



Implementation Barriers Militating Against the Competence Based Curriculum in Glenview-Mufakose District of Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the obstacles hindering the successful adoption of the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) in primary schools within the Glenview-Mufakose district of Zimbabwe. Although the CBC has gained widespread approval among educational stakeholders in Zimbabwe, its execution in this district has encountered significant difficulties. The essence of this research lies in exploring why the full potential of the CBC remains unrealized in this region. The investigation revealed that irregularities in implementing the CBC across primary schools in Glenview-Mufakose necessitated a thorough examination.

The research embraced pragmatism as its guiding philosophy, employing a mixed-method approach that integrated qualitative and quantitative techniques in a triangulated design. The study population included teachers, school administrators, and education inspectors from the Glenview-Mufakose district in Harare province. Eight primary schools were deliberately chosen, with an average of 25 participants per school. Data collection involved in-depth interviews, questionnaires, document reviews, focus group discussions, and observations to gather comprehensive insights.

Findings indicated that the Zimbabwean government and its Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education struggled to transition from a content-focused curriculum to the CBC, largely due to insufficient resources. The timing of the CBC's introduction was also poorly planned, as many schools lacked the necessary infrastructure and materials. Furthermore, not all teachers received adequate training to implement the curriculum effectively, leading to a lack of confidence among some educators. The study suggests that the government should seek international, regional, or local support to secure resources for CBC implementation. It emphasizes the need for both material resources and motivated personnel to sustain this skills-oriented curriculum. While the relationship between the CBC and the former content-based curriculum was not fully explored, further research in this area is recommended.

Introduction

This research focused on uncovering the barriers obstructing the effective rollout of the Competence Based Curriculum in primary schools within Zimbabwe's Glenview-Mufakose district, with the goal of enhancing future learners' skill profiles. The central question driving the study was: Why are students in this district unable to fully benefit from the skills-based curriculum compared to peers in other nations? The investigation was prompted by the limited exposure to skill-building opportunities for learners in this urban area of Harare province, which was expected to excel in CBC implementation.

Background to the Problem

The study examined the challenges impeding the successful adoption of the CBC by primary school students in Glenview-Mufakose. While some countries have effectively implemented skills-based curricula, others, including Zimbabwe, face difficulties, inspiring this research. Globally, the shift from content-driven to competence-based education has been notable, yet Zimbabwe's 2017 curriculum reform sparked varied responses. Critics highlighted issues such as a lack of textbooks, insufficient land for agricultural projects, an urban-centric curriculum, challenges with Information Communication Technology (ICT) integration, an overloaded ICT syllabus for primary learners, and unrealistic project expectations (e.g., six projects per student compared to one at the college level). Teaching mathematics and science as integrated subjects also proved challenging.

In a February 26, 2017, article in The Standard newspaper, parents and teachers' unions criticized Primary and Secondary Education Minister Lazarus Dokora over the National Pledge and the new curriculum. The Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ) called for halting the reforms, but Dokora maintained that detractors were either misinformed or deliberately disruptive. He referenced the Nziramasanga Commission Report, which advocated for a curriculum fostering knowledge, skills, and critical thinking.

Purpose of the Study

The objective was to pinpoint the key barriers undermining CBC implementation in Glenview-Mufakose and propose actionable solutions to overcome them, ensuring learners reap the benefits of a skills-focused education.

Research Questions

The study addressed the following:

Primary Question: Do primary school teachers in Glenview-Mufakose fully comprehend and apply the CBC?

Subsidiary Questions:

What obstacles hinder CBC implementation in the district?

How well-equipped are primary schools with resources to support the CBC?

What are the effects of these implementation barriers, and how can schools achieve the CBC's intended outcomes?

Definition of Key Terms

Competence Based Curriculum: A learning framework designed to develop skilled graduates within the education system.

Implementation Barriers: Obstacles that disrupt the daily processes of enacting the CBC, impacting its outcomes.

Militating Against: Factors that counteract or resist CBC implementation efforts.

Learners: Individuals receiving education, expected to benefit from the CBC.

Teachers: Qualified professionals trained to educate learners.

