



# Socio-Demographic Determinants of Teacher Commitment in Implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum in Secondary Schools: A Narrative Review

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**Abstract:** *The transition to competency-based curricula (CBC) has intensified expectations placed on teachers as central agents of curriculum reform, requiring sustained professional commitment alongside pedagogical competence. While institutional factors influencing CBC implementation have received considerable attention, less synthesis exists on how teachers' socio-demographic characteristics shape commitment to curriculum reform, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. This narrative review synthesises empirical and policy-oriented literature on socio-demographic determinants of teacher commitment in CBC implementation in secondary schools. This narrative review synthesised literature published between 1997 and 2025 sourced from Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus, and relevant policy documents. The review focuses on key socio-demographic variables including age, gender, teaching experience, educational qualification, employment status, and school location. The findings indicate that socio-demographic characteristics influence not only the level but also the dominant dimensions of teacher commitment— affective, continuance, or normative— shaping how teachers engage with CBC reforms. Younger and more highly qualified teachers often exhibit stronger affective commitment, while older and permanently employed teachers demonstrate greater normative and continuance commitment. Gendered workloads, rural–urban disparities, and employment precarity further condition teachers' capacity to sustain reform engagement. The review highlights the need for differentiated implementation strategies that recognise heterogeneity within the teaching workforce. It concludes that effective CBC implementation in secondary schools requires policies and practices that account for teachers' socio-demographic realities alongside institutional support mechanisms.*

**Keywords:** *Teacher commitment; socio-demographic factors; competency-based curriculum; secondary education; Sub-Saharan Africa.*

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## 1. Introduction

The global reorientation of education systems toward competency-based curricula (CBC) reflects growing concern that traditional content-driven models inadequately prepare learners for complex social,

economic, and technological realities. CBC reforms emphasise learner-centred pedagogy, formative assessment, and the development of transferable skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2025). While policy frameworks articulate ambitious curriculum goals, their realisation

depends largely on teachers' willingness and capacity to enact reform in everyday classroom practice.

Teacher commitment has emerged as a critical determinant of successful curriculum implementation. Commitment influences teachers' persistence, adaptability, and emotional engagement with reform initiatives. Organisational Commitment Theory conceptualises commitment as comprising affective (emotional attachment), continuance (cost-based persistence), and normative (moral obligation) dimensions (Meyer & Allen, 1991). These dimensions are shaped not only by institutional conditions but also by teachers' individual characteristics and professional biographies.

Despite the recognised importance of teacher commitment, CBC research in Sub-Saharan Africa has primarily focused on systemic and institutional challenges such as inadequate training, large class sizes, and limited instructional resources. Comparatively less attention has been paid to socio-demographic determinants that influence how teachers experience, interpret, and respond to curriculum reform. Teachers are not a homogeneous group; they differ in age, gender, qualifications, employment status, and school contexts, all of which shape motivation, reform readiness, and professional identity.

In Uganda, the rollout of CBC at the lower secondary level since 2020 has occurred within a teaching workforce marked by significant socio-demographic diversity. Secondary school teachers range from early-career graduates to veteran educators trained under earlier curriculum regimes; they work in urban, peri-urban, and rural schools with vastly different resource profiles; and they occupy positions with varying degrees of job security. Yet, existing studies often treat teacher commitment as uniform, overlooking how socio-demographic factors mediate reform engagement. Existing literature, therefore, points to a clear need for a synthesis examining how socio-demographic characteristics shape teachers' commitment to implementing competency-based curricula in secondary schools.

Teacher commitment refers to the psychological bond between teachers and their profession, organisation, or reform agenda. Affective commitment reflects emotional identification with reform goals; continuance commitment reflects perceived costs associated with disengagement; and normative commitment reflects moral or professional obligation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In curriculum reform contexts, these dimensions influence whether teachers persist, adapt, or comply minimally with policy requirements. Socio-demographic determinants encompass personal and professional characteristics that shape teachers' experiences and responses to organisational demands. These include age, gender, teaching experience, educational qualification,

employment status, and school location. Such characteristics influence access to resources, exposure to reform training, professional confidence, and capacity to cope with workload demands. In CBC implementation, socio-demographic factors interact with institutional conditions to shape not only whether teachers are committed but also how that commitment is expressed.

