
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Challenges Faced by Graduate Teachers in Developing Students' Competencies in Bukoba Municipality in Kagera Region, Tanzania

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| ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess challenges faced by graduate teachers in developing student competencies in Bukoba Municipality in Kagera Region, Tanzania. The study employed the survey design taking a population of 100 graduates from 27 secondary schools and a sample size of 81 graduate teachers. These were selected using purposive sampling. The data were collected using a questionnaire, interview, and structured observation methods. Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics with the help of SPSS, and qualitative data were analyzed using a thematic approach. This was then presented in a table, using frequencies and percentages for quantitative data and quotes for qualitative data. The findings from the study show that graduate teachers lacked teaching aids and were not satisfied with the learning environment, especially in most of the ward schools. It was also evident that these graduate teachers indicated a lack of in-service training to improve their skills as a major setback when it comes to developing students' competencies since they lacked opportunities to upgrade their skills on CBC. Generally, the study concludes that teachers are facing a lot of challenges while developing student competencies, such as an acute shortage of teaching and learning materials which hinders effective implementation of the curriculum. However, it recommends in-service training for teachers, supporting teachers with materials needed for the implementation of CBC, as well as improving the teaching and learning environment to ensure graduate teachers develop learners' competencies fully.

| KEYWORDS

Teachers; Student Competencies; Graduate Teachers; CBC

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Tanzania is one of the countries included in the global educational reformation. In the year 2005, Tanzania introduced a Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) that led to the development of competency-based learning in secondary schools. In 2006, the same was introduced at the primary level, and CBC became operational in both primary and secondary schools (Woods, 2008). Woods adds that the introduction of CBC in Tanzania is the second major educational change; the first took place in 1967 with the introduction of Education for Self-Reliance (ESR), which was content based. With respect to the changes, the Ministry of Education and Culture called upon education to be treated as a strategic agent for mindset transformation and for the creation of a well-educated nation (Kafyulilo et al., 2012). As documented by Woods (2008), since then, Tanzania has put serious financial and human commitment to training and supporting teachers to develop the necessary competencies and confidence to effectively handle Competency-Based Education (CBE).

Nevertheless, CBE is in the early stage of implementation in Tanzania and may be facing serious challenges, and there is a need to see how university instruction is influencing the graduates' delivery of CBC. One of these challenges facing CBC is poor implementation. A recent study done by HakiElimu on mass student failure in the national examination found that one of the reasons was poor curriculum implementation (Rweyemamu, 2012). Again, the commission set by the parliament to investigate the

2012 form four National Examinations results following the massive failure registered; found that the examinations did not follow the CBC format, among other syllabus implementation reasons (HakiElimu, 2013). Another major challenge facing CBC is reflected in the results of that particular year. They were devastating with a high failure rate as compared to the previous years noted that; On 18 February 2013, the Government of Tanzania announced that 240,903 out of 397,126 students who sat the 2012 National Form Four exams failed, putting the failure rate at 61% (up from 46% in 2011). A further 34% received Division IV, meaning only 6% received a meaningful pass rate of Division I, II, and III combined. The 2012 Form Four results have been labeled disastrous and shocking (HakiElimu, 2013, p. 1.).

Thinkwice (2007) defines Competency Based Education as a research-supported curriculum based on the primary goal of defining critical behaviors needed for effective and superior individual and organizational performance. Similarly, Vavlus, Thomas, and Bartlett (2011) add that this approach focuses on students' needs, abilities, backgrounds, and interests, with the teacher serving primarily as a guide or a facilitator for learning. A more realistic view of this approach is to conceptualize it as a spectrum of practices and perspectives that the teacher moves across with greater and lesser ease depending on his/ her education, training, and experience (Barrett, 2010).

1.1. Background of the CBC Programmes in Bukoba Municipality

Bukoba Municipal has many graduate teachers and secondary schools compared to other municipalities and districts in Kagera region. For instance, statistics from the regional education office in 2019 verified that there were 35 secondary schools and 100 graduate teachers expected to implement Competency Based Programs (URT 2019).

Many educationists have observed that trends in education have been a significant move toward Competency Based Programs (Kuhlich, 1991). Competency Based Education (CBE) aims at meeting individual learning needs by meeting students' strengths and weaknesses with flexibility. These views are opposed to the traditional education system in which the unit of progression is time, and the delivery method is predominantly teacher centered (Kuhlich, 1991). On the other hand, in the CBE approach to teaching, the unit of progression is mastery of specific knowledge and skills or competencies. It is learner-centered and takes the constructivist approach to teaching and learning (Norton, 1987).

