

Kiswahili teachers' pedagogical competence in actual class interaction for the implementation of Competency based curriculum

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Abstract

A curriculum is as good as teachers who implement it, because teachers control what is taught and how it is taught in their classrooms. Existing literature examined teachers' pedagogical competence based on their attendance of CBC trainings. However, what remains to be explored is the ability of teachers to facilitate appropriate interactions in the classroom during the curriculum implementation process. This study therefore focused on the ability of Kiswahili teachers to effectively involve learners into various instructional activities during the teaching and learning process. Desimone's Core Conceptual Framework was adopted to anchor this study. Based on interpretive paradigm, this study adopted a qualitative approach that used a multiple case study research design. Target population comprised teachers of Kiswahili at grade four level. Purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting nine teachers of Kiswahili that participated in this study. Qualitative data were mainly generated through observation guide schedule. They were analysed using grounded theory method of analysis while applying constant comparative technique. Findings revealed varying Kiswahili teachers' pedagogical competence. Specifically, teachers skilfully selected learner-centred instructional approaches but ineffectively used them during actual class interaction. The study thus recommends for teacher capacity building programmes that focus more on equipping teachers with skills on how to instruct using learner-centred instructional approaches.

Keywords: Actual class interaction, Competency based curriculum, Curriculum implementation, Kiswahili teachers' pedagogical competence, Teacher pedagogical competence.

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1. Introduction

The quality of any curriculum cannot be greater than the quality of its teachers (Mutolwa, 2019). This implies that curriculum intentions remain an illusion unless they are put into practice by teachers who are well equipped in terms of knowledge and skills to do so. In particular, teachers control what is taught and how it is taught in their classrooms (Nasibi, 2015). However, relatively little is known about the ability of Kiswahili teachers to involve learners into various instructional activities during implementation of CBC. This is so because, majority of existing studies (Andiema, 2020; Atikiya, 2021; Chemagosi, 2020; Isaboke et al., 2021; Kimosop, 2019; Kisirkoi & Kamanga, 2018; Marion, 2020; Momanyi & Rop, 2019; Pale & Amukowa, 2020; Ondimu, 2018; Omondi & Achieng, 2020; Teygong, 2018; Sitienei, 2020; Muasya & Waweru, 2019; Waweru, 2018) only limit their focus on examining teachers' attendance of CBC trainings as a basis of teacher pedagogical competence in the implementation of CBC. Whereas such studies are quite informative as there exists a significant statistical relationship between teachers' extent of training on CBC and their ability to implement the curriculum (Isaboke et al., 2021; Mwita et al., 2022 & Ngeno, 2022), studies by Hwande and Mpofu (2017), Ndayambaje (2018) and Orina et al. (2022) caution that teachers may still be ill-equipped to implement CBC despite attending the training sessions. This study therefore focused on the ability of Kiswahili teachers to effectively involve learners into various instructional activities during the teaching and learning process for the implementation of CBC in selected primary schools in Kenya. This is significant as it informs teacher in service programmes for the implementation of CBC in Kenya and elsewhere as well as the enhancement of teacher training programmes in colleges and universities.



1.1 Objective of the study

I. To explore Kiswahili teachers' pedagogical competence in actual class interaction for the implementation of CBC in selected primary schools in Kenya.

1.2 Research question

I. How prepared are Kiswahili teachers in terms of pedagogical competence for effective classroom interaction in the implementation of CBC in selected primary schools in Kenya?

2. Literature review

According to Mwaka et al. (2014) actual class interaction is the actual delivery process of the planned content. In this study, actual class interaction was viewed as the second phase in the instructional process which involved actualization of the lesson plan. Dick and Carey (2005) expound that, the actual class interaction encompasses elements such as teachers, learners, instructional materials, instructional activities, content and learning environment. These elements interact with each other and work together to bring out the desired student learning outcomes.