## 2. Literature Review

The successful implementation of the competency-based curriculum (CBC) in secondary schools depends not only on policy design and institutional support but also on teachers' commitment to pedagogical change. Existing scholarship increasingly recognises that teacher commitment is a multidimensional construct shaped by individual, professional, and contextual characteristics rather than a uniform psychological disposition (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Fullan, 2016). In Sub-Saharan Africa, CBC implementation has unfolded within teaching workforces marked by wide socio-demographic diversity, including variations in age, gender, qualifications, employment security, and school contexts (Makunja, 2016; Kachope et al., 2025). These differences influence how teachers interpret reform expectations, sustain motivation, and translate commitment into classroom practice. The literature reviewed below, therefore, focuses on key socio-demographic determinants of teacher commitment and highlights gaps that necessitate controlling for these characteristics when examining the relationship between teacher commitment and effective CBC implementation.

### 2.1 Age and Teaching Experience

Age and teaching experience are consistently associated with variations in teachers' engagement with curriculum reform, particularly in relation to openness to pedagogical change and reform sustainability. Younger and early-career teachers are often reported to exhibit stronger affective commitment to CBC principles, largely due to recent exposure to learner-centred pedagogy and formative assessment during pre-service training (Veenman, 1984; Fullan, 2016). This group tends to demonstrate enthusiasm for competency-based approaches and instructional experimentation.

However, evidence from East African contexts shows that affective commitment among younger teachers is fragile and easily undermined by contextual constraints such as heavy workloads, limited mentoring, and unclear assessment demands (Gitau, 2022). In contrast, older and more experienced teachers frequently demonstrate more substantial normative commitment, sustained by professional identity, ethical responsibility, and long-term attachment to the teaching profession (Day & Gu, 2010).

Studies from Uganda and Tanzania indicate that veteran teachers often persist with CBC implementation despite resource constraints, although their engagement may be cautious or selective, particularly where reforms challenge long-established instructional routines (Makunja, 2016; Kachope et al., 2025). A key gap in literature is the limited use of analytical models that separate the effects of age and experience when examining the relationship between teacher commitment and CBC implementation, which can lead to confounding empirical findings.

## 2.2 Gender and Teacher Commitment

Gender is a significant socio-demographic determinant of teacher commitment, shaped by its interaction with workload expectations, professional roles, and access to development opportunities. Studies indicate that female teachers frequently demonstrate strong normative commitment, grounded in professional ethics and relational orientations toward learners (Day & Gu, 2010; Simiyu, 2025). This commitment often sustains CBC implementation even under challenging working conditions.

Nevertheless, empirical evidence suggests that female teachers disproportionately experience increased emotional and physical labour associated with CBC demands, including extensive lesson preparation and assessment documentation (Namubiru et al., 2024). These pressures can erode affective commitment over time, leading to reform fatigue while normative commitment continues to drive compliance. Male teachers, by contrast, are more likely to demonstrate affective commitment when CBC engagement aligns with leadership opportunities, professional recognition, or career progression (Wambi et al., 2024). Despite these patterns, many CBC studies fail to control gender when analysing the effects of teacher commitment on implementation outcomes, limiting the validity of conclusions regarding commitment-driven differences in instructional practice.

## 2.3 Educational Qualification and Professional Training

Educational qualification and professional training play a central role in shaping teachers' confidence, instructional competence, and commitment to CBC implementation. Teachers with higher academic and professional qualifications are generally better equipped to interpret competency frameworks, apply formative assessment strategies, and adapt instruction to learner needs, thereby strengthening affective commitment to reform goals (Pacapat & Escarlos, 2024).

However, evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa indicates that qualification alone is insufficient to sustain commitment in the absence of consistent and high-quality in-service training (Makunja, 2016; Kidega et al., 2022). Teachers with lower qualifications often report difficulty understanding CBC assessment rubrics, leading to frustration and reliance on continuance commitment driven by employment necessity. Even among highly qualified teachers, inadequate professional development undermines commitment when reform expectations expand without corresponding instructional support (Kachope et al., 2025). A notable gap in the literature is the failure to disentangle the effects of qualification and training when examining the relationship between commitment and CBC implementation, resulting in overstated estimates of commitment effects.

## 2.4 Employment Status and Job Security

Employment status significantly shapes how teachers express their commitment during CBC implementation. Permanently employed teachers often demonstrate stronger continuance and normative commitment, sustained by job security, pension prospects, and long-term institutional attachment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). While this stability supports persistence in reform implementation, it may also reduce willingness to engage in instructional experimentation where incentives for innovation are limited.

Conversely, contract and privately employed teachers frequently engage with CBC reforms strategically, demonstrating compliance-oriented commitment aimed at securing contract renewal or job retention (Okuchaba, 2021). Although such continuance commitment supports policy adherence, it often results in surface-level implementation rather than deep pedagogical transformation (Atibuni et al., 2024). Despite this evidence, many studies examining CBC implementation do not control employment status when analysing the relationship between teacher commitment and instructional outcomes, thereby obscuring the extent to which observed effects reflect genuine commitment versus employment-related pressures.

## 2.5 School Location and Socio-Economic Context

School location mediates teachers' access to instructional resources, professional development, and supervisory support, shaping both commitment and implementation capacity. Teachers in rural and socio-economically disadvantaged schools frequently face large class sizes,

limited teaching materials, and minimal training opportunities, conditions that undermine affective commitment (Arinaitwe & Corbett, 2022). In such contexts, normative commitment often sustains CBC implementation despite persistent structural constraints.

Urban and peri-urban teachers, while operating in relatively better-resourced environments, often experience heightened accountability pressures and administrative demands that shift commitment toward compliance rather than instructional innovation (MoES, 2022). Evidence from Uganda suggests that rural teachers demonstrate resilience-driven commitment, whereas urban teachers are more susceptible to reform fatigue linked to performance monitoring and assessment scrutiny (Namubiru et al., 2024). A critical limitation in existing literature is the inadequate control for school location when examining the relationship between teacher commitment and CBC implementation, making it challenging to distinguish commitment effects from contextual inequalities.

The literature reviewed above from 1997 to date demonstrates that the successful implementation of the competency-based curriculum in secondary schools is closely linked to teachers' commitment, which is shaped by a range of socio-demographic and contextual factors. Across this period, studies consistently show that age, gender, professional qualification, employment status, and school location influence how teachers interpret reform demands and sustain engagement with pedagogical change. However, much of this literature treats these characteristics descriptively rather than analytically, often examining teacher commitment without adequately controlling for underlying socio-demographic differences. Consequently, empirical findings frequently conflate the effects of teacher commitment with structural and demographic conditions within teaching workforces. In addition, limited attention has been paid to how these factors interact under resource constraints and accountability pressures that characterise CBC implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa. This review, therefore, addresses a critical gap by synthesising evidence on key socio-demographic determinants of teacher commitment and underscoring the need for analytically robust approaches that account for these factors when examining the relationships between teacher commitment, CBC, and implementation and other outcomes.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Design**

This study adopted a narrative review design to synthesise existing empirical and policy-oriented literature on the socio-demographic determinants of teacher commitment to

implementing the competency-based curriculum (CBC) in secondary schools. A narrative approach was considered appropriate because the reviewed literature spans diverse methodological traditions, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies, as well as policy documents and implementation reports. Unlike systematic reviews, which prioritise narrowly defined questions and statistical aggregation, narrative reviews enable conceptual integration and contextual interpretation of evidence across heterogeneous sources. This design was therefore suitable for examining how socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, educational qualification, employment status, and school location shape different dimensions of teacher commitment within varied educational contexts, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### **3.2 Data Sources**

