

The Realities of Competency-Based Curriculum Implementation: A Comparative Study of Teacher Educators, Student Teachers, and Education Leaders Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda

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Abstract

Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) reforms are transforming education systems across East Africa, yet their effectiveness depends heavily on teacher preparedness, institutional capacity, and policy coherence. This study presents a comparative analysis of CBC implementation in Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda, drawing on longitudinal data from the Foundation for Learning (F4L) project. Using mixed-methods evidence from teacher educators, student teachers, head teachers, and education officers, the study examines curriculum design, pedagogical practice, inclusivity, gender responsiveness, leadership, and sustainability. Findings show that while Kenya demonstrates the strongest alignment between teacher preparation and CBC implementation, Tanzania and Uganda exhibit fragmented adoption marked by limited ICT competence, inconsistent formative assessment, and gaps in gender-responsive pedagogy. Cross-country challenges include inadequate learning materials, uneven policy execution, and limited institutional support systems. The study concludes by proposing regionally adaptable, sustainable strategies for strengthening CBC implementation.

Keywords: Competency-Based Curriculum, gender-responsive pedagogy, systemic reform, teacher professional development

1. Introduction

Education systems across East Africa are undergoing ambitious reforms centered on shifting from content-based to competency-based pedagogies. The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) model emphasizes learner-centered instruction, 21st-century skills, inclusivity, and gender-responsive pedagogy. Despite widespread adoption, evidence on how CBC reforms unfold in real classrooms remains limited. Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda provide an important comparative context given their similar socio-educational landscapes yet differing implementation modalities.

This article analyzes the realities of CBC implementation by synthesizing findings from three longitudinal studies conducted under the Foundation for Learning (F4L) initiative. The studies followed teacher educators, student teachers, and education leaders over multiple cycles across the three countries, offering an empirical lens into everyday practices, successes, and challenges of CBC adoption.

1.1 Regional Overview of CBC Reforms

CBC reforms in East Africa aim to modernize education by promoting competencies such as problem-solving, collaboration, creativity, communication, and digital literacy. However, effective implementation requires alignment of teacher training, school leadership, assessment systems, and instructional resources.

Kenya launched its CBC in 2017, introducing major reforms in teacher education, upgrading from certificate to diploma programmes and integrating extended practicum and mentorship phases. Teacher preparation institutions, such as Shanzu Teachers' Training College, play a central role in facilitating this transition. Uganda adopted the National Teacher Policy (NTP) in 2019, seeking to professionalize teaching by phasing out Primary Teachers' Colleges (PTCs) and elevating the minimum teaching qualification to a bachelor's degree. The F4L interventions were implemented during this reform turbulence, targeting diploma-upgrading students and teacher educators in Arua and Yumbe districts and Tanzania. The F4L project, which adopted various competence based approaches in teacher education, strengthened teacher educators' gender-responsive pedagogies and student teachers' practicum experiences at the colleges and their respective practicum schools. These experiences are noted in Nachingwea Teachers College and surrounding practicum schools in the Lindi region.

Although CBC reform frameworks are well-articulated across East Africa, actual implementation varies widely. Teachers often lack the pedagogical competencies, classroom materials, mentorship, and leadership support required to effectively apply CBC strategies. This gap between policy and practice leads to inconsistent learning outcomes, inequitable inclusion of learners with special needs, and challenges in assessment. A comparative understanding of implementation realities across the three countries is essential to strengthening CBC systems and informing regional education policies.

1.2 Global Understanding of CBC Implementation

CBC reforms have gained momentum globally as countries shift from content-heavy instruction toward learner-centered, skills-oriented education. International studies emphasize that effective CBC implementation requires substantial transformation in pedagogy, assessment, and school culture (Mulenga & Kabombwe, 2019). According to Kim et al. (2022), CBC reforms succeed only when they are accompanied by robust teacher professional development, continuous instructional coaching, and collaborative learning structures among educators.

Theoretical foundations of CBC draw heavily on constructivist learning theory (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978), which posits that learners construct knowledge through interaction, exploration, and real-world problem solving. CBC's emphasis on active learning, inquiry, collaboration, and creativity aligns with constructivist assumptions about how learners develop competencies.

