



Implementation of Competence Based Curriculum and its Effect on Demonstration of Competences in The Education System: Case of Selected Secondary Schools in Morogoro Urban, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Globally, education systems are increasingly moving from a Content Based Curriculum to a Competence Based Curriculum. The education provision is shifting from a focus on memorizing facts to building practical skills. Students are tested on what they can do and how they solve real-world problems. This paper evaluates the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum and its effect on the demonstration of competences in the education system. The Competence Based Curriculum makes the curriculum more effective and responsive to societal and economic needs. It focuses on what students understand, practical skills, critical thinking, and what students can actually do in real-world situations. Researchers have been explaining various educational experiences happening during the curriculum implementation. The implementation of Competence Based Curriculum in various educational contexts has indicated systemic challenges. The Competence Based Curriculum requires students to demonstrate the ability to apply the skills and competences required to perform critical functions. Demonstrating competence involves consistently producing high-quality work, communicating effectively, performing tasks effectively, solving problems proactively, safely, and according to the required standards. The perceptions of educators have shown students' weaknesses in demonstrating skills and competences acquired from the educational programs. The evaluation in Morogoro Urban has shown that students do not really demonstrate the appropriate skills and competences. Based on the foregoing perceptions, the educational stakeholders have been making an effort to assist students in improving learning and demonstration of competences. There are deliberate efforts to improve the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum and the demonstration of competences among students. The improvement has been considered to occur in various aspects and components of the education system. The purpose is to make educational provision more relevant and reaffirms the government's commitment to quality education.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Since the 21st century, developing countries have been working hard towards quality education as a response to societal needs and consciousness, new ways of thinking, practice, and methods of enquiry in education. Quality of education can be looked at from the input, process, output, and outcome perspectives (Sumra & Katabaro, 2014). Quality education depends on a strong curriculum, well-trained teachers, active learners, and supportive learning environments. It prepares students with useful knowledge, strong core skills, and values that enable them to resolve issues and serve positively in their societies. Therefore, in order to impart to students the appropriate knowledge, skills, and academic abilities, it should be structured in the curriculum. World curricula are in constant change to fit the current needs and requirements and to prepare students for a fast-changing, interconnected society. Some of the initiatives taken include: Shift from Content Based Curriculum to Competence Based Curriculum. The Competence Based Curriculum can be traced back to the early 1970s, when Competence Based Education emerged for the first time in the United States of America (Richard & Rogers, 2001).

Globally, education systems are increasingly transitioning from Content Based approaches to Competence Based models aiming to develop learners' practical skills, problem-solving capacity, and critical thinking abilities that are vital for success in the 21st century (Voogt & Roblin, 2012). Countries have been motivated to implement the Competence Based Curriculum to meet the demands of the global labour market and the challenging issues of the 21st century (Mwasharifa & Shavega, 2024). Shifting to a Competence Based education system was crucial because it replaces passive memorization with real-world practical skills and better prepares students for modern responsibilities. Competence Based learning is a system designed to mirror how people learn, work, and collaborate in the world beyond school. It is built on evidence-based assessment, and it prioritizes flexibility in time, space, and support to ensure all students have the chance to use the content they learn to practice durable and transferable skills. In this system, students are empowered every moment to make important decisions about their learning experiences (Samaddar, 2021). The Competence Based Curriculum has two key elements. One, a course of study must be accompanied by a competence framework that is a detailed statement of the knowledge and skills expected of students who complete a course. Two, the competences described in the framework must be verified by valid and reliable tests of student learning (Nelson, 2014).

To achieve the international goals of educational reforms, the government of Tanzania initiated the Development Vision 2025 (URT, 1999). This program is intended to equip people with knowledge, skills, and attitudes for improving productivity and competitiveness. The vision proposes to have people with higher and better levels of knowledge and expertise who can respond and adjust well to the challenges and opportunities of the world of work. It sees education as a tactical change agent and states that “education should be treated as a strategic agent for mindset transformation and for the creation of a well-educated nation, sufficiently equipped with the knowledge needed to competently and competitively solve the development challenges which face the nation” (URT, 1999, p.19). The vision insisted on the structuring of the education system and curriculum. It influenced the Competence Based Curriculum.

Tanzania officially introduced the Competence Based Curriculum in 2005. It was introduced nationwide across regions to foster competences for success. The adoption was meant to equip students with employable skills to cope with challenging issues of the 21st century (Mwasharifa & Shavega, 2024). The curriculum has been shifting the focus from theoretical knowledge to practical skills, creativity, and employability, aiming to align education with Social-Economic Growth. Competence Based Curriculum follows the constructivist theory that guides students in constructing meaning and understanding by linking new information to their prior knowledge, experiences, and social interactions. Students actively build new knowledge by connecting real-world experiences, social interactions, and prior background. It emphasizes classroom practices to be conducted through student centered pedagogy and formative assessment. Jean Piaget (1896-1980) and Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) are two eminent figures in the development of constructivist theories. They share the common belief that classrooms must be constructivist environments. Constructivist classrooms are current and present-day classrooms.