Atherton (2009) further observes that it is the subject matter, teacher and leaner that are the most important components in the actual classroom interaction. To the scholar, successful achievement of instructional objectives occurs only after harmonious interaction of the three components. Atherton (2009) also opines that the type of instruction employed is determined by the nature of interaction of the three elements. For instance, if emphasis is put on subject matter, it becomes subject centred instruction; if learner takes the prime position, it is learner centred instruction and teacher centred instruction where the teacher is emphasized.

The newly introduced CBC advocates for a learner-centred instructional approach for the basic education level (KICD, 2017a). Specifically, it recommends for instructional methods that include; role plays, problem solving, projects, case study and study visits (KNUT, 2019). Furthermore, the grade four Kiswahili curriculum design emphasizes on the use of a range of instructional methods which include; case study, group work, role play, discussion, question and answer, simulation and dictation (KICD, 2019). This is because a teacher who employs a range of instructional methods in a single lesson achieves instructional objectives with much ease compared to the one who depends on a single instructional method (Mbae, 2014). This study not only interrogated teachers of Kiswahili using a range of instructional methods, but also the effectiveness of methods employed in achieving the desired instructional outcomes.

The new curriculum advocates for the application of both classroom and out of classroom learning experiences (KICD, 2017a). Examples of classroom-based learning experiences include: brainstorming, discussion activities, working in pairs, working in groups, debates and role play. On the other hand, the curriculum advocates for out of classroom learning experiences which may include: singing, dancing, reciting poems, club activities, games and debates (KICD, 2017b). It further recommends for community service learning. According to IBE-UNESCO (2017) the community service learning focuses on citizenship, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, life skills, communication skills and research. Parental engagement activities are also encouraged with the parents being requested to be involved in learning activities such as; assisting children with take home assignments, collecting instructional resources and conducting online enquiries (KICD, 2019). According to KICD (2017b) the combination of classroom and out of classroom learning experiences in the actual class interaction is important as they enable the learner to: acquire knowledge, skills and develop attitudes; acquire the intended competences; learn from one another; self-regulate and evaluate; engage deeply in the subject matter; reflect on the learning process and interact with others during the learning process. In a similar way, this study adopted a position that effective instruction occurs when a teacher uses a range of instructional activities that suits the context in which the instruction is taking place. It therefore interrogated the effectiveness of instructional activities used by teachers in achieving the desired instructional outcomes.

To further enhance actual class interaction the KICD (2017b) advocates for the utilisation of various instructional materials. In particular, KICD (2017b) and KICD (2019) advocate for the use of charts, pictures, drawings, posters, newspapers, magazines, dictionaries, flash cards, word puzzles, code words, video clips, models and the immediate environment. The instructional materials are credited with prompting learners' reasoning and facilitating development of competences such as critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and imagination, communication and collaboration, self-efficacy among others. They also make images to last longer in the mind. When a learner correctly sees, hears, smells and touches, then he or she can put the pieces together and get the picture even without you having to explain (KICD, 2017b). According to the current study, unless



instructional materials are used appropriately, they may fail to achieve the intended instructional objectives. This study therefore in addition to finding out on the use of various instructional materials, it also examined their proper use.

Review of empirical studies conducted by scholars such as; Kang'ahi et al. (2012), Momanyi (2012) further indicate that the instructional approach used greatly influences learners' acquisition of Kiswahili language. Mbae (2014) also observes that teachers need to be conversant with different methods so as learners can grasp all that is planned in the curriculum by its designers.

In Tanzania studies reviewed reveal that majority of the teachers continue to use traditional subject centred instruction (Paulo, 2014; Kavindi, 2014; Rwezaura, 2016; Tambwe, 2017; Nzima, 2016). Similar findings have also been recorded in Zambia by studies from Mulenga and Kabombwe (2019) and later Sibanda and Blignaut (2020) who reported that teachers were adapting the new CBC curriculum to suit their traditional way of teaching. Besides, Ndayambaje (2018) in Rwanda also noted that teachers continued using the old teaching methods.

