

Teachers' position on Implementing Competence Based Curriculum in Tanzania: Adoption of the First Framework

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Abstract

Purpose: The study basically aimed at examining implementation of competence based curriculum in Tanzania using the FIRST framework. The framework has been in practice in one way or another although it seems to be new by name in the field of education. Essentially, the framework includes all tools in teaching-learning process where learners are placed at the centre and fully engaged throughout learning journey. By adopting FIRST framework a teacher assumes a facilitation role of all learning activities through actively reviewing every step of learning activities.

Methodology: Regarding the nature of the topic, the study adopted qualitative approach to explore value, opinions and experiences related to teaching and learning in the course of implementing competence based curriculum. A specific method adopted was reviewing secondary works.

Findings: Some teachers particularly those who had received FIRST framework trainings showed high capacity of implementing competence based curriculum. The study found that implementation of competence based curriculum is well captured through the FIRST framework. In this case more training about the FIRST framework is highly recommended for a smooth implementation of competence based curriculum.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: Since implementation of competence based curriculum is very vital to improvement of education in the country the best way to carry it would be adoption of the FIRST framework which has shown positive impact. The study recommends more training of FIRST framework to teachers who are the focussed group meanwhile preparing enough teaching and learning resources. On going training programme to some Tanzanian teachers by SeGa group, the founder of FIRST framework should be strengthened and supported by the government for a greater impact.

Keywords: Curriculum, Competence Based Curriculum, FIRST framework

I. INTRODUCTION

Usually, every society strives to achieve a well-nurtured young generation that suits contemporary need of that particular community. To achieve this goal, curriculum of education system of every society requires frequent review to accommodate the ever-changing need of people. Tanzania is no exception in this matter. It has made rigorous efforts in transforming her curricula since 2004 because the previous

content based curricula were criticised for being too theoretical, therefore unable to meet the demand of practical skills needed by people to cope with rapid economic, industrial and social cultural changes taking place in the world. This study shifts the scholarship attention from traditional teaching (content based teaching) to interactive based teaching (competence based teaching). The FIRST is an engaging framework that helps teachers to bridge theory and practice during teaching and learning process. Specifically this paper examines implementing competence-based curriculum using the FIRST framework. The study found that, teachers who applied the FIRST framework implemented well the competence-based curriculum. On the other hand, teachers who had no idea of the FIRST framework still used content-based approach though claiming to implement the new curriculum. Considering efficiency of the framework, teachers are essentially called upon for trainings.

1.1 Background of the study

The Education system in Tanzania has gone through tremendous changes through since independence. These changes have fashioned provision of education process in the country. Improvement in schools' infrastructures has not been the only area of change but also a notable transformation of curriculum. The existing socio-economic situations and the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 objective which has taken basic features of 2014 Education and Training Policy call for fundamental transformations and remedy of inherent deficiencies in the education delivery system.

The government through the Institute of Education (TIE) in 2004 carried out a survey by reviewing the secondary school curriculum. The report showed that the traditional curriculum did not point out specific competencies that were necessary to be attained by learners by the end of four years study programme. The report suggested replacement of traditional content-based education by a Competence-Based Education (URT, 2004).

The term Competence Based Education (CBE) is basically not a new concept in the world's education system. The Competence Based Education is widely known elsewhere as a movement originated from teacher education curricula in the

United State in the 1970's (Schilling & Koetting, 2010; Mulder, 2004; Fletcher, 2000). It came about as a result of higher demand of a curriculum that would directly come from the problems and issues of the changing society (Kliebard, 2004).

According to (Mosha, 2012) competence is a set of skill, knowledge and behaviours some one needs to have achieved in order to perform tasks or activities at school and in the world of work. Similarly, it is defined as the capability to choose and apply an integrated combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes with the intention to realize a task in a certain context (Kouwenhoven, 2003). The concept competence through this study is defined as the individual's ability to do a particular task in a prescribed standard stressing on what he/she can do rather than what he/she knows. In this respect, Competence Based Curriculum is that instrument in running education that seeks to develop in learners the ability to learn and perform tasks to a prescribed standard. An individual learner shows distinctive characteristics that differentiate successful performer from the rest in terms of ability to reach goals and cope better with a given situation by demonstrating acquired skills, knowledge and other characteristics.

As suggested by Savage (1993), competence based curriculum is a functional approach because it stresses more on life skills and evaluates master of skills that are necessary for an individual to function proficiently in a given society. This paper therefore presents teachers' position on implementing competence-based curriculum (CBE) in Tanzania schools focussing on the application of the FIRST framework.