The Competence Based Curriculum can be conceived as the type of curriculum that aims to enable learners to develop, integrate, and use the desirable competences. It stimulates and emphasizes the acquisition of contemporary skills among students. These skills are increasingly recognized as key competences for today's young people to develop so that they can effectively participate in the global knowledge economy, thrive in an increasingly diverse society, use new technologies effectively, adapt to change and uncertainty, and continue to engage in lifelong learning. The curricula need to integrate 21st century competence in the context of particular content knowledge and to treat both as equally important. These skills refer to a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are believed to be critically important to success in today's world. Some of these skills are: Critical thinking, Communication skills, Collaboration, Creativity, Problem-solving, Technology skills, Social skills, Literacy skills, social responsibility, Innovation skills, and Thinking Skills (Central Board of Secondary Education, 2020; Kopwel, 2014; Foster and Piacentini, 2023; Senjiro and Lupeja, 2023).

The aforementioned curriculum has been implemented in various educational systems around the world. 35 African nations implemented Competence Based Curriculum reforms promising enhanced 21st century skills, employability, and educational quality (Arinaitwe & Ariyo, 2025). Policymakers around the world recognize

the importance of developing young people's modern skills. These skills are a combination of knowledge, skills, and habits essential for success in a rapidly changing world. Many countries include these skills as part of the intended learning outcomes of their education systems. To shift intention into practice, educational assessments need to better measure what matters. Innovative assessments are needed that combine conceptual, technological, and methodological advances in educational measurement (Foster & Piacentini, 2023). This type of curriculum emphasizes competences that graduates might use in a range of different employment and life activities in their communities rather than focusing only on acquiring and reproducing knowledge as the content-based curriculum does. Competence Based Curriculum aims to put students in realistic situations in which they should demonstrate whether they can solve certain problems or perform a particular activity and how they do it (Seezink & Poell, 2010; Tilya & Mafumiko, 2010).

Competence Based Curriculum (Aspects, Steps, Strategies)

Some of the key aspects of Competence Based Curriculum

Purpose: To build practical, creative, and adaptable individuals capable of solving real-life problems.

Implementation: Officially promotes student-centred methods, though implementation challenges persist.

Assessment: Focuses on what learners can do, prioritizing formative assessments like observations and oral presentations.

Structure: Aligns with the Tanzania Education and Training Policy (ETP) 2014 (2023 Edition).

To successfully transitioning to a Competence Based Curriculum it requires:

Active, Learner-Centered Approach: Teachers act as guides rather than mere lecturers. Lessons are designed to engage students in collaborative projects, critical thinking, and inquiry-based learning.

Real-World Application: The focus is on practical life skills, self-employment, and problem-solving, rather than simply passing examinations.

Six steps to develop a Competence Based Curriculum

Designing various components of a Competence Based Curriculum is largely about creating varied opportunities for students to demonstrate important skills in authentic contexts. The process of Competence Based Curriculum typically involves the following steps (Sharma, 2024):

Development or identification of general competences

The first step in developing this kind of curriculum is to identify and map the general competence areas using a wide range of sources of information and techniques to collect them. These competences offer a framework based on specific performance outcomes to develop a curriculum and measure performance. The sources you can use include subject matter experts, high-performing students, educators, online textbooks, articles, and other resources. The techniques that you can use include focus groups, surveys, readings, and observations. Although each student has a unique set of competences, competence maps are generally created by observing and interviewing top-performing students. Then, the students are captured as a list of core competences (knowledge and abilities).

Organizing competences into specific themes

The next step is to define specific competences in each general area. Developing an accurate and precise description will make the next steps in the curriculum development process much easier.

To be able to define a competence fully, reflect thoroughly on its composing elements. For instance, for public speaking, consider both delivery (body language, voice) and content (language, persuasion,

organization). At this point, also consider the following questions to help you frame your goals around a Competence Based Curriculum:

What are the broad advantages of Competence Based learning, and why are these important?

What are the specific benefits it can offer your institution?

What are some of your institution's unique goals around this?

How will you measure the success of this initiative for your institution?

What is the content required to support the development of the specific competence in the curriculum?

What are the instructional strategies and methods that are most effective in developing the competence?

Establishing criteria for performance

For each of the competences, create the standards or rubrics by which you can measure the competence. Make sure to describe several levels that define positive and negative competence at this step. This will help you gauge the effectiveness of the curriculum and find out what works well and what doesn't for the learners.

Creating learning experiences

Once you have defined competences and criteria for outcomes, think about how students will demonstrate these skills via learning experiences. There are multiple ways to demonstrate these skills, so make sure that the products of the assessment, the students' work, are varied and interesting. The ideal way to recognize a Competence Based learning experience is to thoroughly examine the student's work and the learning environment in which they produce it. Teachers and students can use the identified competences and outcomes to regularly reflect on learning. The idea is to empower students to be real learning designers. Students should use the rubric to design a learning experience demonstrating the learning outcomes. They should be responsible for planning, executing, and presenting their work for assessment.

Assessing competence

A successful Competence Based Curriculum will enable students to apply and execute the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities desired by the industry in general. To bridge this gap between industry and academia, there is a need for a structured process of connecting KSAs to assessment. When assessing competences, you need to address two important questions: Have the students acquired the specified competences by the end of the program?

If yes, Was this acquisition of the competences a result of the program? You need various assessment methods to assess the program-level competences, including formative and summative assessments and self-assessment.

Evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum

There will likely be many changes as the curriculum is implemented and students begin to develop their competence in various areas. Therefore, evaluating the curriculum's efficacy in delivering competence is important, refining it to better meet the desired goals, and then repeating the process to ensure ongoing effectiveness. Competence Based learning, a relatively modern approach to learning design, is gaining popularity among educational institutions because it improves students' job-oriented skills.