Benjamin (2014) in his study on implementation of constructivist approach in competency-based curriculum in Tanzania established that nearly (80%) of the teachers who were surveyed from selected schools never took the trouble to use the competency-based approaches during the teaching and learning process. Further studies by: Zhuwale and Shumba (2017) in Zimbabwe; and Makunja (2016) and Nyoni (2018) in Tanzania noted that teachers lacked enough pedagogical knowledge on how to infuse various aspects of CBC in instruction. For instance, the teachers failed to promote competencies such as; critical thinking and problem solving (Makunja, 2016; Nyoni, 2018).

Scholars such as; Komba and Mwandanji (2015), Lukindo (2016), and Muneja (2015) further attribute the continued dominance of traditional subject centred instruction to teacher incompetence in the instructional process. Indeed, a study by Kimaryo (2011) noted that majority of teachers still focused on developing content and use knowledge-based curriculum to facilitate teaching with the hope that the learners would develop the intended competences automatically by themselves. Furthermore, Kosia (2020) reported that a number of teachers were not trained in various recommended teaching methods like problem solving, technical skills, debates, case analysis, library searches and online searches.

In Kenya, a study by Cheruto and Orodho (2016) on the preparedness of teachers of Kiswahili in teaching using integrated Kiswahili course in secondary schools in Kericho County revealed that, most teachers were not competent in teaching the subject using an integrated approach that was introduced in the 2006 curriculum revision. Similar findings were recorded by a study from Kemboi and Nabwire (2017) on the assessment of teacher competence in pedagogical knowledge in the implementation of secondary school curriculum in north rift region. According to the scholars, majority of the teachers did not use learner centred instruction like inquiry, discussions and demonstrations.

Under CBC, studies conducted by scholars such as; Pale and Amukowa (2020) and Muasya and Waweru (2019) indicate that teachers were still using the traditional subject centred instruction that was favoured in the previous 8-4-4 education system. Omondi and Achieng (2020) further established that most teachers found it difficult to infuse values, core competencies and pertinent and contemporary issues. Specifically, it was established that majority (72.8%) of the lower primary school teachers needed support in infusing most of the core competencies in instruction (Waweru, 2018).

Even more specific is the study conducted by Marion (2020) on the challenges experienced by educators in the implementation of competency-based curriculum programme in Kenya: The case of primary schools in Laikipia. In this study the scholar established that, the infusion of competencies such as; digital literacy, creativity and imagination, problem solving and critical thinking was challenging as majority of the teachers indicated that they were still developing their ability. For instance, approximately half of the teachers had difficulties in teaching digital activities. However, the scholar also noted that majority of the studied teachers were able to successfully infuse the competencies of communication and collaboration and Citizenship. In particular, 81.4 % of the instructors were able to infuse Citizenship to their learners to a good extent.

Isaboke et al. (2021), in their study on teacher preparedness and implementation of the competency-based curriculum in public pre-primary schools in Nairobi City County, further delved in the various aspects of CBC. To start with, the study established that majority of the trained respondents could handle the various learning areas in CBC easily without support. On the other hand, majority of the respondents who were not trained indicated that they could not handle these learning areas without support. Specifically, majority of the trained respondents could: infuse core competencies in instruction (63.3 %); infuse pertinent and contemporary issues in



instruction (63.7%); facilitate parental engagement in learners' learning (60.0%); integrate community service learning in instruction (70.0%); and handle non formal instructional activities (66.7%). Isaboke et al. (2021) thus concluded that there was significant statistical relationship between teachers' extent of training on CBC and their ability to implement the curriculum. Indeed, studies done by Sifuna and Obonyo (2019) and Muasya and Waweru (2019) also had a similar conclusion.

Further studies on teacher pedagogical competence in instruction conducted by researchers such as; Hall (2021) and Teygong (2018) have however reported contrasting findings compared to the afore- reviewed studies. For example, the studies revealed the extensive adoption of learner centred instruction compared to subject centred instruction ones. In particular, Teygong (2018) found out that majority of (66.3%) teachers favoured the use of question-and-answer method as a main teaching method. Problem solving and demonstration methods were also found to be prevalent methods favoured by teachers in primary schools in Chepkorio Ward (Teygong, 2018).

