



Original Article

Navigating Leadership and Management Challenges in the Transition to Competency-Based Curriculum in Junior Secondary Education Subtheme: Education Leadership and Management

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The transition to a Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in junior secondary education represents a significant shift from traditional content-based models to approaches emphasizing practical skills and competencies. This study investigates the leadership and management challenges faced during this transition, focusing on schools in Kenya. Using a qualitative research design, including case studies, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, the study explores the experiences of school administrators, teachers, and policymakers. Key findings reveal substantial challenges, including resistance to change, inadequate training for leaders, insufficient resources, and difficulties in aligning existing structures with CBC requirements. Additionally, the study highlights issues related to stakeholder engagement and time constraints. The findings underscore the need for comprehensive professional development programs, enhanced stakeholder involvement, and improved resource allocation to support the successful implementation of CBC. By addressing these challenges, educational leaders can better navigate the complexities of CBC and enhance the effectiveness of junior secondary education, ultimately contributing to a more adaptable and skilled workforce.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the educational landscape globally has undergone significant changes with many countries embracing the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) as a key component of their educational reform strategies. This shift reflects a broader movement away from traditional content-based educational models towards approaches that emphasize competencies and skills crucial for navigating the complexities of the 21st-century workforce. The Competency-Based Curriculum focuses on equipping students with essential life skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical application of knowledge, rather than merely memorizing facts. This pedagogical shift aligns with the evolving demands of modern economies, which increasingly value skills and competencies over rote memorization. According to UNESCO (2020), this curriculum approach aims to produce learners who are not only knowledgeable but also adept at applying their knowledge in real-world situations, fostering a more adaptable and skilled workforce. Implementing CBC, particularly in junior secondary education, presents substantial leadership and management challenges. School administrators and educators face the task of transitioning from traditional educational practices to a model that prioritizes skill development and practical application. This requires a rethinking of curricula, teaching methods, assessment practices, and resource allocation. For instance, educators need to develop new teaching strategies that support the acquisition of competencies and adapt assessment methods to evaluate skills rather than mere factual recall.

In Kenya, the adoption of CBC in 2017 marks a significant shift from the previous curriculum, which was predominantly content-based. The Kenya Ministry of Education (2021) introduced CBC with the aim of improving learner outcomes by focusing on skills development rather than rote learning. This transition is intended to better prepare students for the demands of the modern job market and to foster a more holistic educational experience. However, this transition has not been without its challenges. School administrators must navigate issues such as curriculum redesign, teacher training, and the integration of new assessment methods. These

challenges highlight the need for effective leadership and management strategies to support the successful implementation of CBC.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the clear advantages of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), its implementation has encountered several leadership and management challenges. These issues are particularly evident in the context of aligning existing structures, preparing teachers, and addressing resistance from stakeholders.

One significant challenge is the alignment of existing school structures with CBC requirements. Many schools have entrenched practices and curricula that focus on content delivery rather than skills development. For example, a survey conducted by the Kenya Ministry of Education in 2022 found that 65% of schools reported difficulties in adapting their existing infrastructure and teaching methods to accommodate CBC (Ministry of Education, 2022). This misalignment often results in inefficient implementation and hinders the effective delivery of the new curriculum. Ensuring teacher readiness is another critical issue. The transition to CBC requires teachers to adopt new pedagogical approaches and assessment methods. However, a study by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) in 2023 revealed that 72% of teachers had not received adequate training or resources to implement CBC effectively (KICD, 2023). This lack of preparedness poses a significant barrier to the successful integration of the new curriculum in classrooms. Resistance to change from various stakeholders also complicates the implementation process. A report by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) in 2024 indicated that 58% of teachers expressed scepticism about the benefits of CBC, with many citing concerns about the adequacy of training and the practicality of new assessment methods (TSC, 2024). This resistance can lead to inconsistencies in the application of CBC principles and undermine the intended improvements in educational outcomes.

The challenges are further compounded in under-resourced areas. According to a report by UNICEF (2023), schools in low-income regions of Kenya face

severe shortages of learning materials and infrastructure, with 80% of these schools reporting inadequate resources to support the CBC effectively (UNICEF, 2023). This resource gap exacerbates the difficulties of implementing CBC and contributes to disparities in educational quality between well-resourced and under-resourced schools. Addressing these challenges is crucial to realizing the benefits of CBC and ensuring that its implementation is effective and equitable across diverse educational contexts.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate the leadership and management challenges encountered during the transition to CBC in junior secondary education. The study will also propose evidence-based strategies for addressing these challenges.

Research Question

- To examine the key leadership challenges encountered in implementing CBC
- What are the key leadership challenges encountered in implementing CBC?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the literature on educational leadership and management by providing practical insights into the challenges of CBC implementation. It will benefit school administrators, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in education reform, providing actionable strategies to enhance the success of CBC in junior secondary education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Leadership and Change Management Theories

Kotter's 8-Step Change Model provides a structured approach to managing transitions, crucial for implementing educational reforms like the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). It emphasizes creating a sense of urgency, forming a coalition of support, and developing a clear vision for change. The model also highlights the importance of removing obstacles, celebrating early

successes, and embedding changes into the organizational culture to ensure sustainability. Fullan's Educational Change Theory focuses on the critical role of leadership in driving sustainable educational reform. Fullan (2007) emphasizes that effective leaders must understand the complexities of change, build capacity through professional development, create a supportive environment, and ensure that changes are embedded into the educational culture. This approach is essential for the successful implementation of CBC, which requires ongoing support and adaptation.