The above six-step process can help teachers design courses that emphasize mastery, enable students to control their learning, and prepare them for success in the real world. This method meets various student requirements and encourages flexibility, responsibility, and hands-on learning of practical skills.

Competence Based learning is a forward-looking strategy that helps students and society progressively move toward specialized and outcome-driven approaches. Adopting this approach will ensure that every student has the means, confidence, and fortitude to achieve (Sharma, 2024).

Four strategies for success in Competence Based Classroom

Shifting from Activity-Based to Competence Based Learning

In traditional classrooms, learning often revolves around completing activities that may not necessarily lead to mastering the content. Competence Based Learning focuses on the development of specific knowledge and skills that students need to demonstrate mastery.

Developing a Grading System Based on Competence

A crucial aspect of a Competence Based classroom is developing a grading system that reflects student mastery of the competences rather than their compliance with deadlines or other unrelated factors. In this system, student performance is assessed on their understanding of the content and demonstration of the skills they have acquired.

Separating Behaviors from Competences

In a Competence Based classroom, it's important to separate behaviors from competences. This distinction ensures that students' understanding of the content is not blurred by factors unrelated to their mastery of the subject matter. By separating behaviors from competences, we can more accurately assess and report students' academic progress while also addressing any behavioral issues that may arise.

Rethinking Traditional Practices

A Competence Based classroom requires people to rethink some traditional educational practices. By reevaluating traditional practices, we can create a more supportive and effective learning environment that prioritizes student mastery of competences.

European Union in 2006, developed a framework for key lifelong learning skills, which has eight competences that member states must adopt in their education system. The reference framework sets out Eight Key competences as follows: Literacy competence, Multilingual competence, Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering, Digital competence, Personal, social and learning to learn competence, Citizenship competence, Entrepreneurship competence, Cultural awareness and expression competence. One of the main aims of these key competences is to ensure that initial education and training programs provide the foundation for further learning and working life for children and young adults (Pepper, 2011). The foregoing should be built on factors such as well-trained teachers, high-quality teaching, individualized instruction, strong management, a supportive environment that prioritizes student well-being, an appropriate teacher-student ratio, availability of public resources for schools, holistic development, and alignment with educational goals. The United Nations developed a framework that specifies various competences that can guide people in performing duties effectively. They comprise: Communication, Teamwork, Planning & Organizing, Accountability, Client Orientation, Creativity, Technological Awareness, Commitment to Continuous Learning. These competences will support people in working successfully in their careers. The document suggested programs that can facilitate the development of competences. It includes core values, core competences, and managerial competences (Pollard, 2010).

Based on the abovementioned academic and educational perspectives, Competence Based Curriculum has been indicating some benefits for students. In this curriculum, students learn how to apply knowledge to solve actual societal problems rather than simply memorizing facts for examinations. It emphasizes core competences that are essential for students to develop to prepare them for the future. Instead of relying on a single, high-stakes final exam, students are evaluated continuously, allowing educators to identify and nurture individual talents early. Vocational and technical abilities are integrated into learning, increasing

readiness for the workforce or entrepreneurship. Generally, it benefits students by prioritizing real-world mastery over rote memorization. It means students fully experience the subject to appreciate its relevance and connections to the broader world. Engaging with students in a way that fosters real understanding and growth (DiGiulio, 2024).

The Competence Based Curriculum was strengthened through the 2016 and 2023 syllabi policy documents that have emphasized producing learners who think critically, communicate clearly, and apply knowledge in real contexts (TIE, 2023). The Ministry of Education Tanzania has repeatedly affirmed these goals, framing the Competence Based Curriculum as a pathway to learner autonomy and lifelong learning (MoEST, 2014). The Competence Based Curriculum framework has undergone continued revisions and updates. This is based on the fact that the educational provision has been restructured and improved for the purposes of acquiring quality education in Tanzania. UNESCO works to ensure that every individual has access to high-quality education regardless of various challenges. Enhancing quality education for all is a key driver of societal progress and prosperity. By investing in and prioritizing quality education, individuals are empowered to reach their full potential, build more inclusive societies, and pave the way for a sustainable and flourishing future for generations to come (UNESCO, 2000).

Studies have shown that while teachers generally understand the curriculum's objectives, they often struggle with large class sizes, limited instructional materials, insufficient professional development, achieving excellence, assessment standardization, inadequate support systems, professional licensure is slow, and change is difficult because the system is stuck (Kafyulilo et al., 2012; Tilya & Mafumiko, 2010; HakiElimu, 2017, Samaddar, 2021). One of the most significant challenges in implementing the Competence Based Curriculum is overcrowded classrooms, with class sizes often ranging from 60 to 90 pupils, well above the national teacher–pupil ratio of 1:40 (URT, 2014). These conditions make it difficult for teachers to use learner-centred methods, carry out formative assessments, or provide individual support to students (UNESCO, 2016). Schools also face shortages of essential teaching and learning materials, including textbooks, instructional aids, and key infrastructure such as laboratories and learning corners, which are critical for effective Competence Based Curriculum delivery (HakiElimu, 2017). Teacher preparedness remains a concern, as many educators were trained under the previous Content Based Curriculum and have not received sufficient in-service training to transition effectively to Competence Based Curriculum approaches (Kafyulilo et al., 2012).

