

A Systematic Analysis of Parental Involvement and Its Influence on Learner Outcomes in the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) for Grades 6, 7, And 8 in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of parental involvement on learner outcomes within Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), with a particular focus on Grades 6, 7, and 8. In response to global educational reforms emphasizing learner-centered and skills-based approaches, Kenya's adoption of CBC presents both opportunities and challenges. While the CBC framework identifies parents as critical co-educators, evidence indicates low levels of parental engagement due to socio-economic, cultural, and informational barriers. Guided by Epstein's Theory of Parental Involvement and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Learning, this study adopts a desktop review methodology to analyze empirical and theoretical literature on the subject. Findings reveal a positive correlation between active parental engagement and improved learner performance, emotional development, and competency acquisition. However, disparities in parental capacity, awareness, and communication structures persist, especially in marginalized communities. To address these gaps, the study proposes a Socio-Ecological Engagement Framework (SEEF) that integrates interventions across policy, community, school, and household levels. The paper concludes with policy and practical recommendations aimed at enhancing family-school partnerships to support CBC implementation and ensure equitable learning outcomes across Kenya.

Keywords: Parental Involvement, Competency-Based Curriculum, Learner Outcomes, School-Family Partnerships.

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1.0 Introduction

Globally, education systems are increasingly shifting from traditional, exam-oriented approaches to Competency-Based Education (CBE) models that emphasize skills, values, and real-life application (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2020). These models aim to equip learners with critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills that are essential in the 21st century. Successful implementation of CBE has been observed in countries like Finland and Singapore, where student-centered learning is supported by strong stakeholder engagement (Sahlberg, 2021). These global trends underscore the growing importance of developing education systems that go beyond content acquisition. In this context, parental and community participation have become vital components of curriculum reform and learner success.

In Africa, countries are adopting CBE to address skill gaps and increase learner relevance in changing labor markets (Ngware & Mutisya, 2022). Kenya has taken a bold step in this direction by introducing the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in 2017 through the Basic Education Curriculum Framework (BECF). This curriculum shifts focuses on nurturing core competencies such as self-efficacy, digital literacy, and citizenship among learners. The CBC structure targets a smooth transition from lower primary to junior secondary particularly Grades 6, 7, and 8 where learners are expected to apply knowledge in practical settings (MoE, 2022; KICD, 2021). However, this transformation demands a significant change in teaching practices, learning environments, and stakeholder engagement.

Parental involvement has emerged as a critical pillar in ensuring successful CBC implementation and improved learner outcomes (KICD, 2021). The CBC framework explicitly recognizes parents as co-educators who should complement classroom learning through support at home. This includes assisting with homework,

participating in school activities, and facilitating access to learning materials. Studies show that learners whose parents are actively engaged in their education exhibit better academic performance, discipline, and motivation (Wambua & Mwangi, 2022). As such, empowering parents to take an active role in CBC delivery is fundamental to achieving holistic education goals.

Despite this recognition, the level and effectiveness of parental involvement in CBC especially in Grades 6, 7, and 8 remain inconsistent across Kenyan schools (Otieno et al., 2022). Many parents are unaware of their roles in the new system or lack the capacity to support learners due to economic, educational, or cultural barriers. The shift from knowledge acquisition to skill development requires parental adaptation, which is often hindered by limited awareness and communication gaps with schools. This disconnect undermines the full realization of CBC objectives and deepens inequality in learner outcomes (Obura & Gichuru, 2021).

In light of these challenges, there is a pressing need to systematically examine the nature, scope, and influence of parental involvement on CBC learner outcomes in Kenya (Chege et al., 2023). Understanding the specific contributions of parents in promoting the acquisition of competencies in Grades 6 to 8 can inform evidence-based interventions and policy reforms. Such insights will help educators, curriculum developers, and government agencies to strengthen home-school partnerships. This study therefore seeks to bridge the gap between policy intention and practical implementation through a detailed analysis of parental engagement under CBC (Wangui & Wanjohi, 2023).

