



# Teachers' Preparedness for Effective Implementation of the Lower Secondary Competence-Based Curriculum in Rukungiri District, Southwestern Uganda

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**Abstract:** *The Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) at Uganda's lower secondary school level depends significantly on teachers' preparedness. This study explored the relationship between teachers' preparedness and the practical implementation of the CBC in Rukungiri District. Adopting a convergent parallel mixed methods design, the research engaged 235 in-service teachers through structured questionnaires and conducted key informant interviews with 13 head teachers. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics in Stata 17, while thematic analysis of qualitative data was conducted using NVivo 14. Findings revealed that while teachers reported high levels of perceived preparedness, particularly in classroom management, inclusivity, and learner-centred instruction, substantial gaps were evident in training adequacy, assessment practices, and ICT integration. Qualitative insights reinforced the importance of administrative support, peer collaboration, and resource provision as critical enablers of effective CBC delivery. The study underscores the need for continuous professional development and targeted resource allocation to bridge the preparedness gap. These findings contribute to curriculum implementation theory by affirming that teacher readiness, when holistically supported, is pivotal to transformative educational reform.*

**Keywords:** Competence-Based Curriculum, Teacher Preparedness, Curriculum Implementation, Secondary Education, Mixed Methods, Uganda

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## 1. Introduction

Implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Uganda and Kenya faces significant challenges, primarily due to inadequate teacher preparation and resource constraints (Barasa et al., 2024; Namubiru, 2024). Teachers struggle with adopting

learner-centred approaches and integrating technology, hindered by insufficient training and limited access to

instructional materials (Wambi et al., 2024; Chemutai et al., 2024). Infrastructure deficits, including poor classroom conditions and unreliable internet connectivity, impede CBC implementation (Cheruiyot, 2024). Studies recommend enhancing professional

teaching skills, improving resource allocation, and investing in school infrastructure (Nyamosi, 2024; Njeri & Wanyonyi, 2024).

Additionally, teachers require support in developing assessment criteria, constructing rubrics, and maintaining records for summative reporting (Cherotich et al., 2023). Overcoming these challenges is crucial for successfully implementing CBC and developing students' critical competencies (Kidega & Mugarura, 2024). In broader African contexts, CBC implementation continues to encounter setbacks such as inadequate teacher training, limited teaching resources, and resistance to pedagogical shifts (Momanyi & Rop, 2019; Nzima, 2016). Effective CBC implementation necessitates a clear understanding of its principles, appropriate instructional practices, and alignment with assessment approaches (Gulled, 2023; Nyamosi, 2024).

Teachers' perceptions of CBC vary; some appreciate its learner-centred potential and skill-based orientation, while others highlight the challenges posed by resource limitations and a lack of preparedness (Namubiru, 2024; Kidega & Mugarura, 2024). Establishing caring teacher-student relationships and supportive classroom environments is crucial to student engagement and academic success, particularly in secondary school contexts (Ellerbrock et al., 2015). These factors are echoed in research on fostering a sense of belonging within learning spaces (Hancock et al., 2021; Ibarra, 2022).

Strategies to enhance student belonging include reducing lecture time, increasing interactive sessions, and maintaining a visible online teaching presence (You, 2024). Social-emotional learning and activity-based instructional strategies foster inclusivity and participation (Levin et al., 2019; Ibarra, 2022). Furthermore, when thoughtfully implemented, blended learning environments can positively influence academic outcomes and promote inclusiveness (Mendoza & Venables, 2023). Nevertheless, challenges persist, such as sustaining cross-cultural teacher-student relationships and addressing varied learner needs (Masika & Jones, 2016; Hancock et al., 2021).