The constructivist approach is a paradigm that suggests that teachers should create conditions for students to discover and actively construct knowledge and develop the higher-order thinking skills of analysis and synthesis through inquiry-oriented lessons in the classroom (Norton, 1987). From this perspective, lessons should be competency based, encouraging students to draw upon, connect and analyze their prior knowledge and experiences through self-discovery and interaction with other students and with the teacher who acts as a facilitator. HakiElimu supports Norton by indicating that a Competency Based Curriculum envisages several teaching and learning methods in the classroom, such as problem solving and inquiry, debates, and group discussions, among others (HakiElimu, 2013).

Before the introduction of CBE in Tanzania, the teacher-based curriculum was in practice. According to Kafyulilo et al. (2000), Teacher-Centered Education is aimed at providing individuals with an education that would make them self-reliant and play an active role in the community. Although this philosophy was considered effective, it did not last long and emphasized a content based learning approach, which was inherited from the colonial regime.

Thus, CBE is related to outcome based instruction and is adoptive to the changing needs of students, teachers, and the community (Schneck, 1978). In other words, CBE is productive education that focuses on what an individual can do with the education he/she claims to possess.

CBE has several elements as stipulated below by Norton; Competencies to be achieved are carefully identified, verified, and made public in advance, and the criteria to be used in assessing achievement and the conditions under which achievement will be assessed are explicitly stated and made public in advance. Similarly, the instructional program provides for the individual development and evaluation of each of the competencies specified. The assessment of competency takes the participant's knowledge and attitudes into account but requires the actual performance of the competency as the primary source of evidence and participants' progress through the instructional program at their own rate by demonstrating the attainment of the specified competencies (Norton, 1987).

Looking at the mentioned elements above, CBE is considered to focus on the development of the entire individual. It is on this factor that a number of countries, including Tanzania, decided to transform their national education curriculum from content based to competence based (Woods, 2008). He continues to describe this transformation as the most significant change in primary and secondary education since the introduction of free primary education. With these changes, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC, 2004) anticipated developing an education system that would enable Tanzanians to be sufficiently equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to competently and competitively solve challenges that face the nation.

The introduction of the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) in the Tanzanian education system shifts the orientation of content based learning, though not exclusively, to competency based learning. This focuses more on the understanding of concepts and acquisition of skills and competencies, which in turn calls for changes in teaching and learning, and assessment approaches (Woods, 2008; Wangejela, 2010; World Bank, 2011).

1.2. Contextual Background on University Curriculum and Graduate Teachers

The need for change in the instructional approaches calls for changes in the teacher training program to equip the Tanzanian graduate teacher with the necessary competencies to enable him/her to be effective in the delivery of CBC. Teachers need to have skills to match the curriculum and thus require modification in the curriculum of the teacher training institutions. Teachers in Bukoba are also expected to have the right knowledge and skills to deliver the Competency Based Curriculum. According to Woods (2008), this necessitates a serious financial and human commitment to the training of teachers and education professionals to ensure that they graduate with the necessary competency and confidence to deliver this pedagogical approach.

Since the introduction of the new Competency Based Curriculum in secondary schools, the failure rate in Form Four national exams has been the highest at 61% in 2012 compared to the year 2011 at 46%, the year 2010 at 45%, and 2007 at 38% (Haki Elimu, 2013). Secondary schools in Bukoba Municipality are not an exception. This deteriorating trend has been a point of concern to many stakeholders in the education sector. According to Civil Society, between 2009 and 2011, 86.9% of all the candidates who sat for the national examination scored between division four and division zero (Civil Society, 2013). This shows a downward trend in the outcomes of the education system since the introduction of CBC in Tanzanian secondary schools.

This deteriorating trend in the form of four National Examinations results has made the researcher ask if this massive failure has anything to do with the graduates' teaching and the influence of their university instruction on CBC. In fact, one of the reasons given by the commission formed to investigate the 2012 examination failure was that the examinations were not set in line with CBC (Civil Society, 2013).

The competency Based Curriculum in Tanzania has been in place since the year 2005 in secondary schools. Earlier on, the common teacher-centered curriculum of education was in place up to 2005. Over time, the latter proved ineffective, which prompted the adaptation of the learner-centered curriculum (Wood, 2008). However, since its introduction, the failure rate in the form four has been on the increase, as evidenced by the form four results of previous years up to 2012 (Civil Society, 2013). This has prompted the researcher to find out the challenges faced by graduate teachers in developing student competencies in Bukoba Municipality in Kagera Region, Tanzania.

2. Literature Review

The implication here is that teacher training institutes in Tanzania should ensure that graduate teachers learn how they can modify their teaching methods so as to promote competency based learning. This can be done by ensuring that the teacher understands the competency based approach and can effectively deliver it.