2.0 Rationale of the Study

Although the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Kenya emphasizes the active involvement of parents in promoting learner outcomes, studies show that this involvement remains fragmented, minimal, and often superficial (Wangui & Wanjohi, 2023; Otieno et al., 2022). A 2022 study by KICD revealed that only 32% of parents were adequately informed about their roles in CBC implementation at home, while 68% reported feeling ill-equipped to assist their children with homework and practical tasks. Additionally, Chege et al. (2023) found a significant correlation between active parental support and improved learner performance in core competencies, yet such support was limited to less than 40% of households, particularly in rural areas. The situation is worsened by socio-economic disparities, limited parental literacy, and a lack of structured school-community engagement frameworks (Munyiva & Mbogo, 2023; MoE, 2022). Without a systematic understanding of how parental involvement impacts learner outcomes in Grades 6, 7, and 8, efforts to achieve the full potential of CBC risk falling short, thereby compromising the quality and equity of basic education in Kenya.

3.0 Research Objective

This study sought to systematically analyze the nature and influence of parental involvement on learner outcomes in the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) for Grades 6, 7, and 8 in Kenya.

4.0 Significance of the study

This study is significant as it critically examines the influence of parental involvement on learner outcomes in the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) for Grades 6, 7, and 8 in Kenya. It provides valuable insights for the Ministry of Education to strengthen parental engagement policies. The findings guide school administrators and teachers in fostering effective school-family partnerships. Parents gain a deeper understanding of their role in enhancing learner achievement under CBC. The study also empowers them with practical strategies for meaningful participation. For researchers, it contributes to the growing literature on education reform in sub-Saharan Africa. It provides empirical data for further exploration of stakeholder involvement in CBC. Overall, the study informs policy and practice aimed at improving learning outcomes.

5.0 Theoretical Review

This study is grounded in **Epstein's Theory of Parental Involvement** and **Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Learning**, both of which offer a robust conceptual framework for analyzing how parental engagement influences learner outcomes in Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), particularly at the junior secondary level.

5.1 Epstein's Theory of Parental Involvement

Joyce Epstein (2001) identified six dimensions of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. These domains collectively provide a structured framework for understanding how schools and families can work together to support student learning. In the CBC context where learners are expected to apply knowledge, values, and skills

beyond the classroom this model offers a useful lens to evaluate how parental roles influence outcomes in Grades 6, 7, and 8 (Epstein, 2001; Nyakwara & Mberia, 2022). The theory is particularly relevant as CBC encourages parental participation in both formative assessment and learner development, positioning the home as an extension of the learning environment.

Despite its widespread application, Epstein's model has faced criticism for its one-size-fits-all approach that may not fully account for cultural and socio-economic differences in family structures, especially in diverse African contexts (Jeynes, 2016; Moosa et al., 2020). Critics argue that the theory assumes all parents have equal capacity, time, and resources to engage with schools, which may not hold true for low-income households or those with limited education. Moreover, the model is sometimes criticized for being school-centric, placing more responsibility on families to align with institutional expectations. However, despite these limitations, Epstein's theory remains relevant to this study as it highlights the multidimensional nature of parental engagement and provides a structured basis for measuring the types and intensity of parental involvement within the CBC framework in Kenya.

5.2 Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Learning

Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory posits that learning is inherently social and occurs through interaction with more knowledgeable others, such as parents, teachers, or peers. Central to this theory is the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**, which represents the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance (Vygotsky, 1978). Within the CBC framework, this theory aligns well with the emphasis on learner autonomy, formative assessment, and parental collaboration. Parents, as co-facilitators of learning, are seen as instrumental in scaffolding learning experiences particularly in supporting practical tasks and values-based education promoted under CBC (Munyiva & Mbogo, 2023; Otieno et al., 2022).

Nonetheless, critics of Vygotsky's theory argue that it may underplay individual learner differences and internal cognitive processes, placing excessive emphasis on social context and interaction (Daniels, 2008; Kozulin, 2004). Additionally, the theory assumes the presence of capable "more knowledgeable others" a condition that may not be met in households where parents lack the educational background to support CBC learning. In low-literacy or economically disadvantaged settings, parental scaffolding may be minimal or misaligned with curriculum goals. However, despite these critiques, Vygotsky's theory remains applicable to the Kenyan CBC environment as it underscores the critical role of social support particularly from parents in helping learners progress toward independence, collaboration, and applied knowledge acquisition.