1.II Competence Based Curriculum in Tanzanian Schools

The Curriculum underlies the premise of an equitable education where the focus is stressed on what the student can demonstrate rather than what students know. It doesn't count how the student may have learned it and for how long it took to learn it. It seeks to reward students for their capabilities to demonstrate their acquired knowledge and help to ensure them gain real world skills they can use in a job environment. It should be taken into account that the idea of CBE came along with the evaluation of the national first Five Years Development Plan (FYDP) of 2011/2012 – 2015/2016 initiated by the fourth president of Tanzania Mrisho Jakaya Kikwete. In the second Five Years Development Plan (FYDP) under the theme "Nurturing Industrialization for Economic transformation and Human Development." The main focus being to continue the process of growth through economic transformation aiming at developing industrial sector and some services sectors connected to industrialization like transportation, logistics finance and so forth so as to transform Tanzania into a semi industrial country by 2020. Just

Considering this fact, competence based curriculum was introduced so as to achieve the mission of best practices that could be simulated in Tanzania to generate effective results in

the quality of education offered to Tanzanians, which would ultimately reduce the gap between the labour market and the school system. The new curriculum therefore emphasizes less academic instructions and called for more practical, more skills based orientation to a working environment and students' daily life. Besides addressing the gaps realized in the study, the new curriculum intended at shaping the attitude and minds of Tanzanian learners in a visible manner. The curriculum emphasis on learners' mental ability to synthesis issues and proposes a practical framework that promotes competencies of learners based on their passions and talents. It stresses emphasis on continuous assessment test over one to one examination.

II. RELATED LITERATURES

The demand of greater accountability in education towards community engagement in decision-making gave great impetus to the concept of Competence Based Curriculum (Brundrett, 2000). The movement for CBE initially arose out of the demand to have a curriculum that resulting directly out of the problems facing the society. It just emerged from the same idea of Education for Self-Reliance of 1967 (ESR) articulated by Mwalimu Nyerere the first president of Tanzania, where focus was put on education that would produce people who are self reliant, confident, with sense of commitment and responsibility, self motivated and dedicated to services by taking appropriate actions to address issues affecting both individual and society at large. The need for improved efficiency and increased production in the industries also led to a thinking about best practice to fulfil a task (Goodman, Henderson & Stenzel, 2006; Kouwenhoven, 2003). It is also argued by Mulder (2004) that competence based education became primarily associated with behaviourism, mastery learning and modular teaching. Generally, the competence based education movement grew out of dissatisfaction with programmes in the post secondary education because many colleges and universities offered programmes that had no clear objectives with respect to what the students were actually being training to do or be (Mulder, 2004). Similarly, this was too argued by Cross et al, (2002) that, Competence Based Curriculum represented a major paradigm shift from what is known as content based and teacher centred approach to performance based and student centred approach, which integrated education with training.

Competence based education has been in use in China in the past two decades as a very important education philosophy for constructing its Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system (Fan, 2017). This paradigm shift in TVET system in China was to match with the realistic expectations of the industries for higher TVET graduates. Essentially, the essence was to prepare vocational talents for the future welfare of the society and its rapid overall development of industrial sector. The competence-based curriculum provides a variety of opportunities for identification and nurturing of young Chinese potentials and talents in preparing for life and the world of work. Recently