In addition, limited parental and community involvement, particularly in low-income areas, reduces the support needed for successful curriculum reform (Malunda et al., 2016). These challenges show that effective Competence Based Curriculum implementation depends not only on national policy but also on local conditions, including teacher capacity, resource availability, and community engagement. Transitioning from teacher-centred to learner-centred teaching requires substantial adjustments in classroom practice, which many educators find difficult to achieve in resource-constrained environments (Komba & Mwandanji, 2015). The studies explained the challenges facing teachers in implementing the Competence Based Curriculum. The findings indicated that teachers encounter multiple challenges, including large class sizes (80%), shortages of textbooks and teaching aids (60%), inadequate pre-service and in-service training (65%), limited professional support (80%), time constraints (60%), and difficulties in assessing learner competences (75%). Also, low levels of parental and community involvement (60%) and poor infrastructure (70%) further hinder successful implementation (Juma et al, 2025).

Findings from literature reviews, surveys, and interviews with educators and stakeholders highlight inadequate teacher training as a critical barrier, where many educators feel ill-prepared to effectively deliver Competence Based Curriculum. Limited resources, including shortages of textbooks, digital tools, and adequate infrastructure, further hamper the implementation, particularly in rural and marginalized areas. Resistance to change among educators, parents, and students, stems from unfamiliarity with Competence Based Curriculum methodologies and concerns about its impact on academic outcomes. Infrastructural deficits such as inadequate classroom space and unreliable internet connectivity complicate the delivery of Competence Based Curriculum-aligned education (Cheruiyot, 2024).

Research Problem

Educators have been doing research regarding the adoption, development, and implementation of Competence Based Curriculum and students' demonstration of competences. Research has been showing the educational experiences that are taking place in schools, colleges, and universities. They explain the aspects, steps, strategies, empirical findings, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. Despite various efforts and developments in the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum, there are still educational challenges in the components of the education system. Notwithstanding various efforts, students struggle to demonstrate employable skills and competences. The perception is that young people are not able to demonstrate the competences needed for today's job market. The purpose of this study is to conduct research and explore educational challenges. The study will review and suggest the appropriate measures that could improve the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum and students' demonstration of competences.

Research Objectives

- To explore the challenges affecting the effective implementation of Competence Based Curriculum in secondary schools Tanzania
- To evaluate the perceptions that students are failing to demonstrate the competences that they acquired through the Competence Based Curriculum

Research Questions

- What are the challenges affecting the effective implementation of Competence Based Curriculum in secondary schools Tanzania?
- What are the perceptions that students are failing to demonstrate the competences that they acquired through the Competence Based Curriculum?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research approach. This approach was preferred because it seeks an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within the natural setting. Qualitative studies, aim to examine participants' lived experiences while describing individuals' experiences, beliefs, attitudes, behavior, perception, and interactions (Denscombe, 2010), which allow inner feelings and opinions of the research participants in their real-life situation (Kumar, 2011). The qualitative approach focuses on exploring and understanding the underlying meanings, opinions, behaviors, and motivations of teachers. Using this approach, the researcher entered the secondary school environment open-minded while asking, listening, and discussing attentively with teachers on how they understand the Competence Based Curriculum and how they are performing various educational experiences in the schools. The participants explained how the curriculum implementation is affected by various difficulties.

This study was conducted in five (5) selected secondary schools in Morogoro Urban District of Morogoro Region, Tanzania. The schools were purposively chosen to represent diverse locations in the country where the secondary schools have been implementing the Competence Based Curriculum. These schools are showing the real situation where various challenges have been occurring and affecting curriculum implementation. The study engaged teachers who act as the main implementers of the curriculum. Teachers have been providing an in-depth understanding of what is really taking place in the teaching and learning environment. The secondary schools have been allowing for a detailed exploration of teachers' educational practices regarding the Competence Based Curriculum and demonstration of competences. Purposive sampling was used to select 5 teachers based on expertise and experiences relevant to the study. It is ensuring representation from various educational roles relevant to teacher curriculum practices and the teaching profession.

Data collection

To answer the research questions, the researcher planned and collected data from the teachers in the selected schools. The researcher explained thoroughly the purpose of the study and the methods that could be used during the data collection. He made clarifications of how the data would be captured and how teachers would be involved and to what extent. The investigator used this chance to build a good relationship with teachers, being the main implementers of the curriculum, and gain information related to the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum and demonstration of competences. Data collection methods involved face-to-face semi-structured interviews involving the researcher and five teachers from 5 institutions. The interview helps to understand the experiences of the teachers with regard to the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum. Interviews in qualitative research are guided by an unstructured format. It allows teachers the freedom to express their perceptions and information freely on their own terms (Mertens, 2010). The interviews have focused on understanding and identifying the challenges that have been affecting teachers in implementing the Competence Based Curriculum and demonstrating competences. The semi-structured interviews with teachers enriched the qualitative data and offered views on how the curriculum is implemented and what are the really challenges that affect the educational practices and the quality of education.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2022) five-stage model, was employed to analyze the qualitative data. This rigorous approach ensured that findings were grounded in verbatim quotations from participants, enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's conclusions (Cohen et al., 2018). Thematic analysis is regarded as the form of theme recognition from the data. It includes careful, focused reading and re-reading of data as well as coding and theme construction. It follows five stages:

Familiarizing with the data: The researcher started familiarizing with the audio recorded data obtained through interview in each institution teacher while listening and re-listening several times (Denscombe, 2010; Saldana, 2009). Then, transcription as the process of converting speech from audio recording into written text (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

Generating Initial Codes: A code is a short word/label that assigns meaning to a specific piece of text. Codes were generated using inductive and deductive coding. In inductive coding participant's set data line by line style so to provide participants own words for deep and comprehensive meaning to be provided. In deductive coding the researcher begin with pre-established codes which relay on research questions in order to apply them in the data (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2018). The codes categorise information and are used to identify patterns, themes, or insights. They facilitate interpretation of data to show the challenges occurring during the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum and student demonstration of competences.