6.0 Empirical Literature Review

In Tarbaj Sub-County, Wajir, Gedi and Kamau (2023) conducted a descriptive survey involving 37 Grade 5 CBC teachers to examine the extent of parental involvement in curriculum implementation. Their findings revealed that over 64% of teachers reported minimal to no parental engagement in learners' take-home tasks or school activities. This lack of involvement was associated with poor learner performance and minimal demonstration of CBC competencies. The study concluded that without deliberate strategies to engage parents, particularly in marginalized pastoralist regions, CBC implementation would remain ineffective. However, this study primarily focused on teachers' perceptions and lacked direct correlation with learner outcomes, leaving a critical gap that the current study aims to address by empirically linking parental involvement with actual academic performance under CBC.

In Hamisi Sub-County, Vihiga County, Kihima (2023) investigated the influence of parental involvement on early years learners under CBC using a sample of 120 parents and teachers. The study showed that 72% of parents who regularly supervised homework and participated in school meetings had children scoring above average in literacy and numeracy assessments. Moreover, psychosocial support from parents was found to contribute significantly to learners' self-confidence and task engagement. While the study clearly demonstrated positive effects of parental involvement, it was limited to the early year's level and did not extend to intermediate levels like Grades 6 to 8. This presents a research gap that the current study seeks to fill by examining these effects in upper primary and junior secondary settings, where cognitive tasks become more complex and parental roles more demanding.

Njeru (2023), in a study of private primary schools in Tharaka South, assessed the level of parental engagement in CBC and its determinants. Using a sample of 145 parents and 20 school administrators, the research found that 81% of parents with post-secondary education were actively involved in their children's academic work, compared to only 29% of those with primary-level education. The study underscored the

importance of parental literacy and sensitization in influencing engagement, especially with CBC's continuous assessment demands. However, its exclusive focus on private institutions, where parental socioeconomic status is relatively higher, limits generalizability to public schools. The current study bridges this gap by examining parental involvement across a more socioeconomically diverse population in public institutions.

A national-level literature review by Muigai (2018) found that the majority of Kenyan parents estimated at 68% viewed their role in education as limited to paying fees and attending school meetings, with very few engaging in learning activities at home. The review argued that the CBC requires a cultural shift, where parents become co-educators actively supporting skill-based learning through home projects, discussions, and creativity-based tasks. Although insightful, the study did not provide empirical data on how such limited parental involvement influences learner performance under CBC. The current study extends this analysis by quantifying this relationship and evaluating its impact on learners' acquisition of CBC competencies, particularly in Grades 6, 7, and 8.

Kabugu and Olendo (2024), studying 180 Grade 9 students in Kilifi County, investigated the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance in biology under the CBC framework. Their results showed a statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$) between parental support in revision and learners' Continuous Assessment Data (CAD) scores. Students whose parents were consistently engaged in their studies scored on average 12% higher than their peers. Although focused on a single subject, the study provides quantitative evidence linking parental involvement to academic outcomes. However, its narrow subject scope calls for broader investigation across multiple learning areas and grade levels, which the current study addresses comprehensively.

In Moyale, Marsabit County, Guyo, Mwirichia, and Kibaara (2022) analyzed how parental occupation affected their level of engagement with schools. Based on responses from 160 parents, the study found that 74% of parents engaged in informal or manual labor reported being too time-constrained to attend school meetings or assist with homework. Only 22% of such parents reported helping their children with CBC assignments, compared to 68% among salaried parents. This disparity highlights how economic demands undermine consistent parental participation. However, the study did not measure how such occupational-related absenteeism translated into learner performance, a link the current study investigates by correlating these variables with learner outcomes across multiple regions.

Otieno (2021), although focusing on secondary schools, offered valuable insight into how socio-economic status (SES) and parent teacher communication predicted learners' reading culture. Drawing on survey data from 200 students and parents in Nairobi County, Otieno found that 83% of students with high parental communication habits demonstrated a consistent reading routine, while only 36% of those with low communication did so. Though outside the primary CBC framework, the findings confirm the positive influence of engaged parenting on learning behavior. Yet, the study did not address CBC-specific performance metrics or middle-grade learners, a gap that the current research bridges by focusing on direct CBC learner outcomes in Grades 6 through 8.