Literature was identified through systematic searches of Google Scholar, ERIC, and Scopus, selected for their extensive coverage of education, curriculum studies, and teacher professional research. These databases enabled access to peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and conference papers relevant to curriculum reform and teacher commitment. In addition, grey literature was intentionally included to capture policy perspectives and implementation experiences that are often underrepresented in academic journals. Grey literature sources included curriculum policy documents, implementation guidelines, and technical reports from ministries of education, UNESCO, OECD, and other international and regional education bodies. Reference lists of key articles were also reviewed to identify additional relevant studies. The review focused on literature published between 1997 and 2025, reflecting the period during which competency-based and learner-centred curriculum reforms gained prominence globally.

### **3.3 Study Selection Criteria**

Rather than samples and sampling in the statistical sense, which do not apply to narrative reviews, this study applied explicit study selection criteria to guide inclusion of relevant literature. Studies were included if they examined teacher commitment, motivation, or professional engagement in curriculum implementation or educational reform; addressed socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, teaching experience, educational qualification, employment status, or school location; focused on secondary school education or provided transferable insights applicable to secondary school contexts; and were situated within competency-based, learner-centred, or curriculum reform frameworks. Studies that focused exclusively on primary or tertiary education, opinion pieces lacking empirical or policy grounding, and

publications not available in English were excluded. This approach ensured conceptual relevance and methodological coherence while remaining consistent with narrative review conventions.

### 3.4 Data Synthesis

Data synthesis followed a thematic narrative approach. Relevant findings were extracted from the selected literature and organised according to key socio-demographic determinants of teacher commitment. Through iterative reading and comparison, themes were developed inductively to identify recurring patterns, contextual variations, and points of convergence across studies. Particular attention was given to how socio-demographic characteristics shaped different dimensions of teacher commitment; affective, continuance, and normative and how these dimensions influenced engagement with CBC implementation in secondary schools. The synthesis emphasised interpretive integration rather than statistical aggregation, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how commitment is socially and institutionally conditioned within diverse reform contexts.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

This review was based exclusively on secondary data drawn from publicly available academic literature and policy documents. No primary data were collected, and no human participants were involved. Consequently, ethical approval was not required. Nonetheless, ethical standards were upheld through accurate citation of all sources, faithful representation of original findings, and avoidance of misinterpretation or selective reporting.

## 4. Results and Discussion

This section presents and interprets the synthesised findings from the reviewed literature on the socio-demographic determinants of teacher commitment to implementing the competency-based curriculum (CBC) in secondary schools. In line with the narrative review design and JRIIE editorial guidance, results and discussion are integrated, allowing empirical patterns to be interpreted alongside theoretical and contextual explanations. The findings are organised thematically according to key socio-demographic determinants and their influence on the dominant dimensions of teacher commitment: affective, normative, and continuance.

### 4.1 Age and Teaching Experience

The reviewed literature consistently indicates that age and teaching experience significantly shape how teachers

engage with CBC reforms, though not necessarily whether they are committed. Younger and early-career teachers frequently demonstrate stronger affective commitment, driven by recent exposure to learner-centred pedagogy and assessment practices during pre-service training (Fullan, 2016). This group often exhibits enthusiasm for CBC ideals such as formative assessment, learner participation, and competency integration. However, the evidence also shows that this affective commitment is fragile, particularly when early-career teachers encounter heavy workloads, limited mentoring, and unclear assessment expectations, leading to reform fatigue and emotional strain (Gitau, 2022).