Additionally, outcome-based education (OBE) theory (Spady, 1994) underpins CBC reforms by asserting that curricula should define clear competencies that learners must demonstrate. CBC implementation therefore relies heavily on clear learning outcomes, performance standards, and adaptive teaching.

International comparisons show a varied pattern of CBC implementation:

- Finland, New Zealand, and Singapore provide exemplary models, integrating holistic competencies supported by strong teacher autonomy and professional trust (Sahlberg, 2015).
- In contrast, many low- and middle-income countries face challenges such as inadequate resources, large class sizes, and limited teacher training (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008).
- UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report (2023) stresses that curriculum reforms without corresponding investments in teacher training, school infrastructure, and assessment reform often "remain rhetorical rather than transformative."

1.2.1 Competency-Based Education and Competency-Based Curriculum

While the CBC provides specific instructional content, learning areas, and standards (the "what"), CBE serves as the overarching delivery system and pedagogical culture (the "how" and "why"). It encompasses the entire educational ecosystem - including institutional policy, teacher professional development, flexible learning pathways, and a move toward criterion-referenced assessment. In this framework, the learner is the central agent, progressing only when they can prove proficiency in a defined competency, regardless of the time taken to achieve it.

Teacher Preparation and Institutional Readiness

Teacher educators are central to translating policy rhetoric into classroom realities. CBC demands teachers who are not only knowledgeable but also able to design learner-centered experiences, facilitate inquiry, differentiate instruction, and conduct continuous assessment.

Research consistently shows that teacher preparedness is the strongest predictor of successful CBC adoption (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Informed by Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) Theory (1986), CBC requires teachers to integrate subject knowledge, pedagogy, assessment, and understanding of learner characteristics. CBC also aligns with Fullan's Change Theory (2007), which emphasizes that systemic reforms succeed when teachers receive ongoing support, motivation, and clarity.

Studies across East Africa reveal mixed readiness - Kenya demonstrates strong alignment between CBC policy and teacher preparation due to the revised Diploma in Primary Teacher Education (DPTE), which integrates practicum mentorship, reflective practice, and competency-based assessment (Jepkemboi & Matete, 2022).

Uganda's transition from certificate to degree-level teacher education has caused structural uncertainty, affecting educator morale and institutional readiness (Nampijja, 2021). Tutors remain committed but face resource and training constraints.

Tanzania grapples with uneven tutor capacity, outdated documentation, and inconsistent exposure to CBC-aligned pedagogy (Komba & Mwandanji, 2015). Teacher training colleges often lack materials necessary for practical, learner-centered instruction.

Institutional readiness, availability of teaching resources, ICT facilities, supportive leadership, and assessment systems, strongly influences CBC uptake (World Bank, 2021). Without these, teacher educators struggle to model CBC practices.

Gender and Inclusive Education

CBC emphasizes equity, inclusion, and gender responsiveness as core principles. The Gender-Responsive Pedagogy Model by the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE, 2015) argues that teachers must create learning environments free from gender bias and supportive of all learners, including those with disabilities.

Research shows persistent gender disparities in African classrooms: teachers often unconsciously give more attention to boys, delegate leadership roles based on gender, and perpetuate stereotypes (Kirk & Winthrop, 2008). CBC attempts to address this by encouraging teachers to use equitable grouping, gender-sensitive language, and inclusive instructional materials.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and UNESCO's Inclusive Education Framework emphasize that classrooms must accommodate diverse learning needs. However, studies show that many teachers lack training in differentiated instruction, individualized education plans (IEPs), and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (EASNIE, 2018).

In East Africa:

- Uganda leads in integrating inclusive education into teacher training but lacks resources and ICT skills to support implementation.
- Kenya includes inclusive pedagogy in CBC, yet practical strategies for supporting “time-taker” learners remain weak.
- Tanzania shows gender parity in enrollment but limited gender-responsive planning and inadequate attention to learners with special needs.

This gap between inclusive policy and actual practice affects CBC’s ability to deliver equitable learning outcomes.

Assessment in CBC

Assessment is the backbone of CBC. Unlike traditional summative assessments, CBC relies heavily on formative assessment, continuous feedback, and holistic evaluation.

CBC assessment practices are grounded in:

- Assessment for Learning (AfL) (Black & Wiliam, 1998), which promotes ongoing feedback and learner self-regulation.
- Authentic Assessment Theory (Wiggins, 1990), which emphasizes real-world tasks and performance-based evaluation.
- Mastery learning principles (Bloom, 1968), where learners progress based on achievement of predefined competencies.

