



System-Level Constraints on School Administrators' Capacity to Foster Teacher Commitment in Competency-Based Curriculum Implementation in Secondary Schools: A Narrative Review

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Abstract: School administrators play a pivotal role in shaping the conditions under which teachers implement competency-based curricula (CBC), particularly through leadership practices, resource allocation, and institutional support that influence teacher commitment. In Sub-Saharan Africa, CBC reforms have expanded rapidly over the past three decades; however, implementation outcomes remain uneven as school administrators operate within persistently constrained education systems. This narrative review synthesises empirical and policy-oriented literature on the system-level challenges confronting school administrators in strengthening teacher commitment to implementing CBC in secondary schools. The review draws on peer-reviewed studies from Google Scholar, ERIC, and Scopus, alongside grey literature from ministries of education, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development published between 1997 and 2025. The findings identify key system-level constraints, including limited instructional leadership capacity, weak professional development structures, large class sizes, resource and staffing shortages, accountability pressures, and policy-practice misalignment. Collectively, these interacting constraints position school administrators as change agents operating within highly constrained systems, thereby limiting their capacity to foster sustained affective and normative teacher commitment to implementing CBC. The review highlights the need for policy and institutional reforms that strengthen school-level leadership capacity and provide enabling conditions for administrators to support teachers' engagement with CBC requirements. It concludes that without addressing the system-level constraints on school administrators' capacity, efforts to strengthen teachers' commitment and sustain CBC implementation in secondary schools are unlikely to succeed.

Keywords: School leadership, Teacher commitment, Competency-based curriculum, System -level constraints, Secondary education, Sub-Saharan Africa

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1. Introduction

In many Sub-Saharan African education systems, the role of school administrators has evolved significantly under competency-based curriculum (CBC) reforms. Beyond

routine administrative functions, school leaders are increasingly expected to act as instructional leaders, change managers, and motivators of professional practice, particularly within learner-centred and competency-oriented reforms that have evolved in Sub-Saharan Africa

since the late 1990s (O’Sullivan, 2004; Fullan, 2016; OECD, 2025). Under CBC frameworks, administrators are tasked with interpreting policy directives, organising teacher professional development, monitoring instructional quality, and fostering collaborative school cultures that support learner-centred pedagogy (UNESCO, 2021; Simiyu, 2025). However, these expectations often exceed the institutional authority, resources, and professional preparation available to school leaders, particularly in public secondary schools across SSA (Makunja, 2016; Kidega et al., 2022).

In Uganda, the implementation of the lower secondary competency-based curriculum has intensified these leadership demands. School administrators are required to support teachers in adopting new assessment approaches, integrating cross-cutting competencies, and managing learner-centred classrooms within contexts characterised by large class sizes and limited instructional resources (MoES, 2022; Nangonzi, 2024). Evidence suggests that many administrators operate within rigid bureaucratic structures that prioritise compliance with reporting requirements and examination targets over instructional leadership (Wambi et al., 2024; Simiyu, 2025). As a result, administrators may struggle to provide the sustained professional support necessary to nurture teacher commitment to CBC implementation.

These conditions highlight the importance of examining CBC implementation not only from the perspective of teachers but also through the systemic constraints faced by school administrators in strengthening teacher commitment. When administrators lack the capacity to buffer teachers from policy overload, mobilise instructional resources, or recognise professional effort, commitment is weakened, resulting in superficial or symbolic implementation of CBC reforms (Fullan, 2016; Ololube, 2024). This narrative review therefore situates school administrators at the centre of the CBC implementation process and interrogates the systemic challenges that shape their ability to strengthen teacher commitment in secondary schools.

School leadership literature consistently demonstrates that administrators influence teacher commitment through organisational climate, leadership style, and professional support structures. Instructional leadership models emphasise that school leaders who engage teachers in shared decision-making, provide pedagogical feedback, and support professional growth are more likely to cultivate affective and normative commitment (Fullan, 2016; Gitau, 2022). Conversely, leadership approaches that emphasise compliance, surveillance, and performance pressure tend to undermine intrinsic motivation and professional attachment (Biesta, 2021).