7.0 Research Design and Approach

This study adopted a **desktop review research design**, which involves the systematic collection, appraisal, and synthesis of existing literature and documented evidence from credible secondary sources. This approach is termed as content analysis and it is appropriate, well-established and highly versatile research method (Krippendorff, 2028). The approach is suitable for qualitative inquiry where primary data collection is either impractical or unnecessary due to the availability of sufficient scholarly material. Given the study's objective to analyze parental involvement and its influence on learner outcomes in the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) at the junior secondary level the desktop review method enabled a broad yet focused exploration of scholarly articles, institutional reports, and policy documents relevant to CBC and parental engagement.

8.0 Results

The synthesized findings from the desktop review revealed that public primary schools in marginalized counties such as Wajir experience critically low levels of parental involvement. Gedi and Kamau (2023) reported that 64% of teachers surveyed in Tarbaj Sub County noted minimal or no parental participation in homework, school meetings, or CBC home projects. This lack of engagement was linked to reduced curriculum

effectiveness and learner competency development, suggesting systemic weaknesses in school-family collaboration within low-resource settings.

Quantitative data from Kabugu and Olendo (2024) in Kilifi County showed a statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$) between parental involvement specifically in academic revision and students' performance in biology under CBC. Learners whose parents were actively involved in revision activities scored on average 12% higher in Continuous Assessment Data (CAD) tests compared to peers without such support. This aligns with findings from Otieno (2021), who reported that 83% of students with regular parent-teacher communication exhibited consistent reading culture, further reinforcing the impact of active engagement on academic behavior and outcomes.

Three studies Njeru (2023), Guyo et al. (2022), and Muigai (2018) highlighted the critical role of parental education, occupation, and income in shaping the depth of involvement. In Tharaka South, Njeru (2023) found that 81% of parents with post-secondary education actively supported CBC implementation, compared to only 29% with primary-level education. Similarly, in Moyale, Guyo et al. (2022) noted that 74% of parents in manual or informal employment could not attend school meetings or support homework due to work-related constraints. These socioeconomic disparities translated into unequal learner support, potentially widening performance gaps across regions and households.

Evidence from Kihima (2023) in Hamisi, Vihiga County, showed that 72% of learners whose parents supervised homework and provided emotional support scored above average in literacy and numeracy. The study concluded that early and consistent parental involvement builds foundational competencies, boosting learner motivation and emotional well-being. This finding supports the need for early investment in parent-school partnerships and for scaling up engagement in upper grades (6–8), where task complexity increases.

Parental awareness and literacy were consistently identified as enablers of effective CBC participation. Njeru (2023) emphasized that lack of awareness of CBC objectives limited parental participation in school assessments and creative assignments. Muigai (2018) similarly observed that 68% of Kenyan parents viewed their role narrowly as financial contributors, underscoring the urgent need for sensitization campaigns. Without deliberate training and communication, parents remain passive actors in the CBC ecosystem.

The findings from the desktop review affirm that parental involvement plays a vital role in shaping learner outcomes under the CBC framework. Drawing from Epstein's Theory of Parental Involvement, the evidence supports the notion that multiple dimensions of parental engagement ranging from parenting, communicating, learning at home, to decision-making positively affect learners' academic and social development. For instance, consistent with Epstein's typology, studies by Kabugu and Olendo (2024) and Otieno (2021) confirm that when parents support homework and maintain open communication with teachers, learners exhibit improved academic performance and reading culture. This aligns with the concept of "learning at home" and "communication" as pathways for reinforcing school learning.

Similarly, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Learning emphasizes the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in cognitive development. Parental involvement particularly in early years as observed by Kihima (2023) serves as a critical scaffold that helps children navigate academic tasks within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The finding that learners performed better when parents provided emotional and academic support validates Vygotsky's assertion that learning is a socially mediated process. Moreover, the recognition of barriers such as socioeconomic disparities and low awareness cited by Guyo et al. (2022) and Muigai (2018) further supports Vygotsky's idea that the social context of the learner significantly affects the construction of knowledge.