Types of data	Statement	Codes	Theme
Interview Teacher B	Students learn agricultural concepts in the classroom but fail to perform farming activities such as planting due to the lack of practicals. Science teachers have been explaining experimental procedures verbally instead of giving students a chance to conduct the practical themselves. Insufficient practical exposure for students. They rarely engage in	Farming activities Conduct the practical Experimental procedures Practical exposure Hands-on activities Laboratory facilities Demonstration farms	Teaching methods



Teacher C	hands-on activities due to limited laboratory facilities and demonstration farms in the agriculture subject.		
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Searching for Themes: Although coding process had numbers of approaches only descriptive coding was used by researcher to summarize extracts using a single word/noun because codes obtained were different to each other. Nouns obtained through descriptive coding helped to encapsulate the general idea of the data in a highly condensed manner and makes researcher quickly refer to the content (Saldana, 2013).

Reviewing Themes: According to Santis & Ugarriza (2000) review of theme in qualitative literature is divided into some sections which are Descriptors of the term theme, Emergence of a theme, Finding a theme, and Labeling a theme (p. 353-353).

Defining a theme: The last stage is defining a theme, Ryan & Bernard (2005) provide 12 ways of defining a theme. The researcher identified the theme by considering the really situation occurring in secondary schools concerning the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum and the demonstration of competences. The main theme is on challenges occurring during the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum and perceptions that students fail to demonstrate the competence.

STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Various challenges affecting the effective implementation of Competence Based Curriculum in secondary schools Tanzania

The Competence Based Curriculum was introduced in Tanzania secondary schools to shift teaching and learning away from rote memorization toward the development of practical knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. The reform aims to prepare students for effective participation in a rapidly changing global environment shaped by digitalization, innovation, and technological advancement. Central to Competence Based Curriculum is learner centered pedagogy, which promotes active learning through problem solving, collaboration, critical thinking, independent learning and application of knowledge to real-life situations (MoEST, 2014; World Bank, 2018). The curriculum was designed to equip students with practical knowledge, skills and competences applicable beyond the classroom setting (MoEST, 2019). It gives the ability to effectively apply knowledge, skills and attitudes to perform tasks and solve problems in a specific context (OECD, 2019). The Competence Based Curriculum emphasizes hands-on learning and competence development to prepare students for higher education, employment and everyday challenges. In Tanzania, secondary schools have been implementing Competence Based Curriculum since 2005, but a problem has arisen among students, they have failed to apply observable knowledge, skills, and behaviours to achieve real-world outcomes. Accumulating evidence suggests severe systemic implementation failures with troubling socioeconomic implications (Arinaitwe & Ariyo, 2025).

The researcher visited 5 secondary schools and interviewed teachers regarding the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum and demonstration of competences. Teachers have been providing various views concerning the Competence Based Curriculum. They revealed some components that have been influencing the educational provision in the secondary schools. These components show what is going on concerning the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum. The researcher will then inform educational stakeholders' the responses from teachers. Educators should think how effectively to organize educational practices and improve the Competence Based Curriculum implementation and the attainment of competences.

The following themes were emerged after conducting the data analysis:

Overcrowded classrooms

The teacher inculcates the big number of students and the educational experiences become unrealistic. Teacher C responded that the large class size has been affecting the social and environmental conditions of a classroom. Teacher D reacted that class sizes of 80-100 students per stream are against the directives provided by educators concerning the classroom environment. The overcrowding contradicts student centered principles, which require close interactions, continuous feedback and active participation. Overcrowding of students causes difficulties for teachers to provide individual attention and monitor skill development. Teacher B replied that Competence Based Curriculum is very difficult to implement due to the lack of appropriate physical infrastructure. The few classes lead to many students being congested, something that causes difficulties for teachers to handle students' attention when they are learning by doing.

Inadequate teaching and learning resources

All the teachers visited in the selected schools acknowledged inadequate teaching and learning resources and materials as the challenges occurring in the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum. They specifically addressed that there is a lack of enough laboratories, ICT tools, laboratory equipments, teaching aids, textbooks, reference books, digital learning materials, and agricultural equipments required for practicals. Teacher B added that the lack of teaching and learning materials make difficult for students to practice skills. Teacher D reported that, the teaching and learning resources allocated to secondary schools, are insufficient to support Competence Based Pedagogy. Teacher E elaborated further that the absence of adequate laboratory equipment renders Competence Based Curriculum demand for practical, investigative and project-based learning virtually impossible. Teacher D replied that limited laboratory equipments prevents effective practical instruction. Practical work is central as it enables students to apply theoretical knowledge. If the science subject is taught with minimal hands-on activities, students develop a superficial understanding and weak scientific reasoning skills.