Within the framework of Organisational Commitment Theory, school administrators function as key organisational agents who shape teachers’ emotional attachment to curriculum reforms (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment is strengthened when administrators communicate a clear vision for CBC, model learner-centred values, and recognise teacher effort (Pacapat & Escarlos, 2024). Normative commitment is reinforced when administrators emphasise professional ethics, collective responsibility, and service to learners (Gitau, 2022). Continuance commitment, while less desirable as a motivational driver, may be sustained through institutional expectations and job security considerations, particularly in public education systems with limited labour mobility (Okuchaba, 2021).

Curriculum Implementation Theory further highlights that administrators mediate between policy intentions and classroom realities. Where leadership capacity is weak or constrained, administrators may transmit policy demands without adapting them to contextual conditions, thereby increasing teacher workload and reducing commitment (Gross & Gross, 1971; Kachope et al., 2025). In contrast, supportive administrators can reinterpret curriculum demands in ways that are feasible and professionally meaningful, enhancing teacher engagement even in resource-constrained environments (Fullan, 2016).

2. Literature Review

This literature review focuses on how system-level conditions shape school administrators’ capacity to strengthen teacher commitment during competency-based curriculum implementation in secondary schools. Drawing on literature published from 1997 to date, the review first establishes the conceptual relationship between school administration and teacher commitment, then examines specific systemic constraints that influence administrators’ leadership capacity. By structuring the review in this way, the section aligns with the understanding of how institutional and structural factors condition leadership effectiveness under CBC reforms in Sub-Saharan Africa.

2.1 School Administrators and Teacher Commitment in CBC Implementation

Literature consistently positions school administrators as central actors in shaping the organisational conditions under which teachers engage with competency-based curriculum (CBC) reforms. Under CBC frameworks, administrators are expected to interpret policy directives, coordinate professional development, monitor instructional quality, and cultivate collaborative school cultures that support learner-centred pedagogy (UNESCO, 2021; Fullan, 2016). In Sub-Saharan Africa, however, these leadership expectations have expanded within

education systems characterised by centralised control, limited resources, and examination-oriented accountability regimes, constraining administrators' capacity to influence teacher commitment meaningfully (Makunja, 2016; Kidega et al., 2022). As a result, leadership influence on teacher commitment is frequently mediated by systemic conditions rather than individual leadership competence alone.

Organisational Commitment Theory provides a useful lens for understanding how administrators influence teachers' engagement with CBC reforms. Affective commitment is strengthened when school leaders articulate a clear instructional vision, provide professional recognition, and support pedagogical experimentation, thereby fostering emotional attachment to reform goals (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Pacapat & Escarlos, 2024). Normative commitment is reinforced through ethical leadership, collegial norms, and appeals to professional responsibility toward learners and communities (Gitau, 2022). Continuance commitment, while less desirable as a motivational driver, often sustains compliance in contexts where job security and limited labour mobility shape teachers' engagement with reform initiatives (Okuchaba, 2021). The literature suggests that administrators influence all three commitment dimensions, but their ability to do so is shaped by systemic constraints embedded within education systems.

2.2 Leadership Capacity and Instructional Support Constraints

A dominant theme in the literature concerns limited instructional leadership capacity among school administrators implementing CBC reforms. Studies across Uganda and neighbouring contexts indicate that leadership appointment practices often prioritise seniority and teaching experience over formal preparation in instructional leadership and change management, limiting administrators' readiness to support pedagogical reform (Bush & Oduro, 2006; MoES, 2022; Kachope et al., 2025). Administrators frequently report spending disproportionate time on administrative compliance, reporting, and supervision, leaving limited space for sustained instructional engagement with teachers (Fullan, 2016; Wambi et al., 2024). These constraints weaken administrators' ability to nurture affective and normative teacher commitment through mentoring, feedback, and professional dialogue.

