

Teacher Pedagogical Competence and Learners' Perceptions of History and Citizenship in Junior School Learners in Etago Sub-County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Competency Based Education (CBE) in Kenya is skill oriented and work oriented with the learner being the central focus. The key requirement for teachers is to have a good depth of knowledge and pedagogical competence in History, Citizenship and to develop critical thinking, meaningful engagement and apply knowledge to real life scenarios. There is, however, little empirical work which has directed its attention towards the relationship between the pedagogical competence of teachers and the perceptions of History and Citizenship by the learners in the Junior School, particularly in the rural areas. The study investigated the relationship between the pedagogical competence of teachers and the perceptions of History and Citizenship among the learners in the Junior School of Etago Sub-County in the County of Kisii in Kenya. The study was designed with a cross sectional correlational mixed methods approach with a convergent parallel procedure. The total number of respondents was 1240 which comprised of 1160 grade 9 learners, 40 social studies teachers and 40 heads of institutions. A sample of 327 respondents was selected, 297 of which were learners, 15 teachers and 15 heads of institutions. Information gathered from questionnaires, interview schedules and non-participant classroom observations. Descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlation were used to analyze the quantitative data while the qualitative data were analyzed thematically and used for triangulation. Lastly, the study 280 learner questionnaires were used to obtain a 93.3% response rate. The results indicated that, in general, the pedagogical competence of teachers was evaluated in a positive way. In relation to teachers' practices, the highest mean score ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.92$) was received for encouraging critical thinking, and discussing historical issues, while the second was received for the ability to explain the subject knowledge ($M = 4.08$). Pearson correlation analysis also found that there was a significant and positive correlation between teacher's pedagogical competence and History and Citizenship perceptions of the learners ($r = .681$, $p < .001$). There was evidence of subject mastery and clear explanation in 80% of the lessons observed, questioning was observed in 73.3% of the lessons and feedback, clarification and guidance for learners was observed in 66.7% of the lessons. The study findings indicate that the pedagogical competence of teachers is positively related with the positive perception of learners in terms of History and Citizenship. The study suggests that there is a need to emphasize the continuous professional development of the teachers on CBE pedagogy, critical thinking, questioning, feedback and creative teaching practices.

Key words; Competency-Based Education (CBE), Teacher Pedagogical Competence, History and Citizenship and Learners' Perceptions

INTRODUCTION

Competency Based Education is an important way of transitioning from teaching to learning that emphasizes on both teaching the learner and his/her competencies. The method is participative, critical, creative, collaborative and knowledge based (PC4KB) and emphasizes situations in the real world. In this context, the teacher should not be the one who passes the information on but one who assists the student in learning. In

Junior School History and Citizenship concepts are taught as part of Social Studies. It is hoped that the subject will help the learner think critically, become a responsible citizen, appreciate cultural heritage, and relate the study of history to contemporary issues in society. Teachers therefore, must have the right pedagogical skills to teach these concepts appropriately, which include having a good understanding of the subject, explaining their understanding clearly, asking appropriate questions, providing feedback and using creative teaching methods. This will be determined by your thesis as aspects of the teacher's pedagogical competence. This is particularly true in the case of teacher pedagogical competence, where teachers have to adapt their approaches to suit the needs of learners, in the process of implementing CBE. A good teacher should enable a learner to be active, to ask questions, to interpret information, to think critically and to make links between their learning and their experiences.

However, there are still some schools in Kenya that are very challenged to adopt learner-centered CBE approaches. You discovered in your literature review that there may be barriers for teacher-centered approaches to be taught and learned effectively because of poor quality teacher training and a lack of teacher resources. Previous research has also found that there is a misalignment between teachers' use of a teacher-centered classroom and the curriculum that teachers plan to use in a classroom as a learner-centered approach. This comes into particular consideration in History and Citizenship classes where the students' conception of truth can be influenced by the way the teacher presents their understanding of historical and civic concepts. Learners can gain more interest and appreciation in the subject if teachers explain it well, stimulate learners' thoughts on the subject, and connect with the learners' experiences. While there have been studies on teacher preparedness, CBE implementation and classroom practices, very little has been studied on teacher pedagogical competence in CBE as perceived by learners and its relationship with their perception of History and Citizenship. This is the part of the gap in the research to which you are going to address your thesis.

In this context, the current study investigated the learner's perception of History and Citizenship in the Junior School learners in Etogo Sub-County, Kenya and the relationship between the pedagogical competence of the teacher and the perception of the learners on the subject.