Examination issues

Examining students refers to the educational assessment process used to measure a student knowledge, skills, subject comprehension, and academic progress. Teacher B understands that the core purpose in examining students is to make them pass the national examinations. Teachers invest much on memorization by doing tests and examinations frequently instead of investing on practical learning projects, group discussions, presentations, and hands-on activities. The assessment methods continue to use traditional examinations instead of assessing students by using Competence Based Curriculum assessment methods.

Teacher B reacted that there is an absence of clear assessment methods that align with Competence Based Curriculum. The curriculum needs to assess skills and attitudes and not written knowledge, as has been done in schools. Teacher C answered that overemphasis on doing examinations goes erroneous concerning Competence Based Curriculum assessment principles.

Teachers are pressured to focus on theory and students passing examinations rather than practical skill development and what students have been doing. Teacher E drew attention and confirmed that, despite the Competence Based Curriculum emphasis on applied competences, assessment that are administered to students continues to reward factual recall. The absence of a formally integrated continuous assessment framework means students quickly learn that only final examination marks matter.

The culture in the examination make teachers prepare students for national examinations focusing on memory check based on facts. Teacher A reacted that parents and communities typically equate academic success with grades on examinations, so they emphasize examination performance rather than the acquisition of skills. These experiences are not acceptable in an effective educational provision and quality education.

Teaching methods

Concerning the methods taking place in the classrooms, teachers rely on lecture methods to cover all the topics listed in the syllabus. This behavior shifts the emphasis from competence development to content coverage. In content, they ask what content the student learned. In competence, they ask what the student can do based on what they learned. Teacher B noted that the majority of teachers still teach by using traditional methods, something that discourages reasoning and creativity, which is a core target of Competence Based Curriculum. Observations in the classrooms showed that there is no learning by doing in the school. He said students learn agricultural concepts in the classroom but fail to perform farming activities such as planting due to the lack of practicals. Science teachers have been explaining experimental procedures verbally instead of giving students a chance to conduct the practical themselves. Teacher C explained the insufficient practical exposure to students. They rarely engage in hands-on activities due to limited laboratory facilities and demonstration farms in the agriculture subject.

Teacher training programs help them to develop and implement the curriculum according to the guidelines and learning environment. The findings from Teacher E indicate a problem in the teacher training. Some teachers are not fully trained in Competence Based Curriculum strategies they continue using traditional lecture methods. He elaborated that educators received only brief orientation workshops, typically for a few days, which in fact, were insufficient to fundamentally transform the pedagogical practices of teachers. Other teachers were found to have been trained in the Content Based Curriculum and have not received the training to implement Competence Based Curriculum. They hardly implement learner centered methods in the classrooms. This behavior limits learner participation and reinforces passive learning. Students rarely engage in inquiry, experimentation, and collaboration, which are essential for developing higher-order thinking skills that are required in real-life problem solving.

Language of instruction

Concerning the language of instruction, Teacher A responded that the language of instruction is one of the obstacles in the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum. The majority of students who transition from Kiswahili medium primary education to the English medium in secondary schools showed little English proficiency. The language barrier is a critical obstacle, explained by teacher B&E, The medium of instruction shifts from Kiswahili in primary schools to English in secondary schools; thus, many students never develop sufficient academic English proficiency to engage with Competence Based Curriculum higher-order cognitive demands. These students, when they join university, where independent academic reading, writing, and seminar participation are foundational expectations, these linguistic deficiencies compound their learning difficulties. In some cases, they cannot develop appropriate academic experiences that are conducted at the university.

Experience from the university lecturers

Visited teachers provided an experience learned from university lecturers who perceived that students joining universities fall short in demonstrating the expected competences addressed in the curriculum. University lecturers perceived that students display behaviors consistent with a rote learning framework rather than the active competence-oriented engagement that the Competence Based Curriculum has been expecting to foster. They have been complaining about students abilities. The competences gained by students in the system of education are not really observed and demonstrated. Students do not perform some educational experiences that have already been conducted in the preceding educational levels. The essential skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, and innovation are not realized. Students lack confidence of demonstrating the skills that are required to succeed in the 21st century. They lack the diligence to study properly as students. It's like there is a gap observed relating to the connection of competences between various educational levels. The challenges encountered during the curriculum implementation have been disturbing the execution of the Competence Based Curriculum. Due to these weaknesses, there are ongoing efforts performed by educators to address the shortcomings and set activities right. Various efforts are being made to ensure the Competence Based System works effectively. Some have been attempting to use new methods, check how well students understand, and improve how

teachers teach. In fact, it requires shifting focus from theoretical rote memorization to practical real-world skill application, ensuring all educational stakeholders have been improving all the relevant components.

DISCUSSION

The class sizes of 80-100 students per stream were observed in the visited schools. This is not good because the educational requirements are becoming unrealistic. The overcrowding makes teachers reduce interactive strategies and weakens the development of critical competences stated in 21st century practices. Large class size affects classroom practices. Teachers are using lecture methods in order to cover the topics stipulated in the syllabus. They have been emphasizing the practices of the Content-Based Curriculum. Large class size causes difficulties for teachers to provide individual attention and monitor skill development. Teachers cannot get a chance to provide instructions appropriately to all students. Many students are congested into a single room, leading to difficulties in handling students attention to facilitate learning by doing. Hands-on learning that enhances skill development is found to be limited for learners (Kinyunyu, 2020).