The literature further shows that administrators adopt informal coping strategies to manage leadership capacity gaps, such as delegating instructional responsibilities to senior teachers or prioritising examination subjects over others (Makunja, 2016). While these practices enable short-term functionality, they often result in uneven instructional support and inconsistent messaging about

CBC priorities. Where administrators lack confidence in CBC methodologies, leadership tends to shift toward managerial control rather than pedagogical support, undermining teachers' intrinsic motivation and weakening commitment to reform goals (Simiyu, 2025).

2.3 Resource Constraints, Staffing Shortages, and Workload Pressures

Resource scarcity emerges as a pervasive system-level constraint that shapes administrators' capacity to strengthen teachers' commitment. In many Sub-Saharan African secondary schools, administrators operate in contexts of inadequate funding, insufficient teaching materials, and chronic staffing shortages, which force them to focus on crisis management rather than instructional support (Atibuni et al., 2024; MoES, 2022). These conditions limit administrators' ability to recognise teacher effort, provide incentives for innovation, or support professional growth, thereby weakening affective commitment and reinforcing compliance-oriented engagement.

Large class sizes further exacerbate these challenges. The literature documents widespread frustration among administrators regarding enrolment policies determined at national or district levels, leaving school leaders with little influence over workload conditions (Wambi et al., 2024; Simiyu, 2025). Overcrowded classrooms constrain the feasibility of CBC-aligned practices such as formative assessment, individualised feedback, and collaborative learning, even among committed teachers (Makunja, 2016; Schweisfurth, 2011). Administrators' inability to address these structural constraints weakens their credibility as instructional leaders and erodes teachers' confidence in the practicality of CBC reforms.

2.4 Policy–Practice Misalignment and Accountability Pressures

The literature also highlights policy and accountability pressures as critical system-level constraints shaping administrators' leadership practices. Examination-oriented accountability systems often conflict with the formative and learner-centred philosophy of CBC, creating contradictory expectations for both administrators and teachers (OECD, 2025; Simiyu, 2025). Administrators are expected to reconcile these competing demands, yet evidence suggests that many lack the institutional authority or policy coherence necessary to do so effectively (Fullan, 2016). Compliance reporting requirements further crowd out time for instructional leadership, reducing opportunities for professional dialogue and sustained teacher support (Wambi et al., 2024).

In response to these pressures, administrators often adopt pragmatic strategies such as downplaying CBC priorities during high-stakes examination periods or prioritising performance metrics over pedagogical transformation (OECD, 2025). While such strategies protect institutional standing, they weaken consistent leadership messaging and undermine teachers' trust in the sustainability of reform initiatives, thereby eroding commitment over time (Simiyu, 2025).

2.5 Interaction of Systemic Constraints

A key insight emerging from the literature is that system-level constraints rarely operate in isolation. Leadership capacity limitations are intensified by resource scarcity, large class sizes, and policy misalignment, creating compounding pressures that constrain administrators' ability to foster teacher commitment effectively (Fullan, 2016; Kidega et al., 2022). Accountability pressures interact with workload constraints to reinforce compliance-oriented school cultures, marginalising learner-centred pedagogies central to CBC reforms (OECD, 2025). These interacting constraints limit administrators' capacity to consistently reinforce CBC values, even where personal commitment to reform exists.

Across the literature from 1997 to date, there is broad agreement that school administrators play a critical role in strengthening teacher commitment, yet systemic conditions significantly moderate their influence. While some studies suggest that strong leadership can mitigate contextual challenges, the predominant pattern in Sub-Saharan Africa indicates that leadership effects are contingent on enabling institutional environments (Makunja, 2016; Wambi et al., 2024). This convergence underscores the need to examine CBC implementation through a system-level lens that recognises administrators as constrained change agents rather than sole drivers of reform outcomes.

3. Methodology

3.1 Review Design

This study employed a narrative review design to synthesise empirical and policy-oriented literature on the system-level challenges faced by school administrators in strengthening teacher commitment during the implementation of the competency-based curriculum (CBC) in secondary schools. The narrative review approach was considered appropriate because research on school leadership, teacher commitment, and CBC implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is conceptually broad and methodologically diverse, spanning qualitative studies, quantitative surveys, mixed-methods research, and policy analyses. Rather than seeking

statistical aggregation, the review aimed to achieve conceptual integration of the evidence to explain how systemic conditions shape administrators' capacity to influence teacher commitment. This design aligns with the study's focus on interpreting leadership and organisational challenges within complex, resource-constrained education systems characteristic of SSA.