A study done by UNICEF (2009) in Zambia on teaching life skills revealed that teachers are not always adequately prepared to teach an integrated life skills curriculum. It also found that teachers may not be utilizing critical participatory and learner-centered methodology for effective life skills. This poses a great challenge to the effectiveness of teachers' delivery of competency based skills. In the year 2007, Curriculum Development Centre in Zambia produced and distributed resources and processed teacher guides. This is a clear indication of government commitment to ensuring the effectiveness of its teachers in delivering the competencies stated in the curriculum.

In their research done in Australia, Holzinger (2002) and Motschnig-Pitrick (2002) figured out that competency based teaching is more demanding in terms of communication, organization as well as provision of learning materials. The research adds that students who are given the freedom to explore areas based on their personal interests and are accompanied in their learning by a supportive, understanding teacher achieve superior academic results and also develop socially as well as grow personally and autonomously.

Evidence from existing literature indicates that learner-centered teaching can play a significant role in contemporary education and related research activities on the key impact of relationships in the learning environment (Glew, 1994; Howe, 2001). In this light, it is important for teacher training institutions to ensure that they produce teachers who are effective in delivering the prevailing curriculum. Arguably, due to the demand for a Competency Based curriculum, the government and the community need to work hand in hand to assist the teachers with materials and a good teaching environment. This is mainly because rigid educational programs are giving way to more adoptable and flexible ones, in which student feedback and participation are increasingly playing an important role.

Another research done in Australia by Norwood (2011) shows that teaching and learning practices reveal that teachers differ significantly in their ability to provide differentiated teaching of competency based skills. The challenge of building teacher skills at the teacher training institute to implement a new curriculum in Australia is a major issue to be addressed to ensure the effective delivery of the curriculum. The point to bring out here is that the teacher is considered the implementer of the curriculum. Critically, this Australian issue may dismiss the individual learner, and it seems to bring out the image of a single line passing of skills and knowledge. The researcher disagrees with this idea and holds that the teacher cannot solely deliver the curriculum without the cooperation of other stakeholders. Kim (2011) adds that teaching as the delivery of a curriculum evokes a one-way transmission of knowledge and skills. This may lead to dissatisfied learners. However, for the effective delivery of a curriculum, the teacher plays a major part. According to Norwood (2011), there are many methods that can aid the efficiency of teachers in delivering a competency based curriculum. He states that the competency based method is one that engages students and allows them to find the personal motivation that they need.

Another method is the use of interactive whiteboards where the learners are directly interacting with the material. This poses a big challenge in developing countries like Tanzania in the ability to provide teachers with the appropriate methodologies and resources to make them effective in the delivery of the curriculum and, more so, for training graduate teachers inappropriate methods of delivering a Competency Based Curriculum. Despite the methodologies of delivery, graduate teachers are expected to be effective in their teaching as a way of effective delivery of the curriculum. However, according to Thobega et al. (2001), in research done in Botswana secondary schools, teachers can only effectively deliver a Competency Based Curriculum if they are accorded emotional, administrative, and technical support. They should be supported so that their teaching takes place in a suitable environment. In the Tanzanian context, supporting teachers, especially through the provision of adequate teaching and learning materials by the government and in-servicing teachers on CBE, can prove to be very fruitful in the implementation of CBC.

Similarly, Harper (2004) states that the effectiveness of teachers in delivering a competency based curriculum requires the involvement of important members like students' parents, the ministry of education, and other members of the community. It also requires time and effort. The effectiveness of the teacher in delivering a Competency Based Curriculum, on the other hand, involves persevering through hardships and challenges that one encounters. Arguably, this calls for proper training of graduate teachers in the training institutions. These institutions need to have the appropriate personnel with updated skills and knowledge in teacher training on competency based education.

Teachers, as agents of curriculum delivery, are central to the education system and can make or break a system (Harper, 2004). This calls for high quality training of the graduate teachers for them to be effective in performing their teaching tasks. In the Tanzanian context, teacher training institutes should have a curriculum that trains teachers to be effective in the implementation of the curriculum so that they may contribute to the realization of the goals of education.

According to Mabusa (2000), some subjects require both theory and practice and thus need more time and effort leading to competition between subjects due to increased enrollment, as found out in the Botswana research. In the Tanzanian ward schools, for example, such a factor of increased enrollment may over-stretch teaching facilities and, as a result, make the learning process to be too taxing and fruitless.

Another research done in Botswana by in-service officers Michello and Mabusa (2003) showed factors that hindered effectiveness in delivering the Competency Based Curriculum, which was under study. Some of these factors included lack of support from administration and parents, insufficient facilities, a high workload in terms of student-teacher ratio, and a lengthy syllabus, among others.