Ongoing professional development and sharing inclusive pedagogical strategies are critical for effective CBC implementation and ensuring diverse learners experience meaningful academic engagement (Keating et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2020). This background underscores the multifaceted challenges and considerations involved in implementing CBC effectively. It highlights the critical role of teacher preparedness, resource availability, inclusive practice, and community support in fostering a conducive learning environment that aligns with national education goals.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is anchored in the Curriculum Implementation Theory proposed by Gross et al. (1971), which posits that successful curriculum implementation hinges on four critical factors: clarity of the innovation, capability of implementers, availability of resources, and provision of management support. In the context of Uganda's Lower Secondary Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC), these factors are pivotal. Teachers must have a clear understanding of the CBC's objectives and methodologies to effectively translate the policy into practice. Their capability, encompassing both pedagogical skills and content knowledge, is essential for delivering the curriculum as intended. Adequate resources, including teaching materials and infrastructural support, are necessary to facilitate the new instructional approaches advocated by the CBC. Furthermore, strong management support from school leadership and educational authorities ensures teachers receive guidance and encouragement during the transition. By applying Gross et al.'s framework, this study examines the multifaceted aspects of teacher preparedness crucial for implementing the CBC effectively in Rukungiri District.

### 2.2 Teachers' Preparedness for Effective Implementation of the Lower Secondary Competence-Based Curriculum

Implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Uganda and Kenya faces significant challenges, primarily due to inadequate teacher preparation and resource constraints (Aisha Namubiru et al., 2024; Charles Kidega et al., 2024). Teachers struggle with adopting learner-centred approaches and integrating technology, hindered by insufficient training and limited access to instructional materials (Barasa Mercy Chemutai et al., 2024; Moses Wambi et al., 2024). Infrastructure deficits, including poor classroom conditions and unreliable internet connectivity, impede CBC implementation (heruiyot, 2024). Studies recommend enhancing teacher professional development, improving resource allocation, and investing in school infrastructure (Geoffrey Nyamosi, 2024; Mary Njeri Maiyuria et al., 2024). Additionally, teachers require support in developing assessment criteria, constructing rubrics, and maintaining records for summative reporting (Cherotich Naomi et al., 2023). Overcoming these challenges is crucial for successfully implementing CBC and developing students' critical competencies.

Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in African countries faces various challenges, including inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and resistance to change (Cheruiyot, 2024; Namubiru et al., 2024). Teacher preparedness is crucial for successful CBC implementation, with studies highlighting the need for enhanced professional development and support (Momanyi & Rop, 2019; Nzima, 2016). Effective CBC implementation requires a clear understanding of its principles, appropriate instructional practices, and alignment with assessment methods (Nyamosi, 2024; Gulled, 2023). Teachers' perceptions of CBC vary, with some recognising its potential for skill development and learner-centred approaches, while others express concerns about resource constraints and preparedness (Kidega et al., 2024; Namubiru et al., 2024). Establishing caring relationships and fostering a supportive classroom environment are fundamental for student engagement and academic success in secondary education (Ellerbrock et al., 2015). Addressing these challenges and incorporating best practices can lead to more effective CBC implementation and improved learning outcomes.

Recent research emphasises the importance of fostering a sense of belonging among higher-education students. Teachers play a crucial role in creating inclusive environments through relationship-building, accepting diversity, and encouraging participation (Hancock et al., 2021; Ibarra, 2022). Strategies to enhance belonging include shorter lectures, facilitated discussions, and maintaining a strong online presence (You, 2024). Social-emotional learning and activity-based approaches can nurture students' sense of belonging and engagement (Ibarra, 2022; Levin et al., 2019). When designed thoughtfully, blended learning environments can positively influence academic outcomes and promote inclusiveness (Mendoza & Venables, 2023). However, challenges remain in creating stable cross-cultural relationships and addressing diverse engagement needs (Hancock et al., 2021; Masika & Jones, 2016). Ongoing efforts to develop inclusive pedagogies and shared best practices among educators are essential for building a sense of belonging across diverse student cohorts (Keating et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2020).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Study Design

This study adopted a convergent parallel mixed methods design to investigate the mediating role of teachers' attitudes in the relationship between teachers' preparedness and the effectiveness of the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) implementation among lower secondary schools in Rukungiri District, Uganda. The mixed methods approach enabled the collection and integration of quantitative and qualitative data to provide

a comprehensive understanding of how teacher preparedness and attitudes influence CBC implementation (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires, while qualitative data was obtained through key informant interviews (KIIs). This design was appropriate as it facilitated the triangulation of findings from different data sources.