3.2 Data Sources and Search Strategy

Relevant literature was identified through searches of Google Scholar, ERIC, and Scopus, which were selected due to their extensive coverage of education research, curriculum studies, and educational leadership scholarship. To ensure that the review captured both research evidence and policy perspectives, grey literature was also consulted, including curriculum frameworks, implementation guidelines, and analytical reports produced by ministries of education, UNESCO, OECD, and other regional and international education agencies. Search terms combined concepts related to school administration, teacher commitment, instructional leadership, curriculum reform, and competency-based education, with particular emphasis on literature addressing secondary education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa. The reference lists of key studies were further examined to identify additional sources relevant to the review's focus.

3.3 Selection of Literature

The review focused on literature published between 1997 and 2025, a period corresponding to the global and regional emergence of competency-based and learner-centred curriculum reforms, alongside growing scholarly attention to school leadership and organisational commitment in education. The 1997 starting point reflects early policy shifts toward competency-oriented curricula, which laid the foundation for contemporary CBC reforms in many SSA countries.

Literature was included where it examined school administrators or school leadership in relation to curriculum implementation, institutional capacity, or organisational conditions influencing teachers' work; where it addressed teacher commitment, motivation, engagement, or professional attachment either explicitly or implicitly; and where it was situated within, or clearly applicable to, Sub-Saharan African secondary school contexts. Studies conducted outside SSA were included selectively when they offered theoretical or comparative insights relevant to understanding leadership and commitment under conditions of resource constraint, policy pressure, and systemic reform. Publications that focused exclusively on education levels other than secondary schooling, lacked empirical or policy grounding,

or did not engage substantively with leadership or teacher commitment were excluded.

3.4 Data Analysis and Synthesis

Analysis followed a thematic narrative synthesis process. The selected literature was read iteratively to identify recurring systemic challenges that affect school administrators' ability to strengthen teachers' commitment to CBC implementation. Emerging themes were organised around key structural and organisational conditions, including leadership capacity constraints, resource and staffing limitations, class size pressures, accountability demands, and policy–practice misalignment. The synthesis was guided by Organisational Commitment Theory, which enables interpretation of how these systemic challenges shape teachers' affective, normative, and continuance commitment, and by Curriculum Implementation Theory, which conceptualises administrators as mediators between policy intentions and classroom practice. Emphasis was placed on interpretive integration rather than quantification, allowing the review to explain how systemic conditions interact to influence leadership effectiveness and curriculum enactment across diverse SSA contexts.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

This review was based exclusively on secondary data drawn from publicly available academic publications and policy documents. No primary data were collected, and no human participants were involved. Ethical integrity was ensured through accurate citation of all sources, faithful representation of original authors' arguments and findings, and avoidance of selective or misleading interpretation of the reviewed literature.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Leadership Capacity and Instructional Support Constraints

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, evidence indicates that school administrators operate with limited decision-making autonomy, particularly in public secondary schools where staffing, budgeting, and curriculum directives are centrally controlled (Makunja, 2016; Simiyu, 2025). This limited autonomy constrains administrators' capacity to respond flexibly to teachers' instructional needs under CBC reforms. The literature further highlights a persistent tension between managerial and instructional leadership roles, with administrators devoting substantial time to administrative compliance, reporting, and supervision at the expense of pedagogical support (Fullan, 2016; Wambi et al., 2024). In Uganda and comparable Sub-Saharan

African contexts, leadership appointment practices have historically prioritised seniority and teaching experience over formal preparation in instructional leadership, limiting administrators' readiness to support instructional change (Bush & Oduro, 2006; MoES, 2022; Kachope et al., 2025). These constraints limit administrators' ability to strengthen teacher commitment through sustained instructional guidance.