Teachers responded that there are limited teaching resources, a lack of textbooks, ICT tools, and agricultural equipment required for Competence Based Curriculum practicals. The resources distributed by the Government remain insufficient to support Competence Based Curriculum. The absence of adequate laboratory equipment, reference books, and digital learning materials renders the Competence Based Curriculum demand for practical, investigative and project-based learning virtually impossible.

This finding aligns with UNESCO (2017) documentation of a persistent resource-curriculum mismatch in Sub-Saharan Africa. The materials, textbooks, and infrastructure in schools do not align with the goals and pedagogical methods of Competence Based Curriculum. Without sufficient resources and materials, transitioning from traditional, theory-heavy rote learning to practical, learner centered skill development becomes nearly impossible. Victorini and Wambiya (2024) reported that public secondary schools continue to face serious shortages of teaching resources, making it difficult to conduct group work or other participatory activities. Participants added that limited laboratory equipment prevents effective practical instructions. Practical work is central to Competence Based Curriculum because it enables students to apply theoretical knowledge. If science subjects are taught with minimal hands on activities, students develop a superficial understanding and weak scientific reasoning skills. This contradicts Competence Based Curriculum principles and limits students' preparedness for science related careers (URT, 2014).

Another thing is the absence of clear assessment methods that align with Competence Based Curriculum. The curriculum needs to assess hands-on skills, practical application of knowledge, and values not written knowledge as is implemented in schools. The assessment methods have been observed to use traditional examinations instead of assessing students using Competence Based Curriculum assessment methods. Teachers are often pressured to focus on theory and passing examinations rather than practical skill development. Teachers' understanding is interpreted as that they should assist students to pass the national examinations. They invest much on memorization by doing test and examinations frequently instead of investing in hands-on skills. This reveals that parents and communities equate academic success with grades on examinations, a source of societal pressure that forces schools to emphasize their examination performance and denies the acquisition of skills (Kinyunyu, 2020, Majiwa et al, 2025).

The majority of teachers still teach by using traditional methods, something that discourages reasoning and creativity, which is a core target of Competence Based Curriculum. Teachers mentioned that there is no learning by doing (practical) observed in most of the schools. Students learn agricultural concepts in class but fail to perform farming activities such as planting due to lack of practical sessions. Science teachers explain experiment procedures verbally instead of allowing students to conduct practicals themselves due to limited time, resources, and lack of appropriate training. Teachers observed that continued reliance on teacher centered methods limits learner participation and reinforces passive learning. Students rarely engage in inquiry, experimentation, and collaboration, which are essential for developing higher-order thinking skills required in higher education and real-life problem solving. Many teachers remain uncertain about designing competence based lessons and assessments. This aligns with research showing that limited

pedagogical competence constrains Competence Based Curriculum implementation (Komba & Mwandaji, 2015).

Language barrier is another critical obstacle. The medium of instruction has been changing in educational levels. It shifts from Kiswahili in primary schools to English in secondary schools. The majority of students showed little ability in English because the transition from Kiswahili (primary education) to English (secondary education) was not done successfully. Many students never develop sufficient academic English proficiency to engage with Competence Based Curriculum higher order cognitive demands. When students join university, where there is independent academic behaviour and commitment, the linguistic deficiencies compound students learning difficulties. These language challenges result in reduced comprehension rather than competence and thus reinforce memorization (Mihambo & Amos, 2025).

A survey of students at four Ontario universities has found that more than half feel they lack competence in basic academic skills that would enable them to succeed in university. The survey indicates that students can obtain good high school grades and still be deficient. High school grades do not reflect the development of many skills and competences. A significant proportion of undergraduate students face challenges related to fundamental academic competence skills at all levels of undergraduate study. It is suggested that students need extensive support in place before and after they enter university (Grayson et al, 2019). One of the greatest challenges, and the hardest one to address, was having teachers understand their role in the program and have them move forward from a teacher-led to a student-led approach. This continues to be an ongoing challenge to address (Pasha et al, 2019).

Competence Based Curriculum implementation across African education systems faces persistent hurdles, notably in resource-limited settings. It constitutes a pervasive systemic failure resulting from fundamental misalignment between resource-intensive curriculum design assumptions and actual contextual realities (Arinaitwe & Ariyo, 2025). In reality, the Competence Based Curriculum has caused various challenges, it makes student centered learning difficult to execute. Actually, implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum is confusing because traditional school systems struggle to shift from memorizing facts to building practical skills. Core problems in Competence Based Curriculum have been found recurrently by various educators as follows:

- **Teacher readiness:** Educators often lack adequate professional training and clear instructions on how to teach and assess practical competences. Teachers struggle to use student-centered, interactive teaching methods.
- **Resource shortages:** Schools suffer from severe deficits in basic infrastructure, such as functional laboratories, workshops, and proper textbooks. Schools lack books, computers, and equipped science labs.
- **Assessment confusion:** Continuous skill-based evaluations clash with traditional exam systems and old grading mindsets. Systems still use old examination grades to judge success.
- **Large class sizes:** High student-to-teacher ratios make personal attention and practical group work very hard to do.
- **Mixed messages:** Policy leaders often change rules or issue conflicting guidelines. This leaves parents and school staff stressed and lost.
- **Parental strain:** Families struggle to help with practical assignments due to unclear communication and high cost burdens (Ayako, Ngari, & Asatsa, 2024; Kasuga & Kalolo, 2025; Kitasse & Ssembatya, 2024).