From both theoretical lenses, the discussion points to a systemic weakness in parental sensitization and empowerment. Despite CBC's emphasis on partnerships and holistic development, many parents especially in low-income and rural settings remain under-informed or structurally excluded from supporting learners. The lack of engagement identified by Gedi and Kamau (2023) and echoed by Kadau (2022) signals a disconnect between policy intentions and community realities. Therefore, targeted interventions rooted in Epstein's and Vygotsky's principles are needed to strengthen family-school ties, enhance home-based learning, and build supportive environments tailored to learners' needs.

9.0 Bridging Disparities: Proposed Model and Recommendations

9.1 Proposed model

Figure 1 and Table 1 below illustrates a layered model based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, adapted to understand the environments that influence parental involvement in CBC implementation. At the core is the microsystem, where direct interactions occur between the child, parents, and school. Surrounding these are the mesosystem (linkages between home and school) and the exosystem, which includes indirect influences like parental workplaces, community organizations, and media. These systems shape the extent and nature of parental support in learning. The macrosystem encompasses broader cultural values, societal norms, and economic conditions that influence parental roles and educational attitudes. Overarching all these is the policy system, which includes national education policies, teacher guidelines, and county-level programs that enable or constrain parental engagement. Together, these environments emphasize that effective parental involvement in CBC is not isolated but requires support across social, institutional, and policy level.

Table 1: Socio-Ecological Engagement Framework

Level	Intervention Focus	Strategy	Theoretical Justification	Contribution to Knowledge
Microsystem	Capacity of parents	Parental training in local languages on CBC and project-based learning	Epstein – Parenting and Learning at Home; Vygotsky – Scaffolding	Demonstrates that structured training improves home-based learner support
Mesosystem	School–Parent Communication	Use of WhatsApp, circulars, learner diaries; Scheduled virtual meetings	Epstein – Communication; Bronfenbrenner – Mesosystem linkages	Establishes effective low-cost communication models in resource-limited settings
Exosystem	Community structures	Homework clubs, community learning hubs, flexible school events	Epstein – Collaborating with Community; Bronfenbrenner – Community context	Introduces informal learning ecosystems that extend CBC learning beyond school
Macrosystem	Cultural norms and gender roles	Male outreach (barazas, media), integration of religious/cultural leaders	Vygotsky – Cultural mediation; Bronfenbrenner – Macrosystem	Pioneers culturally-sensitive strategies for father involvement and norm change
Policy System	Evidence-based scaling	KNEC/KICD to coordinate parental engagement audits and data-driven interventions	Bronfenbrenner – Exosystem & Macrosystem; Epstein – Decision-making	Proposes evidence-informed decision-making and localized resource allocation

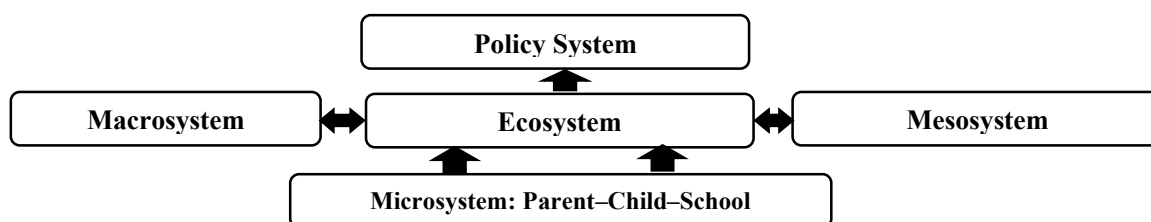


Figure 1: Social Ecological Engagement Model (Researcher, 2025)

Parental involvement is widely recognized as a key driver of student success, yet its role in the implementation of Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) remains underdeveloped. Many schools report low parental turnout during CBC sensitization meetings, limited home support for learner projects, and a general misunderstanding of what CBC demands from families. The Socio-Ecological Engagement Framework (SEEF) emerges as a practical and context-sensitive tool designed to bridge these gaps by actively engaging stakeholders at multiple levels home, school, community, and policy.