3. Methodology

This research employed a mixed approach because it seeks numerical and qualitative data. In this light, the researcher used a survey design. The researcher chose this design since it represents a wide target population, and it gathers standardized information by using the same instrument for all the respondents. This study used questionnaires, an interview guide, and structured observation methods to collect data from the respondents. It is vital that a researcher should conduct research in accordance with the highest ethical principles. As such, the researcher ensured that the research did no harm to the respondents, as well as ensured their anonymity by not mentioning their names and institutions. The researcher also sought informed consent, and participants were free to opt-out or refuse participation.

4. Results and Discussion

According to the findings of this research, most graduate teachers received instruction at their respective universities, and this enables them to teach CBC. However, this comes along with it several challenges. The objective of this study was to find out these challenges. The findings are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1 Challenges Faced by Teachers

Challenges Faced by Graduate Teachers	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of teaching aids	37	45.7%
Lack of in-service training	16	19.8%
Lack of administrative support	7	8.6%
Poor learning environment	21	25.9%

Source: field data (2020)

It can be revealed from Table 1 above that most of the teachers lacked teaching aids, as indicated by 45.7% of the respondents. This may be attributed to poor utilization of locally available materials by the graduate teachers. The idea of Vuvlus et al. (2011) is contradicted by this finding since they argue that a good relationship between teachers, learners, and learning materials is the heart of quality education.

The lack of teaching aids may also be attributed to the heavy workload of graduate teachers' lack of enough time to prepare the teaching aids. One of the teachers commented as follows;

'I teach geography alone in this school, from form one to four. Form ones are very many, so I have divided them into two classes. With this workload, I rarely get time to prepare the teaching aid for most of my lessons.'

In support of the above statement, Holzinger (2002) and Motschnig-Pitrick (2002), in their research done in Australia, found out that competency based teaching is more demanding in terms of communication, organization as well as provision of learning materials, and Harper (2004) add to this by stating that the delivery of a competency based curriculum requires time and effort thus, the need for supporting teachers with the required needs to teach CBC. This indicates that learners may fail to acquire the required competencies in the absence of a teaching aid hence poor teaching of CBC.

Similarly, 25.9% of the respondents indicated that a poor learning environment was a challenge. This is supported by the observation made where the researcher observed overcrowded classrooms while some classrooms lacked enough ventilation as well as enough chairs for the students. This result reveals that, though graduate teachers have the required knowledge and skills to teach CBC, their effectiveness may be compromised by a poor learning environment.

However, 19.8% of the respondents felt that the lack of in-service training was a great challenge to the teaching of CBC. This is supported by 46 of the 81 respondents who indicated that lack of in-service training contributed to a low level of effectiveness in teaching CBC, as shown in Table 1. This shows that there is little or no in-service training for graduate teachers on CBC being carried out. The implication here is that graduate teachers have not received in-service training upon the introduction of the new curriculum leading to inefficiency in the teaching of CBC.

Graduate teachers face many challenges in the process of developing student competencies. The findings from the study show that graduate teachers lacked teaching aid and were not satisfied with the learning environment, especially in most of the ward schools. It was also evident that these graduate teachers indicated a lack of in-service training to improve their skills as a major setback when it comes to developing students' competencies since they lacked opportunities to upgrade their skills on CBC. The implication here is seen during the national examination results, where students fail at a high rate, especially since the introduction of CBC in our secondary schools.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The objective of the study was to find out the challenges faced by graduate teachers in developing student competencies in Bukoba Municipality in Kagera Region, Tanzania. This study found that teachers face a lot of challenges in developing student competencies. The challenges include: an acute shortage of teaching and learning aids and a poor learning environment, which hinders effective implementation of the CBC curriculum. This means that students are not given enough opportunities to interact with learning materials and, therefore, cannot create knowledge. The limitations of the study were that the study was conducted in one district. The authors recommend that a similar study should be conducted in the future but focus on how the challenges which have been identified can be dealt with, and it should be conducted in a larger geographical area.

5.2. Recommendation

The study recommends in-service training for graduate teachers to assist them in upgrading their knowledge and skills in competency based activities. Through continued professional development, more teachers should be sensitized about the strengths of constructivist teaching activities, which are learner-centered. Therefore, the ministry of education and vocational training should introduce more in-service opportunities for graduate teachers. The study also recommends that school administration should support teachers in various ways to enable them to teach CBC effectively. According to Thobega et al. (2001), teachers can only effectively deliver a competency based curriculum if they are accorded emotional, administrative, and technical support. They need support so that their teaching takes place in a suitable environment.

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