learners	CSO	2	3	6	4	2
	Headteachers	4	8	27	15	5
Keeping assessment records	CSO	1	1	1	12	7
	Headteachers	2	3	6	4	2
	teachers	2	7	21	19	5

The CSO was of the opinion that teachers were moderately eager to adopt CBC strategies. 64% of the Headteachers thought that teachers were either eager or very eager; while 60% of the teachers considered themselves as between eager and very eager. Lack of harmony between these opinions may suggest poor induction or poor supervision.

All teachers except one experienced challenges in planning and assessing CBC.

The Headteachers also supported the view of challenges except the level of challenge. This implies the need to identify and mitigate the challenges the teachers face.

B. Analysis of the Challenges Faced by Teachers of English During Lesson Planning and Assessment

The data in Table 9 below shows significant variations in the challenges faced by the teachers of English in the new CBC. Various disharmonies are noted between the opinions of the CSO, the Headteachers, and the teachers.

Table 9 shows that all the key areas of curriculum implementation have been affected by major challenges. The leading challenges are inadequate time for planning, assessment, and record keeping. It is followed by inadequate

materials and confusing curriculum guidelines. Inadequate experience mainly affected setting the assessment criteria; using rubrics and keeping assessment records. Lack of sufficient knowledge was minimally experienced. The CSO was however not aware of confusing curriculum guidelines and the inadequacy of materials.

4. Conclusion

The following conclusions can be inferred from the summary of the study's findings:

- 1) Teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of the CBC curriculum are largely positive towards scheming, lesson planning, and assessment strategies.
- 2) One of the issues that affected teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of CBC is the plethora of challenges that they faced. Teachers stated that the main obstacle was the insufficient training they received meaning that they lacked specific knowledge on some of the technicalities involved in the new curriculum.
- 3) Teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of the

new curriculum may have been affected by the requirement for constant and consistent training, a majority of which is conducted during the teachers' holiday period. This meant that teachers were expected to work harder to meet all of the requirements of the CBC and also attend training when they were not actively involved with learners.

- 4) Teachers face numerous challenges in the implementation of CBC, which affects learning outcomes for learners. Some of these challenges include lack of sufficient knowledge and skills, which is a consequence of insufficient training on various aspects of CBC; inadequate experience; lack of enough time to prepare all of the requisite documents in line with CBC; lack of adequate resources including instructors, and teaching and learning materials; and confusing curriculum guidelines, which stems from a lack of sufficient instructions and the increased workload that is part of CBC.

5. Recommendations

- 1) Teachers of English and Headteachers need to be equipped with the skills that would enable them to communicate test results to parents and pupils as well as create and maintain assessment records, and use appropriate assessment tools, including observation, checklists, and journaling, among others.
- 2) Teacher training institutions in Kenya should swiftly incorporate CBC training courses in their curricula to ensure that they produce teachers already equipped with the

competencies required before venturing into the field. This would reduce the need for in-service training.

- 3) The County government and the Ministry of Education (MoE) should consider supplying Laptops to teachers, to simplify their work in creating schemes of work, lesson plans, and the assessment of learners.

A. Recommendations for Further Study

The researcher makes the following suggestions for further study:

An investigation should be carried out to establish why teachers feel they do not have adequate time and resources for CBC implementation, and whether the problem affects the entire country.

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