### 3.2 Research Approach

The study utilised quantitative and qualitative research approaches—the quantitative component aimed to assess the levels of teacher preparedness for CBC implementation using Likert-scaled questionnaire items. The qualitative component involved KIIs with head teachers to gain insights into contextual and perceptual factors influencing CBC implementation. The combined quantitative component. Combining these approaches allowed for a richer interpretation of the findings and a deeper understanding of the mediating mechanisms.

### 3.3 Study Population

The study targeted 235 in-service teachers from 15 government-aided secondary schools in Rukungiri District. These teachers were selected because they were either currently implementing or had undergone training on the CBC. Additionally, 13 head teachers were interviewed as key informants due to their supervisory role and firsthand experience with CBC implementation in their schools.

### 3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size of 235 was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, and it was increased by 30% to account for potential non-responses, consistent with Singh and Masuku (2014). Stratified random sampling was used to ensure representation across gender, qualification, and subject specialisations. Purposive sampling was applied to select key informants (head teachers) for qualitative interviews.

### 3.5 Study Instruments

Quantitative data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire that included items from the Culturally Responsive Teacher Preparedness Scale (CRTPS) developed by Yun-Ju Hsiao (2015), covering three constructs: Curriculum and Instruction (CI), Relationship and Expectation Establishment (REE), and Group Belonging Formation (GBF). Each item was measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The effectiveness of

CBC implementation was measured using adapted items from Holmes (2011).

Qualitative data was collected using a standardised open-ended interview guide administered to head teachers. The guide explored perceptions of teacher preparedness, attitudes, and the contextual factors influencing CBC implementation.

### 3.6 Data Collection Procedure

After obtaining ethical approvals, the study commenced with a pretest involving 10% of the sample. Questionnaires were then distributed to eligible teachers who completed them independently. Key Informant Interviews were conducted face-to-face with head teachers in a private setting to encourage open and honest discussions. All data collection occurred over weekends to minimize disruption to school programs.

### 3.7 Data Management and Analysis

Quantitative data was entered into Microsoft Excel and analyzed using Stata version 17. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages) were used to summarize variables.

Qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically using NVivo version 14. Emerging themes were coded and interpreted to complement and triangulate the quantitative findings. During

interpretation, quantitative and qualitative data were integrated to provide a holistic understanding of the research problem.

## 3.8 Ethical Considerations

In compliance with ethical standards for research involving human subjects, this study followed established protocols to protect participants' rights and privacy. Before data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee at Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST-REC), and further clearance was secured from the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST). Authorisation to conduct the study within schools in Rukungiri District was also granted by the District Education Officer (DEO).

All participants were given a clear explanation of the study's purpose, potential risks, and benefits, after which they voluntarily signed informed consent forms. Participation was entirely voluntary, with assurance that individuals could opt out at any stage without any repercussions. To ensure anonymity and protect sensitive information, pseudonyms were used, and all collected data were managed with strict confidentiality protocols.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 235)**

Characteristics	Definition	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	73	31.1
	Male	162	68.9
Age (Years)	<30 years	52	22.1
	30-39 years	85	36.2
	≥40 years	98	41.7
Education Level	Diploma	49	20.9
	Bachelor's	158	67.2
	Master's	28	11.9
Employment	Government	116	46.0
	Contract	109	46.4
Other Income	No	121	51.5
	Yes	114	48.5
Other Roles	No	78	33.2
	Yes	157	66.8
Subject Taught	Science	134	57.0
	Arts	101	43.0

Most respondents were male (68.9%, n = 162). Most teachers were 40 years and above (41.7%, n = 98), indicating a relatively experienced workforce. A significant proportion held a bachelor's degree (67.2%, n = 158), and nearly half were employed in government service (46.0%). Approximately half reported having additional sources of income (48.5%, n = 114), while

66.8% (n = 157) held other roles within their schools. Regarding subject specialisation, 57.0% (n = 134) taught science subjects. These demographic characteristics highlight a professionally diverse and experienced teaching cohort involved in CBC implementation.