In contrast, older and more experienced teachers tend to demonstrate more substantial normative commitment, grounded in professional identity, ethical responsibility, and long-term attachment to the teaching profession. In Sub-Saharan African contexts, veteran teachers often sustain CBC implementation despite resource constraints, reflecting a strong sense of duty to learners and institutions (Makunja, 2016). However, several studies report cautious engagement or resistance to CBC pedagogies among teachers trained under content-based systems, particularly where reforms challenge established instructional routines and assessment norms (Kachope et al., 2025). These findings suggest that age and experience shape the form rather than the presence of commitment, influencing whether engagement is driven by enthusiasm, obligation, or cautious persistence.

### 4.2 Gender and Teacher Commitment

Gender emerges as a significant determinant of teacher commitment through its interaction with workload expectations, professional opportunities, and social roles. The reviewed studies indicate that female teachers often exhibit strong normative commitment, sustained by professional ethics and relational orientations toward learners. However, this commitment is frequently maintained under conditions of heightened emotional and physical labour, particularly in contexts where domestic responsibilities intersect with increasing CBC workload demands (Simiyu, 2025).

Empirical evidence from Uganda and neighbouring countries suggests that female teachers often experience declining affective commitment due to exhaustion associated with lesson preparation, assessment documentation, and limited access to professional development opportunities (Namubiru et al., 2024; Wambi et al., 2024). Despite this, they continue to implement CBC on the basis of moral obligation rather than intrinsic motivation. Male teachers, on the other hand, are more likely to demonstrate affective commitment when CBC

engagement aligns with leadership roles, career advancement, or professional recognition. These patterns indicate that gender differences in teacher commitment are structurally produced, shaped by unequal access to training, leadership visibility, and support systems rather than by individual motivation alone.

### **4.3 Educational Qualification and Professional Training**

Teachers' academic and professional qualifications strongly influence their confidence and commitment in implementing CBC reforms. The literature shows that teachers with higher qualifications are more likely to internalise CBC principles, demonstrate instructional flexibility, and exhibit stronger affective commitment, particularly where assessment literacy and pedagogical autonomy are supported (Pacapat & Escarlos, 2024). Higher qualifications enhance curriculum interpretation skills and reduce anxiety associated with competency-based assessment.

However, qualification alone does not guarantee sustained commitment. In many African contexts, teachers with lower qualifications report difficulty in interpreting CBC frameworks and assessment rubrics, leading to frustration and a reliance on continued commitment driven by employment necessity rather than instructional confidence (Makunja, 2016). Even among highly qualified teachers, inconsistent or inadequate in-service training weakens commitment over time, particularly when reform expectations expand without corresponding professional support (Kidega et al., 2022). These findings highlight that educational qualifications interact with access to continuous professional development in shaping both the depth and the sustainability of teacher commitment.

### **4.4 Employment Status and Job Security**

Employment status significantly shapes teachers' engagement with CBC reforms by influencing perceptions of risk, stability, and professional investment. Permanently employed teachers often demonstrate stronger continuance and normative commitment, sustained by job security, pension prospects, and long-term institutional attachment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This stability enables persistence in reform implementation but may also reduce willingness to engage in instructional experimentation where reform demands increase workload without clear incentives.

Conversely, contract and privately employed teachers frequently engage with CBC reforms strategically, demonstrating compliance-oriented commitment aimed at securing contract renewal or job retention (Okuchaba, 2021; Atibuni et al., 2024). While this form of continuance commitment supports policy adherence, it often results in surface-level implementation rather than deep pedagogical transformation. The literature therefore suggests that employment precarity shapes not only commitment persistence but also the quality and depth of CBC enactment in secondary schools.

### **4.5 School Location and Socio-Economic Context**

School location mediates access to instructional resources, professional development, and supervisory support, shaping teachers' capacity to sustain CBC implementation. Teachers in rural and socio-economically disadvantaged schools frequently face large class sizes, limited teaching materials, and minimal training opportunities, conditions that undermine affective commitment (Arinaitwe & Corbett, 2022). In such contexts, teachers often rely on normative commitment, sustained by community attachment and professional ethics.