Statement of the problem

For implementation, CBE will demand teachers to have the pedagogical knowledge and skills that encourage the learner to learn through an interaction and competency based approach. History and Citizenship will require teachers to lead students to think critically and discuss, inquire and apply historical and citizenship concepts, not memorize them. It has been concluded in this thesis that there are some teachers who experience difficulties in the implementation of some CBE approaches because they lack training and limited CPD. Classroom instruction can then continue to be affected by traditional teaching methods. There are some studies on preparedness and pedagogical competence of teachers in CBE, but there is a very little empirical evidence concerning the relationship between the preparedness of teachers and the perceptions of learners on History and Citizenship, particularly for grade 9 learners in the rural Junior Schools. The thesis identified the research gap of how a learners' experience is related to their teacher-related factors in the classroom, which has not been sufficiently explained by the existing studies. This is an important gap as positive perceptions of History and Citizenship can positively foster the participation, engagement and appreciation of learner in History and Citizen Knowledge. It was thus important to explore whether there was a significant correlation between the pedagogical competence of History and Citizenship teachers and learner's perceptions of History and Citizenship in Etogo sub-county in order to find out whether there is a link or not.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Pedagogical Competence in Competency-Based Education

According to Oguta (2025), the application of CBE implies the development and implementation of programs, resources and organization of education and this in its turn, leads to an increase in readiness of teachers to introduce reforms. The strategy of CBE implies the necessity to have flexible learning trajectories during the career of teachers and lifelong professional development of teachers due to the requirements of the labor market and technology changes.

The pedagogic competence of teachers is a significant factor in the creation of perceptions, engagement, and understanding of the ideas of History and Citizenship by social studies students. Good teachers, who understand CBE criteria, will develop engaging lessons. Good teachers who are conversant with CBE criteria are likely to develop engaging lessons in relation to competencies-based learning goals (Chiliswa & Omamo, 2024). However, research indicates that many teachers face difficulties adapting to CBE due to inadequate training and lack of continuous professional development (Njiru & Odundo, 2024). In some cases, teachers still rely on traditional teaching approaches due to limited understanding of CBE methodologies. Good training and mentorship may help teachers to be ready in improving learning processes and outcomes. Wanjala (2023) indicated that teachers involved in professional development will be able to implement the Competency Based Education approaches that will bring increased participation and performance of students in History. In addition, the involvement of mentoring programs and teamwork among teachers leads to the exchange of ideas that makes CBE easier to implement in Junior Schools Learners.

Mwang'ombe (2021) identified key competencies pedagogical, digital, leadership and assessment that directly influence how teachers deliver CBE, stressing that without these, learner-centered approaches remain superficial. Similarly, Sifuna and Obonyo (2019) examined teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) and found that strong PCK enables teachers to connect theory with practice, thereby improving learner engagement in Social Studies. These studies highlight that competence is multidimensional, requiring not only subject mastery but also the ability to apply innovative strategies that resonate with learners' experiences.

Research Gap

The literature examined in the thesis shows that the preparedness of teachers, pedagogical competence and professional development of teachers in CBE has been paid significant attention. But most of this study is on the teachers and implementation rather than on the learners' experiences. The thesis thus pinpoints a gap that focuses on the learner's experience of pedagogical competence of the teacher and the relationship between the teacher's pedagogical competence and the learner's perception of History and Citizenship. This study filled the gap by focusing on the Grade 9 learners.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a cross section correlational mixed approach convergent. A target population of 1160 Grade 9 learners, 40 teachers (Social Studies) and 40 heads of institutions were targeted. A total of 327 respondents were sampled, of which 297 were learners, 15 were teachers and 15 were heads with 280 learners being included in the correlation analysis. Questionnaire, interview and classroom observation were the data collection techniques employed. The Cronbach's alpha values of the pedagogical competence scale were found to be satisfactory (0.78). The data were analyzed using the means, standard deviations, Pearson product-moment correlations and thus, a relationship between teacher's pedagogical competence and learner's perceptions of History and Citizenship was established. The qualitative data analysis was thematic and was triangulated with the results of the questionnaires.

RESULTS

Response Rate

The overall response rate of the study was 93.3% (305/327 targeted respondents). Among Grade 9 learners, 94.3% (280 out of 297) responded to the questionnaires, while 86.7% (13 out of 15) of the teachers completed the questionnaires. In addition, 80.0% (12 out of 15) of the heads of institutions participated in the interviews. The return rate ensured good representativeness of the respondents who were targeted and increased the credibility of the study results. The average age of respondents was 49 years.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

A total of 13 Social Studies teachers and 280 grade 9 learners were involved in the study. The gender ratio of teachers was not significantly different with 53.8% male and 46.2% female. Academic qualification of the

teachers: 69.2% of teachers have bachelor's degree, 23.1% have master's degree and 7.7% have diplomas, the majority of the teachers belong to the university level. In terms of teaching experience, 30.8% had 3–5 years, 30.8% had 6–10 years, 23.1% had more than 10 years and 15.4% had less than 3 years of experience. Furthermore, 23.1% of teachers had never learned CBE and 76.9% had learned CBE.