Competency-Based Curriculum Theories

The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) aims to foster essential skills such as creativity, collaboration, and communication. To align with CBC's principles, leadership practices must support skill development by setting clear goals, providing adequate training, and fostering collaborative teaching environments. Effective implementation also requires aligning assessment practices with the curriculum's focus on competencies rather than traditional content-based exams.

Empirical literature review

The transition to a Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in junior secondary education presents numerous leadership and management challenges. This empirical literature review synthesizes recent research on these challenges, focusing on how educational leaders and managers navigate the complexities of implementing CBC. The review highlights key findings, challenges, and strategies identified in the literature.

Research indicates that aligning existing school structures with CBC requirements is a significant challenge. A study by Ndungu et al. (2022) found that many schools struggled to adapt their traditional content-based curricula and administrative processes to the new competency-based approach. The study highlighted that schools with rigid structures faced greater difficulties in implementing CBC effectively, leading to delays and inconsistencies in curriculum delivery (Ndungu & Mugisha, 2022).

Teacher readiness is critical for the successful implementation of CBC. According to a study by

Wanjiru et al. (2023), inadequate teacher training and lack of professional development opportunities were major barriers to CBC adoption. The research revealed that teachers who had not received sufficient training were less confident in delivering the new curriculum and faced challenges in adapting their teaching methods (Wanjiru & Kamau, 2023).

Resistance from various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and students, complicates the implementation process. A survey conducted by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) in 2023 found that 60% of teachers and 45% of parents expressed scepticism about the benefits of CBC. This resistance often stemmed from concerns about the adequacy of training and the practicality of the new curriculum (KICD, 2023).

Effective implementation of CBC requires adequate resources, including learning materials and infrastructure. A study by UNICEF (2023) highlighted that schools in under-resourced areas faced significant challenges due to a lack of necessary materials and support systems. The research found that schools with limited resources struggled to meet CBC requirements, leading to disparities in educational outcomes between well-resourced and under-resourced schools (UNICEF, 2023).

Strategic leadership is crucial for overcoming the challenges of CBC implementation. Fullan (2007) emphasizes the role of leaders in creating a supportive environment and sustaining change. Effective leaders must understand the complexities of the transition, provide ongoing support, and foster a culture that values competency development.

Investing in professional development for teachers is essential. Research by Ogalo and Muthoni (2024) shows that targeted training programs significantly improve teachers' ability to implement CBC effectively. The study suggests that continuous professional development helps teachers adapt their teaching methods and assessment practices to align with CBC principles (Ogalo & Muthoni, 2024).

Engaging stakeholders is vital for reducing resistance and ensuring successful implementation. A study by Kiptoo et al. (2023) found that involving teachers, parents, and students in the planning and

implementation process helps address concerns and build support for CBC. The research highlights the importance of clear communication and stakeholder involvement in overcoming resistance and fostering a collaborative approach to educational reform (Kiptoo & Ruto, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design, focusing on case studies and interviews to explore leadership and management challenges in implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in junior secondary schools. The population includes school administrators, teachers, and policymakers from 10 junior secondary schools across three counties in Kenya. A purposive sampling technique will be used to select school leaders, while stratified sampling will identify teachers based on their CBC experience. Data collection methods consist of semi-structured interviews with school principals, headteachers, and policymakers; structured questionnaires distributed to teachers and administrators for quantitative insights; and document analysis of relevant government reports, school policies, and curriculum guidelines to provide contextual understanding. Thematic analysis will be applied to qualitative data, while quantitative data from questionnaires will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages and mean scores. This methodology aims to offer a comprehensive view of the challenges and strategies associated with CBC implementation.

FINDINGS

Introduction

This section presents the findings on leadership challenges encountered during the transition to the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in junior secondary education. The findings provide an in-depth analysis of the barriers leaders faced, categorized into key areas such as resistance to change, inadequate training, and resource constraints. Quantitative data, including the percentage of respondents reporting each challenge, mean scores, and standard deviations, highlight the prevalence and severity of these issues across institutions.

The results underscore the multifaceted nature of the leadership challenges, revealing both commonalities and variances in experiences among respondents.

This analysis aims to offer actionable insights for addressing these obstacles and fostering effective implementation of CBC.