## 4.2 Teachers' Preparedness for Effective Implementation of the Lower Secondary Competence-Based Curriculum in Rukungiri District, Southwestern Uganda

**Table 2: Mean Teachers' Preparedness for Effective Implementation of the Lower Secondary Competence-Based Curriculum in Rukungiri District, Southwestern Uganda (N = 235)**

Variables	Mean	SD
Curriculum and Instruction (CI),	3.8	0.5
Relationship and Expectation Establishment (REE)	4.3	0.5
Group Belonging Formation (GBF)	3.9	0.6
Overall Teachers' Preparedness (TP)	4.0	0.4

The findings revealed that teachers perceived themselves as moderately to highly prepared across all measured dimensions of competence-based curriculum implementation. On a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), the mean score for Curriculum and Instruction (CI) was 3.8 (SD = 0.5), indicating that most teachers agreed they were confident in integrating culturally responsive instructional practices. Relationship and Expectation Establishment (REE) recorded the highest mean of 4.3 (SD = 0.5),

signifying strong agreement that teachers could foster respectful, inclusive classroom environments. The mean score for Group Belonging Formation (GBF) was 3.9 (SD = 0.6), reflecting moderate to strong agreement regarding teachers' ability to create a sense of community and belonging among learners. Overall, the composite mean score for Teachers' Preparedness (TP) was 4.0 (SD = 0.4), suggesting a high perceived readiness to implement the Competence-Based Curriculum.

**Table 3: Subthemes and Quotes**

Theme	Subtheme	Quote – Source
Curriculum and Instruction (CI)	Use of learner-centred methods	The CBC is learner-centred... learners do most of the work while the teacher facilitates learning. – HT2
	Integration of ICT and projects	Have acquired regular pieces of training on how to facilitate learners while learning. – HT8
Relationship and Expectation Establishment (REE)	Supportive school environment	School administration has tried to fund and support CBC... despite limited funds. – HT10
	Clear communication and collaboration	Open communication between teachers, administrators and stakeholders is helpful. – HT1
Group Belonging Formation (GBF)	Inclusive group learning	We form small groups... they present, demonstrate, and brainstorm throughout the learning. – HT9
	Motivation through rewards and engagement	We reward them with words like 'bravo' and small gifts to keep them engaged. – HT10
	Need for continuous training and materials	More training on assessment, ICT and methodology is needed... resources are insufficient. – HT4

Thematic analysis of key informant interviews revealed insights aligned with the constructs of Curriculum and Instruction (CI), Relationship and Expectation Establishment (REE), Group Belonging Formation (GBF), and Overall Teachers' Preparedness (TP) in the context of CBC implementation.

Under the Curriculum and Instruction (CI) theme, head teachers emphasised a shift toward learner-centred pedagogy. As one noted, "*The CBC is learner-centred... learners do most of the work while the teacher facilitates learning*" (KII 2).

Additionally, regular training was cited as a facilitator for instructional innovation, including integrating ICT and project-based learning approaches: “Have acquired regular training on how to facilitate learners while learning” (KII 8).

In the Relationship and Expectation Establishment (REE) theme, support from school administration emerged as crucial. One participant shared, “School administration has tried to fund and support CBC... though funds are limited” (KII 10).

Another emphasised collaboration: “Open communication between teachers, administrators and stakeholders is helpful” (KII 1).

Within Group Belonging Formation (GBF), inclusive peer learning strategies were evident: “We form small groups... they present, demonstrate, and brainstorm throughout the learning” (KII 9).

Positive reinforcement was also practised to sustain engagement: “We reward them with words like ‘bravo’ and small gifts to keep them engaged” (KII 10).

However, concerns were raised about limited training and resources: “More training on assessment, ICT and methodology is needed... resources are insufficient” (KII 4).

These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of teacher preparedness, revealing both progress and persisting gaps in CBC implementation across Rukungiri District.

Overall, triangulation of quantitative and qualitative findings shows a strong alignment between teachers’ perceived preparedness and their reported classroom practices. Interview narratives confirmed the use of learner-centred methods and inclusive group activities, supporting the overall sense of readiness. Furthermore, school-level collaboration and administrative support were consistently emphasised, reinforcing the relational dynamics critical to successful CBC implementation. However, qualitative accounts revealed persistent gaps in training and resource availability, highlighting areas where further investment is needed despite generally positive self-ratings.