Females made up 52.5% of the learners while males constituted 47.5% of the learners, thus having a relatively balanced gender representation. Most learners (77.1%) were aged 11–15 years, followed by 15.7% aged 16–20 years and 7.1% below 10 years. The study was conducted on all the respondents (100%), and it was confirmed that the target group were the Grade 9 learners.

Learners' Perceptions of Teacher Pedagogical Competence

The study examined Teacher pedagogical competence and the perception of concepts of History and Citizenship by the learners. The focus was on the teachers' quality in terms of their subject knowledge, clarity of explanation, creativity in teaching, feedback and promotion of critical thinking. The teachers' self-assessment of the implementation of Competency Based Education (CBE) was also conducted and classroom observation and interview were conducted as supporting evidence. The results are displayed in the tables below. Table 1 shows the results of the learner's perception about the teachers' pedagogical competence.

Table 1: Learners' Perceptions of Teacher Pedagogical Competence (n = 280)

Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Social Studies instructors have deep knowledge of the subject.	8 (2.9%)	17 (6.1%)	15 (5.4%)	145 (51.8%)	95 (33.9%)	4.08	0.94
Instructors explain historical concepts clearly and effectively.	7 (2.5%)	19 (6.8%)	17 (6.1%)	138 (49.3%)	99 (35.4%)	4.08	0.95
Teachers use creative teaching techniques as per CBE requirements.	10 (3.6%)	22 (7.9%)	24 (8.6%)	128 (45.7%)	96 (34.3%)	3.99	1.03
Teachers provide useful feedback to help learners improve.	12 (4.3%)	15 (5.4%)	20 (7.1%)	135 (48.2%)	98 (35.0%)	4.04	1.01
Teachers encourage critical thinking and engagement with historical issues.	8 (2.9%)	13 (4.6%)	17 (6.1%)	142 (50.7%)	100 (35.7%)	4.12	0.92

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 1 indicates learners' perception of pedagogical competence of teachers. It was generally concluded that all the indicators were having positive perceptions with mean value ranging between 3.99 to 4.12, which was validated by positive perceptions. When it came to teachers' knowledge of the subject, 85.7% (33.9% strongly agreed, 51.8% agreed) of the learners rated the teachers' knowledge as deep in the subject. The mean rating was 4.08 (SD = 0.94).

The same was found for teaching method in which 84.7% agreed or strongly agreed that the concepts of history were well explained and effective by the teacher, mean = 4.08, SD = 0.95.

Regarding the use of creative teaching technique, 80.0% or mean rating of 3.99 (SD = 1.03) of the learners agreed or strongly agreed. 83.2% agreed with their teachers' feedback which had a mean of 4.04 (SD = 1.01).

The teachers' facilitation of critical thinking and discussion of historical problems was the most positively rated aspect by the students, with 86.4% of them rating this agree or strongly agree mean = 4.12 (SD = 0.92). Overall, the students' perception of teachers' pedagogical competencies was fairly positive, particularly regarding their pedagogical competency in supporting the learning process in developing critical thinking skills, as well as their knowledge of the material and ability to explain historical concepts well.

Teachers' Self-Assessment of Pedagogical Competence

Table 2 presents the teachers' self-reported levels of competence in implementing CBE in History and Citizenship.

Table 2 : Teachers' Self-Assessment of Pedagogical Competence (n=13)

Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
I understand CBE principles in teaching Social Studies.	0 (0%)	2 (15.4%)	1 (7.7%)	7 (53.8%)	3 (23.1%)	3.85	0.99
I am confident in implementing learner-centered strategies.	0 (0%)	2 (15.4%)	3 (23.1%)	7 (53.8%)	1 (7.7%)	3.54	0.88
I am able to assess learners using CBE assessment approaches.	0 (0%)	1 (7.7%)	3 (23.1%)	6 (46.2%)	3 (23.1%)	3.85	0.90
I receive adequate professional support on CBE.	2 (15.4%)	3 (23.1%)	3 (23.1%)	4 (30.8%)	1 (7.7%)	2.92	1.26

Source: Field Data (2026)