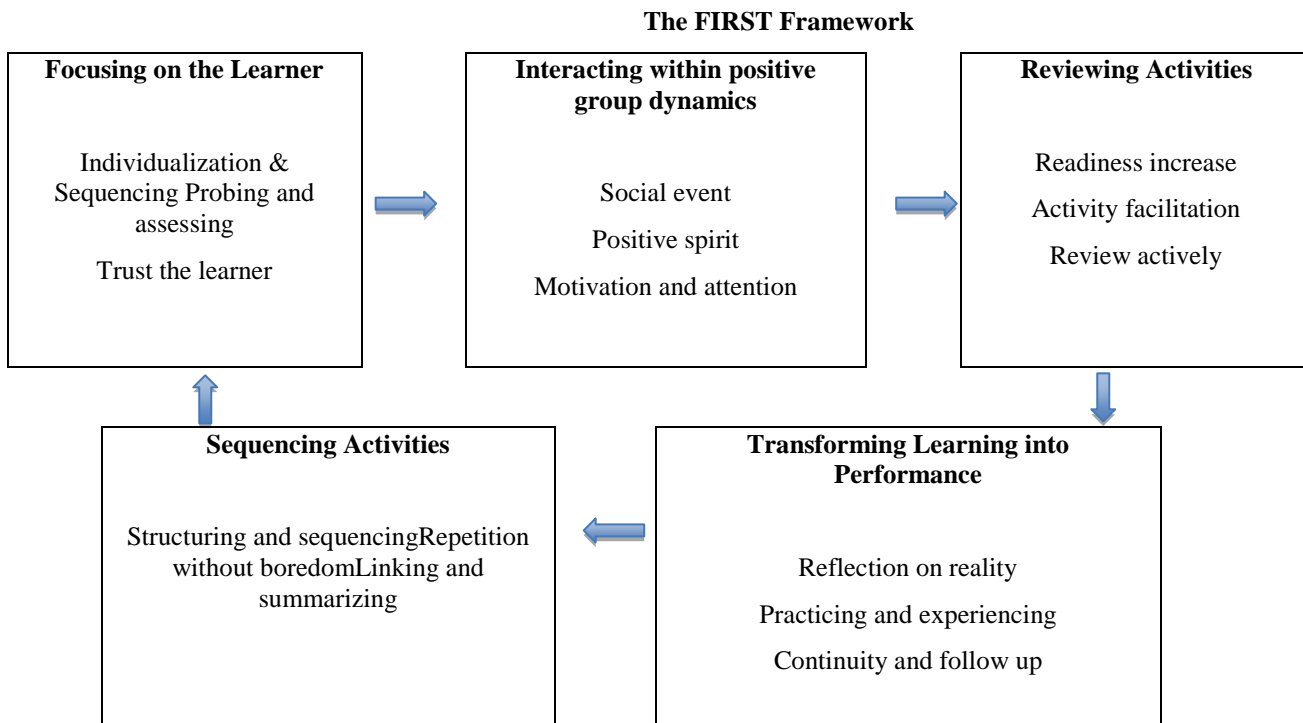
this kind of learning has become of more preoccupation, many Chinese Universities have experienced increased interest from professional and commercial sectors for their interests to be included into academic environment. As a result, vocational schools and universities have developed initiative to adopt their academic teaching to the requirements of industry, so that they ensure employability to their graduates and increase competitiveness in the international education market. Ultimately, a new form of curriculum development has arisen focusing on finding the relationship between university education and the competence needed by the graduates in their future career, by defining clearly which competence need to be included in the respective courses.

In this case, Tanzania through the standards set by the Institute of Education disseminated a secular, which suggested the aim of secondary education as to enable their students acquire competences that fit the study program they intend to complete. Therefore to approach teaching and learning based on competences means they have to go beyond knowledge, which is to attain both the necessary knowledge and ability to apply that knowledge in a specific context of their life. According to Komba and Kira (2013), the old curriculum applied to Tanzania secondary schools was ineffective as the graduates failed to demonstrate the skills and competencies that fully addressed local, national and global market demands. Hence forth, in 2015 Tanzania adopted the CBC

that lead to the development of curriculum aligning with national and the global changes of economic, political and culture. However, implementation of competence-based curriculum in schools has been so huddle and faced several challenges since its introduction.

II.1 The FIRST framework

FIRST is a pedagogical approach in education context that stands for five domains namely; “F” stands for Focusing, “I” stands for Interacting, “R” stands for Reviewing, “S” stands for Sequencing and “T” stands for Transforming. It is a holistic framework tiered around models and theories from different disciplines such as education psychology, learning theory, gamification and game-based learning, facilitative learning, experiential learning, and neuroscience (Bahgat, 2018). The framework includes set of principles explaining how individuals, acquire, retain and recall knowledge. These principles are catalysts that promote full engagement of individuals in the learning activities where every learner applies own experiences in building existing knowledge. The primary roles of FIRST framework in teaching and learning process are that, it inculcates learner’s self experiences, creativity, exploration and transformation. Essentially, to explain well the framework with its all domains and principles, the following figure illustrates;



Source: SeGa

The figure above summarises all activities that a teacher would employ to actively facilitate learning activities. Regarding the structure above one would realize that the framework employs learner centric theory and practice where emphasize is on learner's needs. Every principle of each domain focuses on learners ranging from individual learner in the 'F' to the group in 'I'. Basically these sorts of interaction happening in the learning activities reflect the demand of competence-based curriculum.

In the FIRST framework a teacher do not apply didactic approach in teaching rather facilitation for understanding as a requirements for competence based. Facilitative teaching seeks to assist learners to construct meaning and come to an understanding of key ideas and practice. The framework requires teachers to guide learner inquiries into complex problems, learning activities or situations through a number of principles such as individualization, applying probing and assessing, trusting the learner, creating social event, promoting positive spirit, enforcing motivation and attention, readiness increase, active facilitation, being vigilant in reviewing the lesson, making sure that instructions are well structured and sequenced, must repeat key concepts but without boredom, linking and summarizing units of the lesson, reflecting on reality, practising and experiencing, ensuring that there is continuity and follow up as well. These principles complement each other to create active deep learner experience. However, not at all situations these principles work simultaneously in one learning journey.