African studies indicate that:

- Teachers often rely on summative exams due to large class sizes and limited assessment literacy.
- Continuous assessment is inconsistently implemented due to workload and insufficient training.
- Learners’ progress is rarely tracked using standardized rubrics or portfolios (Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

For example, in Tanzania, lesson plans and assessment records were found outdated and inconsistently filled (F4L study evidence). In Uganda, student teachers lacked standardized formative assessment tools during practicum. Kenya has made significant strides by integrating reflective journals, competency tracking, action research and comprehensive practicum assessments aligned with CBC. These findings align with broader African research indicating systemic gaps in assessment literacy (Kafyulilo et al., 2020).

Sustainability of Reform

For CBC reforms to be effective and long-lasting, they must be accompanied by systemic and institutional sustainability mechanisms.

Sustainability of educational reform is grounded in:

- Fullan's Educational Change Theory (2007), which emphasizes that reforms must align with teacher motivation, organizational culture, and leadership.
- Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which highlights the need for alignment across micro (classroom), meso (school), and macro (policy) systems.
- Systems Thinking Theory (Senge, 1990), which argues that sustainable change requires coherence, collaboration, and feedback loops across the education ecosystem.

Research indicates that CBC reforms fail when:

- Teachers do not receive ongoing support.
- Curriculum expectations outpace teacher preparation.
- Funding for learning materials is inconsistent.
- Leadership and monitoring systems are weak (Schweisfurth, 2011).

East African evidence aligns with this:

- Tanzania shows sustainability risks due to fluctuating staffing, outdated tools, and limited supervision systems (F4L Tanzania)
- Uganda faces structural instability due to the transition to degree-level teacher preparation, affecting continuity (F4L Uganda)
- Kenya's stronger sustainability prospects stem from coherent policy alignment between training colleges, CBC curriculum, and school leadership programmes (F4L Kenya)

CBC sustainability depends on:

- Continuous teacher professional development
- Strong instructional leadership
- Stable funding for teaching materials
- ICT integration
- Effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks

- Alignment between curriculum policy and classroom practice

Without this, CBC risks becoming episodic rather than transformative.

2. Methodology

This study employed a comparative research design drawing on three longitudinal mixed-methods studies conducted in Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda. The longitudinal nature of the studies made it possible to track changes in teacher preparation, pedagogical practices, and institutional readiness for Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) implementation over time. Comparative synthesis enabled systematic analysis of similarities, differences, and contextual factors shaping CBC adoption across the three countries.

2.1 Research Design

The methodological foundation of this paper is based on a comparative synthesis of three separate but methodologically aligned longitudinal studies undertaken within the F4L project. These studies were implemented over two years in Tanzania (2022-2024) and one-year periods in Uganda and Kenya (2023-2024). All three studies adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to generate a holistic understanding of CBC implementation at teacher training colleges and practicum schools.

The mixed-methods strategy was grounded in a pragmatist paradigm, recognizing the value of integrating numerical trends with rich, contextual narratives. Quantitative components enabled measurement of teacher competencies, demographic patterns, and frequency of CBC-aligned practices, while qualitative approaches provided depth, capturing perceptions, experiences, and contextual realities among teacher educators, student teachers, and education leaders. Longitudinal design further allowed assessment of changes across multiple data-collection cycles, thereby strengthening the credibility of findings.

2.2 Participants

The study population comprised key stakeholders involved in teacher preparation and CBC implementation. Participants included teacher educators, student teachers, principals and head teachers from practicum schools, District and City Education Officers, as well as college administrators such as principals, deans of curriculum, and deans of students. These groups were purposefully selected because of their central role in shaping and supporting CBC implementation within teacher education systems.

In each country, sampling procedures targeted individuals who were directly involved in F4L interventions or who occupied relevant leadership or instructional roles in their institutions. For teacher educators and education officers, purposeful sampling ensured that only those who had engaged with CBC-related training and professional learning activities participated. Student teachers were drawn from both early childhood and primary teacher education programmes, representing cohorts undergoing training during the CBC reform period. The inclusion of multiple respondent groups provided a comprehensive perspective on how CBC ideals were being interpreted and practiced across institutional levels.