Educators around the world show the importance of competence. It is the ability to apply related skills and abilities to perform professional duties successfully. Competence is a practical, measurable statement that shows what a student can do by combining knowledge, skills, and attitudes in real-world situations. Competence Based Curriculum progresses by allowing learners to demonstrate their competences

(Mkonongwa, 2019). Demonstrating competence involves a combination of showing specific skills through practical application, continuous learning, and professional behaviours. It involves consistently producing high-quality work, communicating effectively, performing tasks/roles effectively, solving problems proactively, safely, and according to the required standards. To demonstrate is a practical way for students to prove their knowledge, skills, and abilities through real-world tasks, activities, and events. However, the evaluation has shown that students do not really demonstrate the appropriate skills and competences. They fail to show competences because the traditional education system prioritizes rote memorization and high-stakes testing, and it does not prioritize practical application of knowledge. Sometimes you can find some students with good grades who cannot demonstrate competences appropriately (Grayson et al, 2019). It is revealed that students generally demonstrated a low level of competence in the performance of their tasks. The study suggested the need to focus support services aimed at helping students to engage actively in the learning process (Ofoha, 2013).

Academic Views and Suggestions Provided by Various Scholars

Educators have been continuing to make deliberate efforts to improve the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum and the demonstration of competences among students. The improvement has been considered to occur in various components of the education system. It includes the purpose of education, factors attached to students, teacher training, infrastructure, resource availability, managing class sizes, curriculum system, assessment reforms, and financial issues. Furthermore, East African governments are reshaping education to equip students with the skills and competences they need to build livelihoods, gain employment, and drive economic growth. The countries are embracing the Competence Based Curriculum to align what students learn in class with the demands of today's labour market. The reforms are designed to equip students with the skills and competences they need to succeed in the workplace. Tanzania has made significant efforts to improve literacy rates. The reforms place emphasis on Competence Based Learning. This system makes education provision more relevant and reaffirms the government's commitment to quality education (TIE, 2014, 2023).

Policymakers around the world recognize the importance of developing young people's 21st century skills. Many countries include these skills as part of the intended learning outcomes of their education systems. The US-based Partnership for these skills argues that student success in colleges and careers requires four essential skills: critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity and innovation (Foster & Piacentini, 2023). In fact, there has been a call for educators to prepare students for the 21st Century to help them navigate an increasingly globalized world and interconnected landscape (Teo, 2019). Educators should struggle to update skills and competences in order to implement Competence Based Curriculum effectively. The preceding process will enhance students to acquire and demonstrate essential skills and competences for the modern workplace. Quality education in the 21st Century is essential, it is a powerful driver of social and economic development.

- Various challenges prevent learner centered pedagogy from functioning effectively. Without a supportive learning environment Competence Based Curriculum remains largely theoretical rather than practical (Tilya & Mafumiko, 2010). The challenges need to be addressed so that the Competence Based Curriculum will produce competent and innovative graduates.
- The government must invest in long-term teacher development programs embedded in school practice, not isolated workshops. Limited teacher training leads to reliance on outdated teaching methods, it undermines Competence Based Curriculum goals (Mokoro, 2020).
- Effective communication is crucial in academics because it transforms passive learning into active engagement. It enables students to clarify complex concepts, develop a good understanding, collaborate in research, and build relationships with peers and lecturers. Mastering these skills/competences enables students to flourish in academic activities (Paulo & Tilya, 2005).
- Curriculum ambition without proportional resource investment produces a credentialing system that certifies students as competent without having genuinely developed those competences. Resource

limitations: without adequate laboratory tools, ICT resources students cannot develop competences effectively (Nemes & Nderego, 2025).

- Teachers emphasize the importance of curriculum alignment so that examination questions reflect Competence Based learning outcomes, reducing the tension between examination success and skill development (Paulo & Tilya, 2005).
- Teachers suggest that assessment reforms are needed so examinations include practical components, projects and continuous assessment rather than focusing only on theory (Kasuga & Kalolo, 2025). Schools should allocate dedicated time for practical sessions (fieldwork, laboratory, ICT practice) alongside examination preparation (Nemes & Nderego, 2025).
- Teachers recommend joint workshops and seminars where university lecturers and secondary school teachers share expectations and teaching strategies (Mokoro, 2020). Universities have been receiving students from secondary schools, so sharing the experiences and weaknesses can improve the implementation and demonstration of competences. Furthermore, Universities could provide bridging programs or orientation courses to help incoming students adapt to Competence Based learning requirements (Kasuga & Kalolo, 2025).
- It is recommended that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should conduct regular capacity building for teachers through in-service training programmes on Competence Based Curriculum to enable the teachers to cope with the paradigm shift. Also, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should improve teacher training programmes in order to produce pre-service teachers with the necessary skills for effective implementation of Competence Based Curriculum. The government in collaboration with other stakeholders, should provide schools with supportive infrastructure and other resources for effective Competence Based Curriculum implementation (Mwasharifa & Shavega, 2024).
- Scholars suggested the improvement of these aspects: Provision of adequate resources, Alignment of assessment with Competence Based Curriculum goals, Strengthening teacher professional development, Enhancing language support, Building student confidence and engagement, Community engagement, and Strengthening transition to university education (Juma et al, 2025; Majiwa et al, 2025; Issa et al, 2024; Shiboko & Mrema, 2024).

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