The above shows teachers' self-evaluation of their pedagogical skills in implementing CBE. The majority of teachers concurred that they were aware of the principles of CBE with 76.9% agreeing or strongly agreeing with a mean of 3.85 (SD = 0.99). Likewise, 69.3% responded agree or strongly agree and 3.85 (SD = 0.90) meant they were able to evaluate learners using CBE assessment approaches. The confidence in implementing learner-centered strategies was relatively low, however, with a mean of 3.54 (SD = 0.88). The least satisfactory rating was related to professional support on CBE which measured a mean of 2.92 (SD = 1.26). 38.5% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they were provided with good professional support. This indicates that teachers felt generally good about their competence in understanding and implementing aspects of CBE but there was limited support for them. This was also confirmed by head teachers who indicated that there was little follow-up after the initial CBE training.

Table 3: Observation Findings on Teachers' Pedagogical Competence in History and Citizenship Lessons

Observation Indicator	Observed	Observed%	Not Observed	Not Observed%	Remarks
Teacher demonstrates subject mastery and explains History and Citizenship concepts clearly	12	80%	3	20%	Most teachers showed adequate understanding of the content and explained concepts in a learner-friendly manner.
Teacher uses questioning to stimulate learner thinking and classroom participation	11	73.3%	4	26.7%	Questioning was commonly used to check understanding and encourage participation, although some questions were mainly recall-based.
Teacher provides feedback, clarification and guidance to support learners during the lesson	10	66.7	5	33.3%	Most teachers corrected responses, clarified unclear points and guided learners, though feedback was limited in some lessons.

The results of the classroom observation are shown in Table 4. 80.0% of lessons displayed a high level of subject mastery and clear explanation, 73.3% of lessons displayed questioning to stimulate learner thinking. In 66.7% of the lessons observed, there was feedback, clarification and learner guidance. The overall results reflect the learners' positive ratings of the teacher's competence, which are largely confirmed by these findings. Feedback and learner guidance were also used less frequently, though, suggesting that it was not a consistent practice in all lessons.

Qualitative evidence of Teacher Pedagogical Competence.

The good ratings of the learners were confirmed through information gathered from the heads of institutions.

One head of the institution commented that teachers' preparation and creativity influenced learners' attention and curiosity, and another commented that teachers who were able to relate content from the past with learners' local experiences tended to have more active learners.

These responses back up the findings of the learners and showed that teachers who were perceived as effective were those who made the content of history relevant and who fostered the participation of learners.

Relationship between Teacher Pedagogical Competence and Learners' Perceptions

Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted using composite scores derived from the 280 learner questionnaires.

Table 4: Correlation between teacher pedagogical competence and Learners' Perceptions

Variable	N	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. value	Interpretation
Teacher pedagogical competence and learners' perceptions	280	0.681	0.001	Strong positive significant relationship

Source: Field Data (2026)

The results indicate that teacher pedagogical competence is strongly correlated with learners' perceptions of History and Citizenship with the correlation coefficient of 0.681 ($p < 0.001$, $n = 280$). The result shows that this pedagogical competence of teachers had correlation with positive perceptions of learners. The study revealed that there was a strong association between teacher pedagogical competence and learners' perceptions among the instructional-practice variables studied. The results indicate that the content knowledge, clarity of explanation, effective questioning, giving feedback and support to learners are key elements in the development of positive perceptions of History and Citizenship.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study found a strong, positive and statistically significant relationship between teacher pedagogical competence and learners' perceptions of History and Citizenship ($r = .681$, $p < .001$). The highest mean score ($M = 4.12$) was shown for teachers' ability to promote critical thinking and engagement.

These observations were confirmed by classroom observations, in which 80%, 73.3% and 66.7% of lessons demonstrated mastery of content and clear explanation, questioning and feedback and learner guidance, respectively. Innovative approaches, however, were not used consistently as indicated by the lower rating of creative teaching techniques ($M = 3.99$). In general, the results show that pedagogical competence is linked to more positive perceptions of the learners, but cannot be concluded as a cause-effect relationship due to the correlational nature of the study.

CONCLUSION

The study finds that teacher pedagogical competence and learners perception of History and citizenship in Junior School learners in Etago sub-county is statistically significant and positively related. Articulate discussions with their teachers about the concepts of history were seen as useful feedback and support for critical thinking. Learners' overall impression was that their teachers were knowledgeable, clear in explaining historical concepts, and were able to provide useful feedback and support critical thinking. Teachers' encouragement of critical thinking and historical issues had the highest rating, and creative teaching techniques had the lowest rating, but it was still positive. The most important finding of the correlation analysis was the strong positive correlation between the teacher pedagogical competence and learners' perceptions ($r = .681$, $p < .001$).

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