2.3 Data Collection Methods

Data collection was conducted using a combination of quantitative and qualitative instruments that were harmonized across the three country studies to ensure comparability. Standardized questionnaires were administered to student teachers, teacher educators, and education officers to collect quantitative information on demographic characteristics, professional competencies, perceptions of CBC, and exposure to training activities. The questionnaires included both closed-ended and Likert-scale items designed to capture measurable trends.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with college principals, teacher educators, head teachers, District Education Officers, and selected student teachers. These interviews allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences with CBC, institutional challenges, gender-responsive pedagogy, and assessment practices. Classroom observations were carried out during student teachers' practicum sessions to evaluate the actual implementation of CBC-aligned instructional strategies, classroom management, learner engagement, and use of teaching resources.

Document analysis complemented the primary data sources. Researchers reviewed a range of instructional documents including lesson plans, schemes of work, logbooks, assessment instruments, student records, and practicum evaluation tools. Additional supervision and mentorship records were examined to understand the nature and frequency of support provided to student teachers. Collectively, these methods ensured comprehensive data triangulation.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed systematic procedures aligned with mixed-methods principles. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were entered, cleaned, and analyzed using SPSS and Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and graphical representations, were generated to summarize demographic patterns and quantify levels of CBC implementation across sites.

Qualitative data from interviews, observations, and document reviews were transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis. Researchers read and reread transcripts to identify recurrent ideas, which were then coded and categorized into themes reflecting patterns in teacher preparedness, pedagogical practices, assessment approaches, gender responsiveness, and institutional leadership. Thematic analysis followed an inductive-deductive approach, allowing country-specific nuances to emerge while also testing the data against the overarching study objectives:

1. To examine the extent to which teacher education programs effectively model and integrate inclusive pedagogical practices, ensuring that student teachers are prepared to address diverse learner needs within a Competency-Based framework.
2. To evaluate the transition from traditional, content-heavy instruction to CBC-aligned pedagogical practices, with a specific emphasis on the use of active learning strategies,

formative assessment, and the quality of professional artifacts such as schemes of work and lesson plans.

3. To investigate the institutional and systemic factors—including school leadership, resource availability, and policy coherence—that determine the long-term sustainability and scalability of Competency-Based practices beyond the initial intervention phase.
4. To conduct a comparative analysis of CBC implementation progress across Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, identifying regional patterns of "fragmented adoption" and systemic differences between curriculum-focused and education-system (CBE) approaches.

Finally, a cross-case analysis was undertaken to compare findings across Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya. This analysis examined convergences and divergences across the three contexts, enabling identification of region-wide trends as well as country-specific constraints and opportunities. The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence enhanced the robustness and validity of the study's conclusions.

3. Findings

This section presents the results of the comparative analysis organized around the study's four objectives. The findings draw directly from the longitudinal studies conducted in Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda and highlight the varying realities of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) implementation across the three countries.

Designing Gender-Responsive, Inclusive CBC Teacher Education Programmes

Evidence from the Tanzanian longitudinal study reveals that the design of gender-responsive and inclusive teacher education programmes remains limited. Document analysis showed that lesson plans prepared by teacher educators lacked explicit gender-responsive strategies, with most plans appearing outdated and poorly aligned with CBC expectations. Records of assessment and instructional documentation were inconsistently maintained, suggesting weak institutional systems for embedding gender and inclusion within teacher preparation. These gaps hinder efforts to model CBC-informed, equitable pedagogical approaches for student teachers

In Uganda, the F4L intervention materials placed strong emphasis on inclusive education, gender-sensitive pedagogy, and diversity-responsive teaching. Training manuals and professional learning guides demonstrated clear integration of gender-responsive principles. Nonetheless, implementation capacity was uneven: approximately 40% of tutors lacked sufficient ICT competence, a key component of inclusive CBC practice, and only a minority had received training in educational leadership. These gaps limited the overall effectiveness of the designed teacher education programmes, despite strong conceptual framing in the manuals.