Beyond formal leadership roles, the literature indicates that many school administrators adopt informal coping strategies to manage leadership capacity gaps under CBC reforms. These include delegating instructional responsibilities to senior teachers, relying on peer supervision, or informally prioritising specific subjects over others based on examination pressure (Makunja, 2016; Kachope et al., 2025). While such strategies enable short-term functionality, they often result in uneven instructional support across departments. Evidence further suggests that administrators may avoid direct pedagogical engagement due to limited confidence in CBC methodologies, reinforcing a managerial rather than instructional leadership orientation (Fullan, 2016; Simiyu, 2025).

4.2 Resource Constraints, Staffing Shortages, and Workload Pressure

The review indicates that resource and staffing shortages significantly shape administrators' daily priorities, often forcing them into reactive crisis management rather than proactive instructional leadership. In contexts characterised by inadequate funding, insufficient teaching materials, and high teacher-student ratios, administrators frequently focus on resolving immediate operational challenges such as timetable gaps, infrastructure maintenance, and staffing shortages (Atibuni et al., 2024; MoES, 2022). This emphasis on crisis management limits opportunities for recognising teacher effort or supporting innovative CBC practices, thereby weakening teachers' affective and normative commitment. Conceptually, rural schools experience these challenges more acutely due to limited access to resources and professional support networks, while urban schools face pressure from high enrolment and performance expectations (Kidega et al., 2022). These contextual differences shape how administrators engage with teachers and influence commitment dynamics.

The review also highlights the emotional and relational labour performed by administrators in resource-constrained settings. Administrators frequently manage teacher frustration, burnout, and dissatisfaction arising from persistent shortages of materials and staff, while lacking tangible solutions to these challenges (Atibuni et al., 2024). This emotional labour affects how

administrators interact with teachers, sometimes leading to cautious or defensive leadership practices that prioritise stability over innovation. The literature suggests that prolonged exposure to scarcity conditions reduces administrators' capacity to motivate teachers meaningfully, weakening morale and limiting recognition of professional effort, particularly in under-resourced public schools (Kidega et al., 2022; MoES, 2022).

4.3 Large Class Sizes and Workload Pressures

Large class sizes emerged consistently as a constraint that administrators acknowledge but have limited capacity to address. The literature documents widespread administrator frustration with class-size policies set at national or district levels, leaving school leaders unable to reduce workloads or restructure learning environments (Wambi et al., 2024; Simiyu, 2025). This frustration often spills into strained administrator-teacher relationships, particularly when teachers perceive leadership as unable to advocate effectively for improved working conditions. Overcrowded classrooms also make it practically difficult to implement several CBC pedagogies, such as formative assessment, individualised feedback, and collaborative group work, even among committed teachers (Makunja, 2016; Schweisfurth, 2011). As a result, teachers may maintain professional commitment while simultaneously losing confidence in the feasibility of CBC reforms, affecting trust in school leadership.

Evidence further indicates that administrators' inability to influence class size decisions negatively affects their perceived legitimacy and credibility among teachers. When teachers consistently raise workload concerns without corresponding structural changes, trust in school leadership may diminish, even where administrators demonstrate empathy and support (Wambi et al., 2024). Administrators themselves report feeling constrained by policies beyond their control, which limits the effectiveness of advocacy and reinforces perceptions of leadership powerlessness (Simiyu, 2025). In such contexts, teacher commitment may persist at a professional level but becomes increasingly detached from confidence in leadership-driven CBC implementation processes (Makunja, 2016).

4.4 Policy - Practice and Accountability Pressures

The findings further reveal that administrators face intense policy and accountability pressures that complicate their role in supporting teacher commitment. Examination-oriented accountability systems often conflict with the formative and competency-based philosophy of CBC, creating contradictory expectations for both administrators

and teachers (OECD, 2025; Simiyu, 2025). Administrators are frequently positioned as "policy buffers," expected to reconcile competing demands from curriculum reforms and examination performance targets; however, evidence suggests that many lack the institutional leverage to manage these tensions effectively (Fullan, 2016). Compliance reporting requirements further crowd out time for instructional supervision and professional dialogue, reducing administrators' capacity to reinforce CBC principles consistently (Wambi et al., 2024). These pressures weaken administrators' ability to sustain teacher commitment to learner-centred practice.