Through the FIRST framework a teacher is able to integrate deep learning into teaching process. The lesson becomes enjoyable activity and as Biggs and Tang (2011) asserted that deep learning encourages learners to seek underlying meanings, relate new knowledge and skills to experiences, analyse and evaluate the knew knowledge and skills. It is at this situation that competence based is achieved.

III. METHODOLOGY

In developing this paper, the author employed qualitative approach because of its nature to explore information related to value, opinions and individual teacher's experiences. Specifically the author adopted a review of secondary data. Related documents like teachers' scheme of works and lesson plans were also reviewed. These documents were reviewed to assess whether or not statement of objectives, teaching and learning activities or teaching and learning resources lead to central focus of competence based curriculum. In addition to the above two methods the author himself engaged in teaching activity where the FIRST framework tools were designed and applied so as to examine effectiveness of the framework in carrying CBE objectives.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Around the end of 2015 all secondary schools and vocational training schools in Tanzania had adopted competence-based curriculum. The implementation of the new curriculum started

with training of few teachers who are the key curriculum implementers, distribution of teaching and learning resources by Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) and setting assessment criteria by the National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA). All these bodies were essentially set to ensure smoothness of implementation. At whatever circumstances, all school teachers by virtual of circular they had to embrace the new curriculum without questioning. However, the process has faced several shortcomings that in one-way or another are impediments to achievements. The following are the key areas pointing position of teachers in the process of implementing competence-based curriculum;

IV.I Awareness of CBC among teachers

Initially the study started by investigating teachers' awareness on competence based curriculum knowing that if the concept is well known probably implementation would be easy. The study shows that a big number of teachers did not have clear understanding what does the concept of competence-based curriculum mean. The level of understanding was not only based on definition of the concept but also CBC objectives. Considering the position of teachers in the process of CBC implementation, it was thought that responsible authorities specifically the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), the Ministry of Education and Culture and the National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA) would fully involve teachers from the beginning of the process and promote awareness among them before the curriculum was put into place instead only minority had this opportunity. Unawareness of teachers' on CBC was also exhibited in the study by HakiElimu (2012), which argued that the CBC in schools had always been poorly implemented, as the majority of teachers did not understand the requirements of the new curriculum. This situation shows that there was a link missing between teachers' awareness and the pedagogical implementation of the new curriculum. However, awareness should be realised by both teachers and students because the role of a student is tied to that of the teacher in competence based curriculum (Abel et al, 2009)

IV.II Teachers' personal skills

As a responsible teacher should be, it is very important an individual teacher develop personal skills on his/her career. Promoting students' competence doesn't only require mastery of subject matter but also the best way to present it. This implies that methodology is of paramount in teaching particularly in competence-based curriculum. The responses of teachers through discussion with teachers show that about 83% had not received training related to the new curriculum. As the curriculum implementers it is surprising that majority of them did not know how to implement the new curriculum. The workshops and seminars conducted earlier before actual implementation of CBC involved only few teachers. It was expected that those teachers got opportunity to attend these trainings could have micro training to their co-teachers but this was not done. Through teachers' lesson plans and scheme of

work it was realized that statements expressing learning outcomes were not well written. Most of their lesson plans were more similar to content based curriculum (Old curriculum) lesson plan in terms of statement of objectives. They did not show a design of realist learning tasks, which aimed at developing students' competences. These findings are closely related with the study conducted by Komba and Mwandanji(2016) and Grace (2016) on the similar subject matter specifically looking on teachers' ability to prepare competence based curriculum lesson plans.

IV.III Teachers' access to teaching and learning resources

Normally any change in curriculum goes perpendicular with publication of new textbooks and other teaching and learning resources aligning with the new instructions. Many of studies show that responsible authority did not prepare enough textbooks and other resources. It was found that the number of textbooks available at schools was very few compared to a number of students. Further more, most of the textbooks available did not reflect objectives of the new curriculum (CBC). It was too reported that many schools had no enough laboratory apparatus that could support practical courses as one of the requirements of new curriculum. Laboratory-based teaching helps students to develop scientific, practical skills, problem-solving ability, inquisitive minds and learning through investigation. In this case teachers found difficulty to carry out important learning activities signifying competences. Examples of these activities are those designed to accomplish the principles of activity facilitation, individualization, social events or linking and summarizing.