Kenya demonstrated the strongest integration of gender-responsive and inclusive pedagogy within its CBC-oriented teacher preparation programmes. The structured Diploma in Primary Teacher Education (DPTE) and Diploma in Early Childhood Teacher Education (DECTE) provided clear pathways for embedding learner-centered and inclusive methodologies. However, despite strong programme design, some tutors struggled to differentiate instruction for learners requiring additional support, indicating persistent challenges in translating inclusive design into actual classroom practice

3.1 Implementation of CBC-Aligned Pedagogy

Observational and documentary evidence indicates that Tanzanian student teachers demonstrated partial adoption of CBC-aligned instructional strategies. While there was evidence of interactive pedagogy in some lessons, inconsistently updated lesson plans, inadequate assessment documentation, and limited use of learner-centered techniques undermined full implementation of CBC principles. These inconsistencies reflect broader institutional weaknesses in supporting tutors and student teachers to apply CBC methodologies effectively.

In Uganda, student teachers showed strong involvement in school practice activities, participating in academic progress monitoring, test supervision, discipline management, and community engagement. However, their competency levels across CBC-relevant domains varied substantially. Several core CBC competencies, such as continuous assessment, ICT integration, and differentiation, were rated below average, suggesting a gap between theoretical understanding and practical mastery. This variation points to the need for stronger mentoring and targeted professional support for student teachers during practicum placements

Kenya exhibited the strongest implementation outcomes among the three countries. Approximately 80% of student teachers demonstrated high proficiency in selecting CBC-aligned teaching strategies that foster creativity, problem-solving, and collaboration. Data further showed strong competencies in lesson planning, peer review, reflective practice, and learner engagement. The presence of structured mentorship during the practicum, where student teachers observe and receive guidance from experienced mentors, played a significant role in reinforcing real-life, competency-oriented teaching practices

3.2 Sustainability of CBC Practices

Sustainability of CBC implementation in Tanzania faces substantial risks. Frequent fluctuations in tutor staffing disrupt continuity of CBC delivery, while persistent use of outdated instructional documents constrains efforts to institutionalize CBC practices. Supervision systems remain weak, with limited regular follow-up and monitoring of instructional quality. These factors collectively undermine the long-term sustainability of CBC reforms within teacher training institutions

Uganda's transition from certificate-level to degree-level teacher preparation under the Uganda National Institute for Teacher Education (UNITE) has introduced significant structural uncertainty. This policy shift has affected institutional stability and created anxiety

among both tutors and students. Despite this, the majority of diploma student teachers, many of whom are mature adults upgrading their qualifications, demonstrated strong personal motivation to embrace CBC values and practices. Nonetheless, sustainability remains uncertain until institutional structures stabilize

Kenya shows the most promising sustainability outlook. Strong national policy coherence between the CBC framework, teacher education reforms, and school-level leadership development (such as the Diploma in Education Leadership and Management) has supported consistent implementation. Teacher training colleges benefit from structured professional development cycles, while practicum requirements ensure that CBC practices are reinforced during real classroom experiences. These features collectively enhance the likelihood of sustained CBC adoption within the Kenyan education system

3.3 Cross-Country Comparative Analysis

A comparative synthesis reveals significant variation in CBC implementation across Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda. In terms of tutor preparedness, Kenya demonstrates the strongest alignment with CBC requirements and beyond, to supporting learner identification of learning pathways, while Tanzania shows moderate readiness and Uganda exhibits mixed levels due to structural transitions. Gender-responsive pedagogy is weakest in Tanzania, moderately integrated in Kenya, and strongly emphasized in Uganda's training materials. ICT competence remains a challenge in both Tanzania and Uganda, with Kenya performing moderately well but still facing resource gaps.

Assessment practices, central to CBC, were weakest in Tanzania, moderately implemented in Uganda, and most developed in Kenya due to structured use of reflective journals and continuous assessment tools. Practicum structure also varied widely, ranging from limited support in Tanzania to highly structured mentorship in Kenya and moderate experiences in Uganda.

Policy coherence emerged as a key determinant of success. Kenya's alignment between curriculum, teacher training, and leadership programmes contributed to promising sustainability prospects. Tanzania's sustainability was rated at risk due to institutional inconsistencies, while Uganda's remained uncertain because of ongoing system reforms.

Overall, Kenya demonstrated the most favorable environment for CBC implementation, Uganda showed strong conceptual commitment but faced structural challenges, and Tanzania exhibited partial implementation marked by gaps in documentation, assessment, and gender-responsive planning.