According to the current study, actual class interaction is an important phase of instruction as it ties together the other two phases of instruction; that is lesson planning and assessment. This is achieved by putting the lesson plan into practice through involving learners in various instructional activities. They are these instructional activities that form the basis of assessment that is done in the later stage of instruction. The study therefore emphasizes on teachers of Kiswahili competence in actual class interaction. From the review contradictions emerge with some scholars (Hall, 2021; Teygong, 2018) arguing about teacher pedagogical competence in the instructional process for implementation of CBC, while others (Waweru, 2018; Pale & Amukowa, 2020; Omondi & Achieng, 2020) sharing a contrasting opinion. Further in-depth study on Kenyan teachers' pedagogical competence in the actual class interaction is needed to resolve these contradictions. This study therefore undertook an in-depth study of Kiswahili teachers' pedagogical competence in actual class interaction.

3. Materials and methods

This study employed a qualitative research approach. In particular, it utilized a multiple case study research design in exploring Kiswahili teachers' pedagogical competence in actual class interaction for the implementation of CBC in selected primary schools in Kenya. The design was suitable in providing an in-depth and detailed account of the phenomenon understudy (Yin, 2018).

The study population comprised teachers of Kiswahili at grade four in Turkana, county, Kenya. Specifically, the number of teachers of Kiswahili studied was limited to nine. The reason for limiting the number of participants in the study was to allow for selection of "information- rich cases whose study would illuminate the questions under study" (Patton, 2015, p.230). Furthermore, the respondents for the study were selected using the maximum variation strategy (Patton, 2015). To enhance this strategy, the researcher selected participants from schools located both in rural and urban settings. In addition, efforts were made to select teachers of Kiswahili from both public and private schools. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants of this study. This sampling technique suited the current study for it increased the utility of data obtained from the small exploratory sample (Denscombe, 2021; Denzin et al., 2023).

Data collection and analysis occurred concurrently. According to Neuman (2021) this allowed the research findings to be grounded more on empirical proof. Data was mainly collected using observation guide schedule. Immediately after collection, it was coded and categorized. This was then followed by inductive data analysis. Whereby, themes were built from the bottom by organizing data into increasingly more abstract units of information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Moreover, the analysis was conducted using grounded theory techniques while applying constant comparative technique which was in line with recommendations by Charmaz (2014).

To ensure participants' anonymity pseudonyms such as: School "A"; School "B"; School "C" ... were used. Moreover, teachers were identified using pseudonyms. For instance, the teachers of Kiswahili in School "A" were identified as; A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6. Additionally, Ethics approval was sought at the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) before data collection process began.

Finally, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were used to assure the quality of this study (Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011). In particular, credibility was attained through applications of techniques such as; peer debriefing, member checking and triangulation. On the other hand, thick description of the phenomenon ensured transferability of this study. Moreover, an audit trail and a research journal were kept by the researcher, and this guaranteed dependability and confirmability respectively.



4. Results and discussion

In this study, Kiswahili teachers' pedagogical competence in actual class interactions was conceptualized as the ability of the teacher of Kiswahili to effectively instruct learners during the teaching and learning process for the implementation of CBC. The study found that majority of the teachers selected and used learner-centred instructional approaches that included; group discussions, class presentations and question and answer methods. This finding was in line with views shared by the new curriculum that advocates for a learner-centred instructional approach for the basic education level (KICD, 2017a). Specifically, the grade four Kiswahili curriculum design emphasizes on the use of a range of instructional methods which include; case study, group work, role play, discussion, question and answer, simulation and dictation (KICD, 2019). Comparably, Teygong (2018) found out that majority (66.3%) teachers favoured the use of question-and-answer method as a main teaching method. According to Dingili et al. (2022a) teachers had appropriate understanding of learner-centred instructional approaches. They further disclosed that teachers mainly favoured; group work, field work, project work, case study, discussion, enquiry, role play, simulations and question and answer instructional methods.