At the most basic level, SEEF acknowledges that most Kenyan parents are willing but ill-equipped to support CBC due to language barriers, time constraints, limited formal education, or a lack of understanding of their role in the new curriculum. To respond to this, the framework proposes localized parental orientation sessions delivered in both English and local languages to help parents understand CBC principles, learner assessments, and how to assist with take-home projects. These sessions can be conducted by County Directors of Education in collaboration with school heads, using simplified materials, real examples, and even demonstration lessons.

Another practical strength of SEEF is its emphasis on low-cost, accessible communication tools. While most public schools struggle to reach parents through formal channels, SEEF advocates for the use of WhatsApp groups, learner diaries, printed circulars, and SMS updates to ensure that communication is regular, two-way, and inclusive even for parents in remote or low-income areas. The idea is not just to pass information but to create an ongoing feedback loop where parents can ask questions, share concerns, and feel genuinely included in the learning process.

SEEF also promotes the strategic scheduling of school activities, such as evening or weekend learning exhibitions, which take into account the realities of parents who work in the informal sector or have irregular hours. Through this, schools can increase turnout and engagement in ways that respect parental availability. Additionally, the framework encourages the formation of parental support groups and community learning hubs, especially in areas where parents may feel intimidated by CBC demands. These hubs offer peer-to-peer learning opportunities, where parents can learn from others who are more confident in supporting their children.

A critical innovation in SEEF is its attention to gender inclusivity, particularly the involvement of fathers, who are often sidelined in traditional models of parental engagement. Through targeted initiatives such as father child reading events, barazas, or radio campaigns SEEF challenges the cultural norms that place the educational burden solely on mothers. This approach not only promotes equity but also increases the pool of adult support available to the learner.

Importantly, SEEF recognizes that parental involvement cannot be improved in isolation from broader policy and institutional support. The framework therefore calls on the Ministry of Education, Teachers Service Commission (TSC), and Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) to institutionalize parental involvement through policy guidelines, monitoring tools, and county-based evaluations. For example, schools could be required to report annually on their parental engagement strategies and receive support based on performance data.

9.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions contextualized within Kenya's CBC landscape, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The Ministry of Education, in partnership with the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and County Directors of Education, should scale up targeted parental orientation and training sessions. These should be offered in both English and local languages and focus on demystifying CBC structures, learner assessments, parental roles, and practical project-based support.
2. All public and private schools should adopt affordable and accessible communication tools such as WhatsApp groups, printed circulars, and learner diaries to foster ongoing dialogue. The Board of Management (BoM) and Parents' Associations should establish formal schedules for regular engagement, feedback sessions, and virtual consultation days, especially for working parents.
3. Education stakeholders, including NGOs, CDF offices, and school committees, should support the creation of parental support groups, homework clubs, and community learning spaces where parents with limited education or time can collectively support their children. Flexible scheduling of school activities (e.g., evening or weekend events) should also be implemented to accommodate informal sector workers.
4. Schools should engage religious leaders, cultural elders, and local opinion shapers in awareness forums to align CBC goals with community values. For example, incorporating faith-based perspectives into values education or explaining the relevance of creative subjects in culturally acceptable terms can help overcome resistance.
5. Efforts should be made to challenge traditional gender roles that sideline fathers from educational responsibilities. Through male-targeted outreach, such as barazas, father-child events, and media campaigns, schools can promote shared responsibility in supporting CBC learners.

6. The Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC), KICD, and universities should collaborate in conducting ongoing evaluations of parental involvement across counties. Data collected should inform localized interventions and resource allocation, particularly in low-performing regions or those with low parental engagement.

11.0 Conclusive Outcomes

This study critically examined the influence of parental involvement on learner outcomes within Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), with a focus on Grades 6 to 8. Drawing on Epstein's Theory of Parental Involvement and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Learning, the findings established a strong positive correlation between active parental engagement and enhanced learner performance, motivation, and competency development. Despite CBC's emphasis on parental roles, engagement remains uneven due to socio-economic, informational, and cultural barriers. In response, the study proposed the Socio-Ecological Engagement Framework (SEEF), a multi-level and contextually grounded model aimed at fostering stronger school family partnerships. To close the implementation gap, the study recommends structured parental training, inclusive and accessible communication mechanisms, community-based learning hubs, and systematic policy-level evaluations. These interventions are essential for embedding meaningful parental involvement and advancing equitable, competency-based education outcomes in Kenya.

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