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TEACHERS' PRACTICES APPLIED ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPETENCE-BASED CURRICULUM IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KILOLO DISTRICT COUNCIL, TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT :

This study examined teachers' practices in the implementation of the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) in secondary schools in Kilolo District Council, Tanzania. A qualitative case study design was employed, involving 39 participants, including teachers, students, District Education Officers, and a School Quality Assurance Officer. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentary review, and analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that teachers frequently relied on traditional teacher-centred methods, with limited use of learner-centred practices encouraged by CBC. Assessment remained dominated by tests and examinations, while authentic assessment strategies such as portfolios, rubrics, and projects were rarely applied. Although some teachers integrated demonstrations, group work, and real-life applications, these were inconsistently practiced and often hindered by large class sizes, limited resources, and inadequate ICT skills. The study concludes that effective CBC implementation requires professional development, resource provision, and systemic support to enhance teachers' pedagogical and assessment practices. It recommends strengthening teacher training, diversifying assessment, and expanding ICT integration to align classroom practices with CBC objectives.

Keywords: competence-based curriculum and Teachers' practices.

Introduction

The shift from content-based to competence-based education in Tanzania reflects a global trend emphasizing skills, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. The Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) seeks to prepare learners for real-life challenges, employment, and lifelong learning rather than rote memorization. In secondary schools, teachers are the central agents of CBC implementation as they design lessons, facilitate interactive learning, and apply assessment practices that measure competencies across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. However, in Tanzania, the transition from traditional methods to CBC practices has been met with challenges, including inadequate training, limited teaching resources, and teacher reliance on conventional assessment approaches. Kilolo District, with its mixture of rural and semi-urban schools, offers a valuable context to examine how teachers interpret and apply CBC in practice.

This study was guided by the following objectives: to examine teachers' practices frequently applied in CBC implementation, to assess the challenges they face, and to determine the implications of these practices for the quality of teaching and learning. By focusing on Kilolo District, the study contributes to understanding how CBC reforms are taking shape in under-resourced contexts and offers insights to inform policy and practice in secondary education.

Theoretical Perspectives

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory emphasizes that learning occurs within a social context through observation, imitation, and modeling. Bandura (1977) argued that individuals acquire new behaviours and knowledge by watching others, a process known as vicarious learning. In educational settings, teachers serve as role models, demonstrating problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and effective communication, which students then internalize (Teachers Institute, 2024). Research further shows that peer modeling fosters the development of cognitive and social skills, as students often learn more effectively from peers than from instructors (IJNRD, 2024).

Constructivism, developed by Piaget (1973) and Vygotsky (1978), suggests that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction and reflection. Piaget's theory emphasized stages of cognitive development, while Vygotsky stressed the role of social interaction and cultural context in shaping learning. Fosnot (2013) argued that competence-based approaches align closely with constructivist principles, as they emphasize inquiry-based learning,

collaboration, and real-world problem solving. Brooks and Brooks (2019) also supported the view that constructivist classrooms encourage deeper engagement by positioning the teacher as facilitator rather than sole authority.

Materials and Methods

This study adopted a qualitative research approach with a case study design to gain in-depth understanding of teachers' practices in CBC implementation. Kilolo District was purposively selected because of its semi-urban and rural educational setting and the limited number of studies on CBC in the area. The target population comprised 50 secondary schools, 713 teachers, 18,916 students, 9 School Quality Assurance Officers, and 4 District Education Officers. From this, a sample of 39 participants was drawn, including 12 teachers, 24 students, 2 District Education Officers, and 1 School Quality Assurance Officer. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to ensure diversity and relevance of participants.

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentary review, while secondary data included lesson plans, syllabi, assessment records, and national curriculum documents. Thematic and content analysis were employed to identify recurring themes and patterns related to CBC implementation. Trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation of sources, member checking, and thick descriptions of context. Ethical considerations included informed consent, confidentiality, cultural sensitivity, and respect for participants' dignity.

Findings and Discussion

Teachers' Practices that are Frequently Applied in Secondary Schools on the Implementation of CBC

Teacher-Led Demonstrations and Explanations

The study found that demonstration was one of the most common practices observed in science and vocational subjects. In some classrooms, teachers modeled experiments such as assembling an electric circuit, after which students repeated the activity in small groups. However, in most schools, demonstrations were primarily teacher-led, with students playing passive roles as observers. Only a few teachers allowed students to actively participate by assigning roles such as recorder, timekeeper, or presenter, which encouraged collaboration and responsibility.

While demonstrations ensure procedural accuracy, their dominance reflects the persistence of teacher-centred pedagogy. This contradicts the learner-centred principles of the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC), which emphasize hands-on engagement (Mkumbo, 2023). The overuse of teacher-led demonstrations can be attributed to constraints such as large class sizes, limited resources, and pressure to cover the syllabus quickly (Kamwela & Rwehumbiza, 2022). Although effective for showing techniques, demonstration should serve as a starting point for active learner practice. Studies in Malawi show that when demonstrations are followed by student repetition in groups, comprehension and retention improve (Chirwa, 2023). Thus, CBC implementation requires shifting from "watch-and-listen" demonstrations to interactive activities that promote skill acquisition (Ombay, 2024).

Group Work and Collaborative Learning

Teachers reported adapting a variety of methods such as group discussions, study tours, and peer mentorship. One teacher explained:

I always read my subject-instructed subject matter and objective to be achieved, then I select and use different teaching methods such as group discussion and study tours according to my school environment and students' ability (Teacher, School F, Interview, 27 May 2025).

In some schools, group-based tasks also helped shy students build confidence and reduced classroom anxiety.