Table 1. Comparison of CBC Progress

Country	Implementation Status	Key Strength	Primary Challenge
Kenya	Strong Alignment Transition towards broader CBE	Teacher Preparation Embedding learning pathways	General Resource Gaps
Tanzania	Fragmented Adoption	Early Stages	ICT Competence & Gender Pedagogy
Uganda	Fragmented Adoption	Policy Framework	Formative Assessment & ICT

4. Discussion

The comparative findings across Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda demonstrate that while the adoption of CBC is advancing across East Africa, its effectiveness is shaped by contextual, institutional, and systemic factors. These findings echo a growing body of African and global research showing that the success of CBC reform depends less on the curriculum documents themselves and more on the capacity of teachers, availability of instructional resources, school leadership, and policy coherence (Mulenga & Kabombwe, 2019; UNESCO, 2023).

Teacher Preparation and Pedagogical Readiness

Across the three countries, differences in teacher preparedness were pronounced. Kenya demonstrated the strongest tutor and student teacher readiness for CBC implementation, partly due to the structured Diploma in Primary Teacher Education (DPTE), mentorship models, and alignment between national policy and college practices. These findings align with Jepkemboi and Matete (2022), who argue that Kenya's early investment in teacher training reforms significantly enhanced CBC preparedness.

In contrast, Tanzania and Uganda displayed uneven teacher educator capacities. Tanzania's outdated lesson plans and inconsistent assessment documentation mirror findings from Komba & Mwandangi (2015), who reported that many Tanzanian tutors continue relying on traditional pedagogy despite national competency-based directives. Uganda's situation, where tutors conceptually understand inclusive CBC principles but struggle with ICT and leadership skills, is consistent with Nampijja (2021), who highlighted the disruptive effect of Uganda's teacher education transition on educator competence.

The study substantiates Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) theory, which emphasizes that teacher knowledge must integrate pedagogy, content, and context. Where tutors lacked clear understanding of inclusive pedagogy, differentiation, or continuous assessment, as seen in Tanzania and parts of Uganda, CBC implementation suffered.

5.1 Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Pedagogy

CBC emphasizes gender equity and inclusion; however, progress remains mixed. Uganda demonstrated the strongest emphasis on gender-sensitive training, consistent with regional studies suggesting that West Nile PTCs have historically integrated gender and inclusion in

teacher education (Nakabugo et al., 2020). In contrast, Tanzania's limited gender-responsive planning mirrors broader findings that gender mainstreaming in Tanzanian teacher training remains inconsistent (Mluma et al., 2021).

Kenya showed moderate integration of inclusive pedagogy but struggled with differentiated instruction for learners needing additional support. Similar challenges were documented by Abuya et al. (2015), who found that Kenyan teachers often lack skills to support diverse learners despite policy emphasis on inclusion.

These findings reinforce FAWE's Gender-Responsive Pedagogy Model (2015), which notes that gender inclusion is only realized when teachers consistently apply equitable instructional strategies, something still lacking across all three countries.

5.2 Continuous Assessment Practices in CBC

Continuous assessment (CA) is central to CBC. Kenya's relatively strong CA alignment, using reflective journals, peer review, and structured practicum tools, confirm studies showing Kenya's gradual but steady improvement in assessment literacy (Oduor & Njeru, 2023). Conversely, Tanzania's and Uganda's weaknesses in assessment documentation support broader findings across sub-Saharan Africa that teachers often lack the training and tools necessary for effective CA (Kafyulilo et al., 2020; Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

This reinforces Black & Wiliam's (1998) theory that formative assessment must be embedded in daily teaching, not treated as an add-on. In Tanzania and Uganda, where documentation and assessment literacy were weak, student teachers struggled to apply CBC-aligned assessment practices.

5.3 Leadership, Policy Coherence, and Sustainability

Strong leadership emerged as a key determinant of sustainability. Kenya's alignment of teacher training colleges, leadership programmes (DELM), and national CBC policy supports Fullan's Change Theory (2007), which argues that coherent reform structures are essential for lasting transformation. Tanzania and Uganda lacked comparable leadership pipelines, resulting in unstable supervision systems and risk of CBC reform fatigue.