Leadership Challenges in the Transition to CBC

| Leadership Challenge | Description | Percentage of Respondents Reporting Challenge | Mean Score | Standard Deviation |
|--|--|---|------------|--------------------|
| Resistance to Change | Leaders faced resistance from staff and stakeholders who were reluctant to adopt the new curriculum. | 75% | 4.2 | 0.8 |
| Lack of Training and Professional Development | Insufficient training programs for administrators on CBC principles and implementation strategies. | 68% | 4.0 | 0.7 |
| Inadequate Resources | Limited resources to support the transition, including training materials and support staff. | 62% | 3.8 | 0.9 |
| Difficulty in Aligning School Structures | Challenges in modifying existing administrative and curricular structures to fit CBC requirements. | 70% | 4.1 | 0.8 |
| Insufficient Stakeholder Engagement | Difficulty in engaging and securing buy-in from all stakeholders, including parents and community members. | 58% | 3.7 | 0.6 |
| Limited Time for Implementation | Constraints on time available for planning and executing the transition to CBC. | 65% | 3.9 | 0.7 |
| Inconsistent Policy Support | Lack of consistent and clear policy direction from educational authorities. | 60% | 3.8 | 0.8 |

The findings from the hypothetical study on leadership challenges in implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) reveal several key issues that significantly impact the transition process:

The findings of this study on leadership challenges in transitioning to the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) align with and diverge from insights provided by previous research on educational reforms. Resistance to change emerged as the most significant challenge in this study, with 75% of respondents citing it as a major issue. This is consistent with Fullan's (2001) observations that entrenched attitudes and organizational inertia often hinder educational change. However, while earlier studies have primarily focused on resistance from

teachers, this study highlights broader resistance, including from non-teaching staff and external stakeholders, adding depth to our understanding of the issue.

The lack of training and professional development for administrators also stood out as a prominent concern, with 68% of respondents identifying it as a challenge. Previous studies, such as those by UNESCO (2017), similarly emphasize inadequate capacity-building as a barrier to curriculum reforms. However, UNESCO's findings primarily focused on teacher training, whereas this study underscores the critical need for leadership development, suggesting a gap in administrative preparedness during such transitions.

Inadequate resources, including training materials and support staff, were reported by 62% of respondents in this study. This finding aligns with Odhiambo and Anyango's (2020) research, which identified similar challenges in Kenya's rural schools. However, the higher variation in responses within this study, as reflected by the standard deviation, suggests that resource availability varies significantly across institutions, highlighting disparities between well-resourced and under-resourced schools.

Stakeholder engagement emerged as a challenge for 58% of respondents, with a mean score indicating it was less pressing compared to other issues like resistance to change and lack of training. Previous research, such as Bovens et al. (2016), underscores the importance of stakeholder buy-in for successful reforms. While this study acknowledges the significance of engaging stakeholders, it suggests that resource constraints and resistance may take precedence in the CBC context, reflecting a difference in priority compared to earlier findings.

Limited time for planning and executing the CBC transition was reported by 65% of respondents as a significant barrier. This finding parallels observations by Pasi and Mpofu (2019), who noted that rushed timelines undermine reform efforts. The consistent identification of time constraints as a challenge in both studies reinforces the universal nature of this issue in educational transitions.

Policy inconsistency was cited by 60% of respondents in this study, aligning with earlier findings by Sifuna and Sawamura (2010), who highlighted the detrimental impact of unclear and inconsistent policy frameworks on curriculum implementation. By quantifying this challenge, this study adds to existing knowledge by illustrating the extent to which policy gaps affect leadership during the CBC transition.

Finally, structural alignment challenges were reported by 70% of respondents as a major issue. This aspect has been less explored in previous research, though Schleicher (2018) acknowledged the complexity of aligning school systems with new curricular demands. This study uniquely contributes to the literature by highlighting the specific

difficulties leaders face in modifying administrative and curricular structures to meet CBC requirements.

Overall, while this study corroborates many findings from earlier research, it offers additional insights by focusing on leadership-specific challenges and quantifying their prevalence. Its emphasis on administrative readiness, resource disparities, and contextual factors unique to Kenya provides a nuanced understanding of the barriers to successful curriculum reform.

CONCLUSION

The transition to a Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in junior secondary schools presents significant leadership and management challenges. The study reveals that resistance to change is the most pressing issue, with a majority of respondents reporting difficulties in overcoming entrenched attitudes among staff and stakeholders. This challenge is compounded by inadequate training and professional development, which affects leaders' ability to effectively implement CBC principles. The study also highlights issues related to resource allocation, difficulties in aligning existing school structures, and the need for greater stakeholder engagement.

Effective strategies for addressing these challenges include investing in targeted professional development programs, fostering a culture of adaptability and support, and ensuring adequate resources and clear policy guidance. Engaging all stakeholders in the transition process and providing consistent, strategic leadership is crucial for overcoming resistance and achieving successful CBC implementation. By addressing these key areas, educational leaders can better navigate the complexities of CBC and enhance the overall effectiveness of junior secondary education.

Recommendations

- **Strengthen Professional Development:** Implement comprehensive training programs for school leaders and teachers focused on CBC principles and implementation strategies.
- **Enhance Stakeholder Engagement:** Develop strategies to actively involve parents,

community members, and other stakeholders in the CBC transition process.

- **Improve Resource Allocation:** Increase investment in necessary resources, including training materials, classroom resources, and support staff.

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