In applying the afore-mentioned learner centred approaches, some teachers showed great proficiency in the instruction of subject matter. Specifically, the instructional activities were organised in a logical sequence with one activity building on the other. For instance, it was observed that teacher B5 organized the learners in groups and gave them cards which prompted the learners to a group discussion. The learners later presented the findings of their discussions to the class. After the presentations, teacher B5 expanded on what was presented by offering the learners more examples and clarifications. Learners were actively involved in the lesson with majority of them eager to respond to the teacher's questions. Figure 4.1 depicts this discussion.

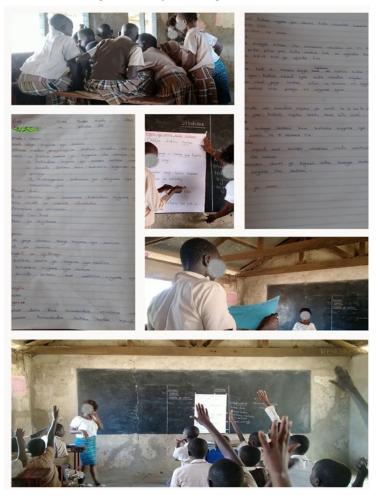


Figure 4.1 School B Kiswahili actual class interaction



The study findings were similarly recorded in studies conducted by Kimaryo (2011), Muasya and Waweru (2019) and Pale and Amukowa (2020) in which teacher proficiency in the instructional process was noted.

This study also revealed domination of teacher-centred instructional approaches that had focused on the cognitive level of learning. For instance, it was observed that instead of teacher D5 engaging learners in learning activities such as nature-walk. Learners were required to imagine objects and link them to what was being taught. This denied the Learners an opportunity to manipulate various instructional materials while learning. For example, during the lesson teacher D5 said the following;

Teacher D5: Hebu funga macho yako na urudishe akili nyumbani... ona ile nyundo... unaona vile in fupi. Ndio maana watu husema mfupi kama nyundo. (Close your eyes and try to imagine the hammer at home... do you see it? Can you see how short it is? That is why it is said... as short as a hammer).

Comparably, a lesson conducted by teacher F2 was teacher-centered with the teacher engaging in activities such as; giving explanations, presenting and demonstrating. The teacher even read to the learners a passage with some of the learners listening to the teacher's reading while others engaged in other activities like talking as depicted in figure 4.2.



Figure 4.2 School F Kiswahili actual class interaction

As for teacher G3, she intended to integrate digital devices into her lesson so as to enhance learner centered instructional activities. However, the lesson turned to teacher centred as there was only one laptop which was manipulated by the teacher. Moreover, the class lacked a projector which could have projected the teacher's laptop screen on the board for all learners to see. This resulted in learners struggling to view what was being presented on the laptop as shown in Figure 4.3.





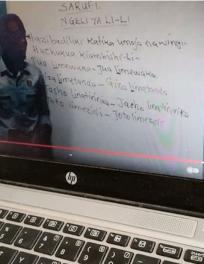


Figure 4.3 School G Kiswahili actual class interaction

The fore-going findings signal slow transition of teachers' pedagogical competence from the previous 8-4-4 content-based curriculum to new competence-based curriculum. Indeed, a study by Kimaryo (2011), noted that majority of teachers still focused on developing content and use knowledge-based curriculum to facilitate teaching with the hope that the learners would develop the intended competences automatically by themselves. Mulenga and Kabombwe (2019) and Sibanda and Blignaut (2020) also concluded that teachers were adapting the new CBC curriculum to suit their traditional way of teaching.