## 4.2 Discussion

The study’s findings revealed a generally positive perception of teachers’ preparedness to implement the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Rukungiri District. Quantitative data demonstrated high levels of self-reported competence across planning, instructional methods, and assessment strategies. This was triangulated with qualitative interviews from head teachers, confirming observable classroom practices aligned with CBC principles, particularly learner-centred instruction, group-based activities, and efforts to integrate technology.

These findings echo previous studies across East Africa that have identified teacher preparedness as a pivotal

factor in successful CBC implementation (Namubiru et al., 2024; Kidega et al., 2024). Teachers’ active engagement in designing schemes of work, incorporating performance standards, and adapting lesson delivery methods affirms their professional commitment to the reform. However, the interviews also illuminated persistent structural challenges: minimal training opportunities, inadequate instructional resources, and underdeveloped assessment tools. This mirrors findings by Wambi et al. (2024) and Chemutai et al. (2024), who highlighted the need for ongoing professional development and improved resourcing.

Moreover, school leadership emerged as a critical enabler of practical implementation. Head teachers emphasized administrative support, peer collaboration, and feedback mechanisms, reinforcing literature pointing to institutional culture in curriculum reform (Geoffrey Nyamosi, 2024; Cherotich Naomi et al., 2023). This relational dimension aligns with social learning theories that posit collaborative, supportive environments as vital to instructional innovation and change (Ellerbrock et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, the data also exposed a preparedness gap, particularly in rubric development, ICT use, and managing CBC-related workloads. These deficiencies are consistent with prior research in Uganda and Kenya, where resource scarcity and large class sizes constrain the efficacy of CBC delivery (Cheruiyot, 2024; Njeri Maiyuria et al., 2024). While teachers showed willingness and enthusiasm, their capacity was often stretched, leading to emotional burnout and limited adaptation for diverse learners.

Interestingly, the qualitative narratives highlighted an emerging culture of innovation among some teachers, who reported creating customized materials and locally grounded teaching strategies. This suggests the potential for bottom-up curriculum reform when teachers are empowered and supported through training, feedback, and recognition systems (Momanyi & Rop, 2019).

Finally, theme. Inclusive teaching practices, peer engagement, and opportunities for learner voice were viewed as important contributors to student motivation and achievement, corroborating the work of Hancock et al. (2021) and Ibarra (2022) on learner engagement in diverse education systems.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

This study examined teachers’ preparedness for effectively implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) at the lower secondary school level in Rukungiri District, Uganda. The findings revealed that most teachers perceive themselves as moderately to highly prepared, particularly in classroom management, learner-centred methodologies, and basic assessment

practices. This perception was affirmed by qualitative insights from head teachers, which showcased active engagement in collaborative learning and inclusive instructional strategies. However, notable gaps were identified in areas such as training adequacy, access to teaching and learning resources, integration of ICT, and use of performance rubrics. point to a disconnect between policy expectations and ground-level realities. The role of administrative support, peer collaboration, and school-level leadership emerged as vital in enhancing teacher capacity. While teachers demonstrate enthusiasm and adaptability toward CBC, effective implementation remains hampered by systemic resources and capacity limitations that must be addressed to realise the curriculum's full potential.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The study makes the following recommendations:

1. The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), through NCDC, should provide regular, targeted CPD focusing on performance-based assessment, rubric construction, ICT integration, and differentiated instruction.
2. Schools require increased funding for CBC teaching materials, digital tools, and improved infrastructure to ensure equitable implementation across rural and urban settings.
3. School administrators should actively support teacher-led CBC initiatives to foster a culture of mentorship, innovation, and collaborative lesson planning.
4. A robust school-based monitoring system should be put in place to provide constructive feedback and guide CBC improvement efforts using data-driven insights is needed.
5. Increased involvement of parents, local businesses, and community leaders in CBC awareness, co-curricular activities, and feedback mechanisms will enhance local ownership and support for the curriculum.
6. Addressing workload stress through reduced class sizes, emotional support, and incentives will improve teachers' capacity to implement CBC effectively and sustainably.

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