Methodology

The research utilized a mixed-method approach rooted in pragmatism, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection for a robust analysis. The qualitative aspect was valuable for capturing the multifaceted nature of the issues, as supported by Leedy and Ormrod (2018). It recognized that teachers construct their realities within the social context of CBC implementation, offering diverse perspectives rather than oversimplified conclusions. Pragmatism was chosen to assess the practical success or failure of curriculum theories in educational settings, exploring teachers' experiences with the new curriculum and their use of instructional resources.

The study also incorporated critical theory and a concurrent triangulation design to address the research problem comprehensively. This framework guided data collection, measurement, and analysis, with findings presented in the results section.

Research Paradigm

Grounded in realism, the study posited that sensory-derived knowledge reflects reality accurately (Barker, 2013). Data gathered through questionnaires, interviews, and observations in Glenview-Mufakose were deemed reliable representations of the truth. The interpretive paradigm, as described by Bitzer (2015) and Creswell (2016), was selected to align with the study's purpose, providing deep insights into participants' experiences and enhancing the credibility of the findings.

The Population of the Study

The population comprised primary school heads, teachers, and education inspectors in Glenview-Mufakose, Harare province. Eight schools, each led by qualified administrators and implementing the CBC, were purposively selected, with approximately 25 participants per school (Bums & Groove, 2013).

The Research Approach

A mixed-method strategy, pioneered by Campbell and Fisk in 1959 (Creswell, 2019), was adopted to validate psychological traits and encourage diverse data collection methods. This approach merged qualitative field techniques (e.g., observations, interviews) with quantitative surveys, allowing for a comprehensive database (Sieber, 2011; Creswell & Clark, 2017). The concurrent mixed-method design involved collecting both data types simultaneously and integrating them for a holistic analysis, addressing different aspects of the research problem.

The Research Design

The research design outlined the theoretical and practical framework for the investigation (Saunders et al., 2017). It ensured accurate, interpretable data and a representative sample from Glenview-Mufakose (Babbie, 2019). A case study approach, as endorsed by Tellis (2015), facilitated in-depth data generation and analysis, making it ideal for exploring CBC implementation. The exploratory design was apt for a relatively new curriculum with limited prior research, aiming to provide insights into its challenges (Nurmiet et al., 2011).

Data Collection Methods

Permission was secured from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, the Harare Provincial Education Director, and the Glenview-Mufakose District Schools Inspector before data collection. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights, with confidentiality emphasized. Data were gathered through:

Questionnaires: Distributed randomly to male and female teachers to minimize bias.

Interviews: Conducted individually with open-ended questions to elicit detailed responses.

Observations: Noted participants' non-verbal cues during face-to-face interactions, adhering to social distancing protocols.

Data Analysis

Data from questionnaires and interviews were compiled, organized, and presented using tables, graphs, and pie charts to accommodate diverse audiences. Tables offered simplicity, graphs provided quick comprehension, and pie charts catered to varied preferences. Analysis considered age, gender, and teaching experience to enhance meaning. Triangulation, member checks, and peer debriefing ensured credibility and trustworthiness (Creswell, 2014).

Analysis of Data from Interviews

Content analysis transformed qualitative interview data into structured formats (e.g., tables, graphs) for clarity.

Processing of Collected Data

Data were tabulated manually and electronically, then visualized in graphs and pie charts to enhance accessibility and save space.

The Actual Research Findings

The study revealed:

Biographical Details: Most teachers held diplomas, with fewer possessing degrees; female teachers outnumbered males with degrees, challenging gender stereotypes in education.

Age Distribution: Teachers aged 30-40 were the primary CBC implementers, suited to its active nature, while school heads and inspectors (50-60) excelled in administrative roles but struggled with technical aspects.

Institutional Challenges: Schools had qualified staff, but few teachers were trained in new subjects like Visual and Performing Arts (VPA). The 2017-2020 CBC rollout was poorly executed due to inadequate preparation, resources, and teacher training, compounded by unchanged infrastructure and large class sizes.

Conclusion

The research identified numerous impediments to CBC success, including resource shortages and inadequate teacher preparation. Age did not affect teacher performance, but qualifications and experience did. Despite challenges, the CBC holds potential to benefit primary education with proper support.

Recommendations

Standardize CBC implementation across schools.

Hire more teachers to reduce class sizes and improve individual attention.

Train staff in Sign Language and Braille for inclusivity.

Foster collaboration among stakeholders (e.g., NGOs, parents).

Encourage schools to network and share best practices.

Establish CBC coordination teams within the Ministry.

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