Uganda's ongoing transition to degree-level teacher training, while forward-looking, has created uncertainty. Similar systemic disruptions were observed in Rwanda during its early CBC implementation phase, where sudden policy shifts caused temporary declines in teacher morale (Nsengimana et al., 2021).

5.4 The move towards CBE

It is significant for the three countries to note that changing the curriculum documents alone is insufficient, but ensuring how learning is structured, delivered and validated is required for a more comprehensive, philosophical and systemic shift of education. While Kenya is making early strides in the shift towards CBE, Uganda and Tanzania has to make more in roads into the broader education to achieve the systemic shift. Overall, the findings reaffirm that CBC

sustainability depends on teacher support systems, stable institutions, strong leadership, and long-term resourcing, consistent with global education reform studies (Sahlberg, 2015).

6. Conclusion

This comparative study illustrates that Competency-Based Curriculum reform in East Africa is progressing, but unevenly. CBC principles, learner-centered pedagogy, inclusivity, continuous assessment, and development of 21st-century skills, are widely embraced at policy level across Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda. However, actual implementation in teacher education institutions and practicum schools varies considerably.

Kenya demonstrates the most coherent and sustainable CBC ecosystem with a progressive systemic shift towards CBE, supported by structured diploma programmes, national alignment between training institutions and schools, and robust mentorship models. Uganda shows strong conceptual commitment to inclusive and gender-sensitive pedagogy but faces challenges stemming from ongoing teacher education reforms and limited tutor ICT competencies. Tanzania exhibits partial implementation, hindered by outdated documentation, inconsistent assessment practices, and insufficient gender-responsive teaching approaches.

A common thread across all three countries is that CBC success relies not only on curriculum design but on the capacity and confidence of teachers, availability of instructional resources, supportive school leadership, and sustained professional development. Where these elements are strong, as in Kenya, CBC thrives. Where they are weak or unstable, implementation becomes fragmented.

The study concludes that CBC reform must be accompanied by systemic strengthening of teacher education institutions, investment in leadership development, and continuous support to teachers if the curriculum is to achieve its intended transformation of teaching and learning across East Africa.

7. Recommendations

Based on the comparative findings and informed by global and regional research on CBC implementation, the following recommendations are proposed:

Strengthen Teacher Educator Capacity

- Provide continuous professional development on CBC-aligned pedagogy, gender-responsive teaching, ICT integration, and differentiated instruction.
- Integrate Shulman's PCK model and constructivist approaches into tutor training modules.
- Establish peer-learning communities (PLCs) within teacher colleges to promote sharing of CBC best practices.

Improve Practicum and Mentorship Structures

- Scale Kenya's mentorship-practicum model across Tanzania and Uganda, ensuring every student teacher is paired with a trained mentor.
- Develop standardized practicum supervision tools aligned with CBC competencies.
- Increase the frequency and quality of supervision visits to ensure effective modeling of CBC in practicum schools.

Institutionalizing Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Pedagogy

- Integrate FAWE's Gender-Responsive Pedagogy model into all teacher training curricula.
- Train tutors and head teachers on classroom equity, inclusive language, and differentiation strategies for diverse learners.
- Ensure lesson planning templates require explicit attention to inclusion and gender responsiveness.

Strengthen Continuous Assessment Systems

- Develop national and college-level guidelines for CBC-aligned continuous assessment.
- Train teachers and student teachers in formative assessment, authentic assessment, and competency tracking.
- Digitize record-keeping systems to improve monitoring and reduce documentation inconsistencies.

Enhance Leadership and Policy Coherence

- Establish structured leadership development programmes for head teachers and education officers in Tanzania and Uganda, modeled after Kenya's DELM programme.
- Align teacher training curricula with national CBC frameworks to ensure coherence between policy and practice.
- Introduce CBC monitoring frameworks at district and college levels.

Improve Resourcing and ICT Integration

- Invest in ICT infrastructure, digital learning tools, and internet access for teacher colleges, especially in Uganda and Tanzania.

- Provide training on ICT use for lesson delivery, assessment, and inclusive learning.
- Allocate funds for CBC-aligned teaching materials and classroom learning aids.

Ensure Sustainability through System Strengthening

- Avoid abrupt policy shifts that destabilize teacher training systems.
- Provide long-term financing for teacher training, mentorship, and professional development.
- Institutionalize CBC research and periodic evaluation to support continuous improvement.

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