The findings further show that administrators often respond to competing accountability demands through risk-avoidance and strategic silence, particularly where CBC expectations conflict with examination-driven evaluation systems. Rather than actively challenging policy contradictions, administrators may downplay CBC requirements during periods of high examination pressure to protect school performance metrics (OECD, 2025; Simiyu, 2025). This adaptive behaviour, while pragmatic, reduces consistent messaging about CBC priorities and weakens administrators' capacity to model commitment to reform. Over time, such inconsistencies contribute to teacher scepticism regarding the seriousness and sustainability of CBC implementation (Fullan, 2016; Wambi et al., 2024).

3.5 Interactions Among Systemic Constraints

The reviewed literature indicates that systemic challenges facing school administrators rarely operate in isolation; rather, they interact in ways that compound implementation difficulties under competency-based curriculum (CBC) reforms. Leadership capacity constraints are frequently intensified by resource shortages, large class sizes, and policy pressures, creating overlapping demands that limit administrators' ability to support teacher commitment effectively (Fullan, 2016; Kidega et al., 2022). For example, administrators tasked with instructional supervision often contend simultaneously with overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching materials, and staffing gaps, reducing opportunities for sustained professional engagement with teachers (Atibuni et al., 2024; MoES, 2022).

The literature further suggests that accountability and examination pressures interact with resource and workload constraints to reinforce compliance-oriented school cultures. Administrators operating under high-stakes evaluation systems may prioritise examination preparation, particularly in large classes where CBC-aligned pedagogies are challenging to implement, thereby marginalising learner-centred approaches (OECD, 2025;

Simiyu, 2025). These interacting constraints limit administrators' capacity to consistently reinforce CBC values, even when personal commitment to reform exists.

Additionally, the interaction of limited autonomy and policy misalignment constrains administrators' ability to advocate for teachers or adapt implementation strategies to local contexts. As a result, administrators often adopt pragmatic coping mechanisms that stabilise school operations but weaken long-term efforts to strengthen teacher commitment and deepen CBC implementation (Wambi et al., 2024; Makunja, 2016).

This narrative review examined the systemic challenges facing school administrators in strengthening teacher commitment for effective competency-based curriculum (CBC) implementation in secondary schools, with relevance to Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The synthesis of evidence demonstrates that teacher commitment is profoundly shaped by the institutional environments created by school leadership, and that administrators' capacity to influence commitment is significantly constrained by systemic factors beyond individual leadership competence. These findings reinforce the argument that CBC implementation is not merely a technical or pedagogical process, but a complex organisational and leadership challenge embedded within broader education systems.

Consistent with Organisational Commitment Theory, the review indicates that school administrators play a critical role in shaping teachers' affective, normative, and continuance commitment through leadership practices, organisational climate, and professional support structures (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Administrators who articulate a clear instructional vision, recognise teacher effort, and provide pedagogical support are more likely to foster affective commitment, which has been shown to drive instructional innovation and sustained engagement with reform (Fullan, 2016; Ololube, 2024). However, across SSA contexts, administrators' ability to enact such leadership practices is frequently undermined by limited leadership preparation, heavy administrative workloads, and inadequate institutional authority, weakening the potential impact of leadership on teacher commitment.

The findings further reveal that normative commitment is particularly salient in African contexts, where teachers often perceive curriculum implementation as a professional and moral obligation to learners and society. Administrators play a reinforcing role in sustaining this sense of duty through ethical leadership, collegial norms, and alignment with national education goals (Gitau, 2022; Kachope et al., 2025). However, the review also suggests that prolonged exposure to systemic constraints—such as persistent resource shortages and policy overload—can erode normative commitment over time. When

administrators are unable to address teachers' structural challenges or advocate effectively on their behalf, professional obligation may give way to fatigue and disengagement, even among highly committed teachers.

