

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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Abstract: 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.

Keywords: Leadership and Management Challenges, Transition, Competency-Based Curriculum, Junior Secondary Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

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 Kenyan 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.

1.2 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 Kenyan 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 skepticism 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.

1.3 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.

1.3.1. Research Question

- i. To examine the key leadership challenges encountered in implementing CBC

1.4 Research Question

ii. What are the key leadership challenges encountered in implementing CBC?

1.5 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.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 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.

2.2. 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, M., & Mugisha, E., 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, A., & Kamau, J., 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 skepticism 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, N., & Muthoni, R., 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, A., & Ruto, R., 2023).

3. 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.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 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:

Resistance to change emerged as the most significant challenge, with 75% of respondents identifying it as a major issue. This high mean score reflects the substantial obstacles leaders face in overcoming entrenched attitudes and practices among staff and stakeholders. The standard deviation indicates a moderate variation in responses, suggesting that while resistance is a common challenge, its intensity may vary among different institutions.

The lack of adequate training and professional development for administrators was also a prominent challenge, with 68% of respondents highlighting this issue. The mean score of 4.0 underscores the critical need for targeted training programs to equip leaders with the skills and knowledge necessary for CBC implementation. The lower standard deviation suggests a relatively consistent view among respondents regarding the importance of this challenge.

Inadequate resources, including insufficient training materials and support staff, were identified by 62% of respondents. The mean score of 3.8 reflects a notable concern, though slightly less critical compared to resistance to change and training issues. The higher standard deviation indicates a wider range of opinions on the adequacy of resources, possibly reflecting disparities between well-resourced and under-resourced schools.

Challenges in modifying existing administrative and curricular structures to align with CBC requirements were reported by 70% of respondents. The mean score of 4.1 indicates a significant concern, highlighting the complexity of restructuring schools to accommodate the new curriculum. The moderate standard deviation shows some variation in how this challenge is experienced across different institutions.

Engaging stakeholders effectively was a challenge for 58% of respondents. The mean score of 3.7 suggests that while stakeholder engagement is important, it is somewhat less critical than other challenges. The lower standard deviation indicates a more consistent view on the level of difficulty associated with this issue.

Limited time for planning and executing the CBC transition was noted by 65% of respondents. The mean score of 3.9 reflects a significant concern, emphasizing the pressure on leaders to manage the transition within tight timelines. The standard deviation suggests a fairly uniform perception of the challenge's severity.

Inconsistent support from educational authorities was reported by 60% of respondents. The mean score of 3.8 highlights that while policy support is a concern, it is not as pronounced as some of the other challenges. The standard deviation shows variability in how respondents view the impact of policy inconsistency.

Overall, the findings highlight that resistance to change and lack of training are the most pressing leadership challenges in implementing CBC. Addressing these issues through targeted professional development, enhanced stakeholder engagement, and adequate resource allocation is crucial for the successful transition to a competency-based approach in junior secondary education.

5. 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 are 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.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. **Strengthen Professional Development:** Implement comprehensive training programs for school leaders and teachers focused on CBC principles and implementation strategies.
- ii. **Enhance Stakeholder Engagement:** Develop strategies to actively involve parents, community members, and other stakeholders in the CBC transition process.
- iii. **Improve Resource Allocation:** Increase investment in necessary resources, including training materials, classroom resources, and support staff.

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