The frequent use of group work reflects CBC's emphasis on collaboration and communication (Nzilane, 2022). In resource-limited settings, it also enables equitable sharing of scarce materials, such as a single textbook used by multiple learners (Mziray, 2023). Yet, when poorly structured, group tasks risk becoming superficial exercises. Teachers often assign them as time-fillers without guiding deeper learning, echoing Mwakasendo's (2024) finding that many lack facilitation training. Where group work was effective, teachers acted as facilitators, asking probing questions and supporting inclusive engagement (Mtebe & Kisanga, 2023). To realize CBC goals, teachers must be trained not only to assign group activities but also to assess collaboration skills like leadership, negotiation, and conflict resolution (Chirwa, 2023).

Questioning and Class Discussions

Findings revealed that questioning and discussions were inconsistently practiced. In one biology class, a student asked: "Why do plant cells have bigger vacuoles than animal cells?" This inquiry opened a fruitful discussion that fostered critical thinking. However, in most cases, questioning was limited to factual recall and teacher-dominated discourse.

This reliance on lower-order questions reflects examination-driven teaching and the pressure to move quickly through content (Mziray, 2023; Kamwela & Rwehumbiza, 2022). While closed questions help assess comprehension, they fall short of CBC's emphasis on critical thinking, analysis, and synthesis (Mwakasendo, 2024). Class discussions, too, were often dominated by a few outspoken students, leaving others disengaged. Effective CBC-aligned questioning requires deliberate planning of open-ended questions and strategies like think-pair-share to ensure inclusivity (Nzilane, 2022). Teachers who planned questions in advance better guided learners toward competencies, consistent with Chirwa's (2023) findings.

Project-Based and Contextual Learning

Teachers employed project work and practical tasks in various subjects. In one case, a home economics teacher instructed students on measuring ingredients. After practice, one learner remarked:

I now understand the importance of accuracy when measuring ingredients. It's something we learned in theory, but doing it in practice made it clear (Student, Interview, 25 May 2025).

Such reflections demonstrate the value of experiential learning in consolidating knowledge.

Discussion shows that project-based learning (PBL) can strengthen CBC when well implemented, as it integrates real-world problem-solving and interdisciplinary learning (Mwakasendo, 2024; Chirwa, 2023). Projects like environmental assessments or community campaigns encourage learners to apply knowledge across subjects. Yet, many schools conducted “paper projects” due to resource limitations, undermining experiential learning (Mziray, 2023). Assessment of projects was often focused on final products rather than processes, neglecting CBC competencies such as teamwork and creativity (Nzilane, 2022). Greater emphasis on process-oriented assessment and community integration would enhance the effectiveness of PBL.

Use of ICT and Multimedia Tools

Some teachers showed initiative in accessing digital content. One teacher explained:

Even if we have internet, we are not trained enough to use it properly for teaching (Interview, Teacher, School C, 26 May 2025).

Another was observed browsing YouTube for a volcanic eruption video to enhance lesson delivery. These examples highlight teachers' efforts to integrate ICT despite barriers. ICT has the potential to transform CBC classrooms by supporting inquiry, collaboration, and creativity (Mtebe & Kisanga, 2023). However, many teachers fell into the “substitution trap,” where technology merely replaced traditional tools without transforming pedagogy (Nzilane, 2022). The effectiveness of ICT integration depended heavily on teacher competence. In schools where training was provided, lessons included interactive simulations and multimedia creation, enhancing learner engagement (Mwakasendo, 2024). Still, rural schools lag behind, exacerbating inequality in CBC implementation (Mziray, 2023). For ICT to realize its transformative role, equitable investment in infrastructure and teacher digital training is essential.

Assessment Practices in CBC Classrooms

The findings showed that teachers relied heavily on traditional tests and examinations while rarely employing formative tools such as portfolios, rubrics, or rating scales. One educational officer emphasized during an interview:

Assessment, monitoring, and evaluation of teaching and learning were frequently administered to students using appropriate tools that promoted learning competencies. Teachers commonly used authentic assessments such as portfolios, field observation, project work, and practical tasks, while minimizing reliance on traditional assessment techniques (Educational Officer, Interview, 28 May 2025).

Discussion highlights that assessment practices are slowly shifting toward competence-oriented methods, with performance-based tasks such as role-plays and experiments gaining ground (Mtebe & Kisanga, 2023). However, summative examinations still dominate, driven by systemic pressures. The absence of detailed feedback further undermines formative assessment, as many teachers provide only marks without guidance for improvement (Mwakasendo, 2024). Inconsistencies also arise because teachers design their own rubrics, leading to non-uniform standards across schools (Chirwa, 2023). For CBC to succeed, assessment reforms must reduce exam pressure and standardize formative approaches that emphasize continuous skill development (Kamwela & Rwehumbiza, 2022).

Conclusion

The study concluded that teachers in Kilolo District have made efforts to apply CBC-aligned practices such as demonstrations, group work, questioning, and practical tasks. However, these practices are often teacher-dominated, inconsistently applied, and limited by structural barriers such as inadequate resources, poor ICT access, and examination pressures. Assessment practices remain largely traditional, with insufficient use of authentic and performance-based methods. As a result, the CBC's vision of promoting creativity, problem-solving, and real-life competence has not been fully realized in many classrooms.

Recommendations

It is recommended that teachers redesign demonstrations and group work to ensure active learner participation. Project-based learning and community-linked activities should be expanded to make learning more contextual and meaningful. Schools should diversify assessment by incorporating portfolios, rubrics, role plays, and formative evaluations that capture a wide range of student competencies. Capacity-building programs for teachers should emphasize facilitation skills, ICT integration, and authentic assessment strategies. Policymakers should invest in providing teaching resources, strengthening ICT infrastructure, and reforming examination systems to align with CBC objectives. By addressing these gaps, CBC implementation can move closer to achieving its intended outcomes of competence, creativity, and lifelong learning among students.

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