In contrast, urban and peri-urban teachers typically operate in better-resourced environments but face heightened accountability pressures and performance monitoring, which can shift commitment toward compliance rather than innovation (MoES, 2022). Evidence from Uganda indicates that while rural teachers often demonstrate resilience-driven commitment, urban teachers may experience reform fatigue linked to administrative demands and assessment scrutiny (Wambi et al., 2024). These contextual differences suggest that school location conditions not the presence of commitment but its dominant expression and instructional consequences. Consistent with the focus of this review, the findings indicate that socio-demographic determinants are central to understanding variations in teacher commitment during CBC implementation in secondary schools. Teachers' age, gender, educational qualification, employment status, and school location systematically shape the form and sustainability of commitment expressed toward curriculum reform. In disadvantaged socio-economic contexts, particularly rural secondary schools' teachers often rely predominantly on normative commitment to sustain CBC implementation in the absence of adequate instructional resources and professional support (Makunja, 2016; MoES, 2022). While such commitment reflects strong professional ethics, prolonged reliance on moral obligation without institutional reinforcement increases vulnerability to burnout, disengagement, and attrition (Ololube, 2024). These patterns suggest that CBC implementation

challenges should be interpreted through a socio-demographic lens rather than attributed solely to individual motivation or resistance. Recognising socio-demographic determinants is therefore essential for strengthening teacher commitment and achieving equitable CBC implementation across secondary schools.

The findings further suggest that the sustainability of CBC implementation depends on how effectively education systems support different socio-demographic groups of teachers in maintaining balanced forms of commitment. Affective commitment, which is more common among younger and highly qualified teachers, drives pedagogical innovation but is fragile in the absence of recognition, mentoring, and career progression. Normative commitment, which is more prevalent among older teachers, female teachers, and those in rural contexts, supports persistence but may limit instructional experimentation when not reinforced by competence-building opportunities. Continuance commitment, closely associated with employment security, ensures policy adherence but often leads to compliance-oriented implementation, in which employment precarity dominates teachers' engagement (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Okuchaba, 2021). These dynamics indicate that one-size-fits-all CBC implementation strategies are insufficient for sustaining teacher commitment across diverse secondary school contexts. Policies and leadership practices must therefore be explicitly designed to strengthen affective commitment while supporting normative and continuance commitment in ways that reflect teachers' socio-demographic realities and professional trajectories.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

This narrative review examined socio-demographic determinants of teacher commitment in the implementation of the competency-based curriculum (CBC) in secondary schools, responding directly to persistent questions about uneven reform outcomes. The synthesis of existing evidence demonstrates that teacher commitment to CBC implementation is not uniform but is systematically shaped by age, gender, educational qualification, employment status, and school location. These socio-demographic characteristics influence not only the intensity of teacher commitment but also the dominant commitment dimension, affective, normative, or continuance, through which teachers engage with CBC reforms.

The review further shows that reliance on a single form of commitment is insufficient for sustaining meaningful CBC implementation across diverse secondary school contexts. While affective commitment supports pedagogical innovation, normative and continuance commitment often

sustain implementation in resource-constrained and insecure employment settings, albeit with limited instructional transformation. These patterns highlight that observed challenges in CBC implementation should not be interpreted solely as resistance or capacity deficits, but as contextually shaped responses rooted in teachers' socio-demographic realities.

### 5.2 Recommendations

By foregrounding socio-demographic determinants, this review contributes to a more nuanced understanding of teacher commitment as a socially and institutionally conditioned process rather than an individual psychological attribute. The findings underscore the need for CBC implementation strategies that move beyond homogeneous assumptions about teachers and instead recognise diversity within the secondary school teaching workforce. Ultimately, prosperous and equitable CBC implementation depends on aligning curriculum reform, leadership practices, and policy design with the socio-demographic conditions that shape teacher commitment in secondary schools.

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