This study further revealed that C.B.C integrated content was being superficially integrated by the teachers of Kiswahili in the lessons observed. For example, of the nine cases observed, competencies were only integrated in four. As shown in figure 4.3, teacher G3 aimed at involving learners in the manipulation of the digital devices in order to equip them with the digital literacy competency. However, the leaners were reduced to spectators as the teacher manipulated the digital device. This resulted in minimal enhancement of the digital competency in the learners. Besides, there was no integration of values and P.C.I in all cases observed. Similar studies by: Zhuwale and Shumba (2017) in Zimbabwe; Makunja (2016) and Nyoni (2018) in Tanzania; and Omondi and Achieng (2020) and Waweru (2018) in Kenya noted that teachers lacked enough pedagogical knowledge on how to infuse various aspects of CBC in instruction. For instance, Marion (2020) established that the infusion of competencies such as; digital literacy, creativity and imagination, problem solving and critical thinking was challenging to a majority of the teachers.

KICD (2017b) advocates for the integration of a range of instructional materials and learning activities into the instructional process. In this study, teachers had relatively high pedagogical competency in selection of varied learning resources and instructional activities. However, the teachers showed limited proficiency in putting to use the identified learning resources and instructional activities. For instance, although teacher G3 correctly identified digital devices for enhancement of the digital literacy competency in learners, the teacher failed in effectively using the learning resources to infuse the intended competency.

Similar findings were recorded in relation to instructional activities. To exemplify this, teacher E8 engaged the learners in a question-and-answer activity. However, some of the questions posed were vague with unclear responses. This discussion is further illustrated in the following excerpt;

Teacher E8: Tunapokula haya matunda yanatupa madini gani? (Which mineral nutrients do we get by eating these fruits?)

Learners: Afya njema (Good health)

Teacher E8 also arranged learners in groups for group discussion. However, the teacher assigned the learners with vague topics to discuss. For example, they were asked, "Jadili mti unaotoa parachichi?" (Discuss the tree that produces Avocado?). These questions stimulated minimal discussions amongst the learners. Teacher E8 further gave a take-home assignment in which learners were to use parent's mobile phones to find out the tree



that produces Avocado. Just like the discussion's activity, the take-home assignment offered very little stimuli for the learners to enquire on. Secondly, the task was a mere repetition of the subject matter learners had handled while reading the text, engaging in question and answer and discussion activities. It thus did very little to build on the knowledge that had earlier been acquired.

Similar observations were recorded of a lesson by teacher H3 which was carried out while learners were seated on a round table discussion group arrangement. However, little discussion took place amongst them since most of them responded to the teacher's questions without consulting their peers. Moreover, most of the questions stimulated little discussion amongst them as they were centered on the subject matter that the learners had already interacted with while observing pictures and chart in the previous activities. Hence, this activity relied more on recall than on group work. This observation prompted the researcher to note in the researcher's journal the following;

Maybe the discussion was brought at the wrong time when learners already had answers hence no need to discuss.

The fore-going findings mirror those put forward in a study by Cheruto and Orodho (2016) revealed that most teachers were not competent in teaching the Kiswahili subject using an integrated approach. Dingili et al. (2022b) expounded that majority of the teachers showed little change in their approach to instruction even after the inception of the new curriculum. In particular, they used teacher centered instructional approach that was dominant in the previous 8-4-4 content-based curriculum. They further noted that the instructional methods that were favoured included; lecture, teacher led discussions, teacher led narrations and teacher led demonstrations (Dingili et al., 2022b).

5. Conclusion

Even the best curriculum and the most perfect syllabus remains dead unless quickened into life by the right methods of teaching and right kind of teachers (Kochar, 1992 as cited by Nasibi, 2015). This study revealed that, although majority of teachers of Kiswahili selected learner-centered instructional approaches that included group discussions, class presentations and question and answer methods they, showed limited proficiency in putting into use the selected learner-centered instructional approaches. They thus fell short of fully implementing the new curriculum that emphasizes on instruction of competencies through leaner-centred instructional approaches. These inadequacies might further hamper full realisation of the aspirations of the new curriculum that focuses on development of an engaged, empowered and ethical citizen. The study therefore recommends for teacher capacity building programmes that focus more on equipping teachers with skills on how to instruct using learner-centred instructional approaches. Besides, a similar study on teachers' pedagogical competence in actual class interaction in other learning areas could be a worthwhile undertaking. This is because each learning area has its own unique ways of instruction.

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