IV.IV Management of overcrowded classrooms

It is the fact that teaching and leaning environment becomes conducive when a classroom has an appropriate number of students. The Tanzania ministry of education prescribed 45 students in a class as a standard number. More than half of schools studied were observed to suffer overcrowding of students. This had a great impact on the implementation of competence-based curriculum.

It is said that there is explicit relationship between physical environment and students understanding of the subject matter. In overcrowded classroom students develop more negative attitude, perceptions and human relationship as well. In this context promoting students' competence becomes difficulty because only few students may get opportunity to receive maximum supervision from facilitator. However, the suggested framework may probably help to resolve this nuisance situation. For example, creating and supervising well social events within group dynamics. As denoted by Klatzky (1994) that, learning is fundamentally a social activity (as cited in Bahgat, 2018). The activity bounds students to create an interactive and safe environment for collaboration between teachers and students and among students themselves.

IV.V Teachers' lesson plan and preparation

Essentially, the lessons are organized by subjects and levels in

which objectives, descriptions of teaching and learning materials and teaching and learning activities must be clearly stated. It is unfortunately that many teachers lack proper knowledge on writing lesson plans that reflects competence-based curriculum. For example it was found that many of the stated objectives in lesson plans reviewed did not show specific skills expected to be attained by students at the end of the lesson because verbs used were general. Verbs like "students to know... students to understand..." such verbs do not define exact skills intended to be acquired by students. Similarly, it was found that in many stated objective there were more than one measurable verb. This is actually a very poor way of stating objectives of a lesson. Further more, it was found that normally teachers are concerned with only classroom contents they don't prepare pre classroom activities. This is contrary to what FIRST framework advocates. Prior to the classroom session a teacher is supposed to prepare any keynote point in either pictorial or text form as a topic opener. This helps students to have a correct direction on the coming lesson. It also helps students to read widely before the actual lesson begins. This idea aligns with the argument by Bahgat, (2018) that learning doesn't start and end in the classroom, what really matter is the continuity of learning after the training is over.

IV.VI Assessments and feedback

Assessment is essentially a description of how a teacher determines how learners have understood the subject matter. The assessment should be confined within the pre-defined criteria, there should not be new aspects added later or any other aspects be measured that are not in the list of objectives of pre-defined criteria for assessment. Regarding this study, it was found that teachers gave students very low performance task during learning process. Though both formative and summative assessments are important but formative assessment enhances strong foundation for students' academic progress. In this case it was expected that teachers give students enough activities, quizzes and assignments to strengthen their understanding. On the other hand feedback after assessment helps in mirroring the information regarding students' performance and also feedback initiates the learning process in them. After giving feedback students develop action plans that describes what they have to do after classroom session is over. This concurs with Martin (2020) who asserts that action plans are documents prepared by learners immediately after learning event in which they describe learned skills outside classroom setting (cited in Bahgat, 2018). It is also argued that using action plan for assessment at the end of lesson strengthens transfer of learning. It is for this reason that becomes important to apply FIRST framework to successfully carry formative assessment. In this framework through pull and push strategy helps a teacher to realise individual learner's understanding. Further more, a teacher uses the first domain of the framework Focusing and the fifth domain Transforming learning into performance specifically their associate principles probing and assessing as well as continuity and follow up respectively for assessment and

feedback. This will keep learners on track as supported by Willingham (2009) who asserts that continuous assessment is very important because the longer learners carry a misconception the harder it will be to correct it.

V. CONCLUSION

The study has shown that many teachers do not actually understand what to be achieved in the competence-based curriculum. Although teachers think that they are implementing the new curriculum but through document review particularly teachers' scheme of works and lesson plans, it was found that in fact they were still implementing content based curriculum. Since the FIRST framework is capable of integrating objectives of competence-based curriculum it would be a high time for a responsible authority to carry out training teachers about the framework. Teachers need to be supported with the provision of substantial training and resources especially in this course of implementing the new curriculum.

The findings from this study show that teachers were not well oriented to the practice of new curriculum (competence-based curriculum). We therefore assume that implementation of CBC will continue to set rigors for teachers and thus compromising the central objective of CBC.

Finally, in order to achieve intended objective of CBE we recommend rigorous effort to be taken by education authority and education agencies like Tanzania Institute of Education that is responsible for curriculum development and National Examination Council responsible for assessment. An immediate step worth noting would be training teachers so as to cope with curriculum in place. The FIRST framework would be the most relevant for enhancing competence based curriculum by virtual of its capability to promote active learning.

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