In contrast, continuance commitment emerged as a weaker but contextually important driver of CBC implementation. In many SSA education systems characterised by limited labour mobility, teachers often remain engaged with curriculum reforms due to job security considerations rather than intrinsic motivation (Okuchaba, 2021). Administrators operating within such contexts may inadvertently rely on compliance-based strategies to sustain implementation, reinforcing surface-level adherence rather than profound pedagogical transformation. While continuance commitment contributes to reform continuity, the literature suggests that it is insufficient to produce the learner-centred practices envisaged under CBC frameworks without complementing it with affective and normative commitment.

The review strongly supports Curriculum Implementation Theory, which emphasises that curriculum reforms succeed only when individual actors are supported by enabling institutional conditions (Gross & Gross, 1971). School administrators are positioned as mediators between policy intentions and classroom practice. Nevertheless, their mediating role is often constrained by systemic factors such as large class sizes, inadequate staffing, limited instructional materials, and misaligned accountability systems. Even administrators who demonstrate strong instructional leadership orientations struggle to translate policy into practice when these structural conditions are unfavourable. This finding aligns with broader reform literature arguing that leadership effectiveness must be understood within systemic contexts rather than attributed solely to individual competence (Fullan, 2016).

Large class sizes emerged as a particularly significant constraint shaping administrators' capacity to strengthen teacher commitment. CBC implementation requires instructional practices such as formative assessment, individualised feedback, and collaborative learning, all of which are difficult to support in overcrowded classrooms. Administrators' inability to influence class size policy or staffing allocations limits their credibility as instructional leaders and weakens teachers' confidence in the feasibility of CBC reforms (Wambi et al., 2024). As a result, teachers may remain professionally committed but resort to compliance-oriented practices that prioritise classroom control over learner-centred pedagogy. Resource constraints further complicate administrators' leadership role. The literature indicates that administrators in resource-limited schools spend disproportionate time managing shortages and meeting administrative requirements, leaving little time for instructional support or

teacher motivation (Atibuni et al., 2024; MoES, 2022). In such contexts, administrators' efforts to encourage CBC implementation may be perceived as unrealistic or disconnected from classroom realities, weakening affective commitment and reinforcing scepticism toward reform initiatives. This finding underscores the importance of aligning leadership expectations with material conditions.

Policy and accountability pressures also emerged as critical systemic challenges. Many administrators operate under accountability regimes that prioritise examination performance and compliance reporting, often at odds with the formative and competency-oriented principles of CBC (Simiyu, 2025; OECD, 2025). This misalignment creates contradictory signals for teachers, with administrators simultaneously expected to promote learner-centred pedagogy and deliver examination results. The resulting tension constrains administrators' capacity to consistently reinforce CBC values and undermines teachers' trust in the reform's coherence, weakening commitment.

Compared with better-resourced education systems, evidence suggests that when administrators are provided with adequate leadership preparation, professional autonomy, and coherent policy frameworks, their influence on teacher commitment is more pronounced and sustainable (OECD, 2025). This contrast highlights the contextual nature of leadership effectiveness and cautions against importing leadership models without adapting them to SSA realities. It also reinforces the argument that strengthening administrator capacity requires systemic reform rather than isolated leadership training initiatives. Overall, the review reveals both convergence and divergence in literature. There is broad agreement that school administrators are central to strengthening teacher commitment and sustaining CBC implementation. However, studies diverge on the extent to which leadership can compensate for systemic constraints. While some evidence suggests that strong leadership mitigates contextual challenges, the predominant pattern in SSA indicates that structural conditions significantly moderate the effects of leadership. These findings challenge overly individualistic narratives of leadership effectiveness and underscore the need for system-level approaches to curriculum reform.

Education policymakers should strengthen leadership career pathways that deliberately prepare and support school administrators as instructional leaders under competency-based curriculum reforms. Promotion to school leadership should be accompanied by structured professional preparation in curriculum leadership, teacher motivation, and change management rather than relying solely on seniority or teaching experience (Fullan, 2016). In addition, incentive structures-including recognition, career progression, and performance appraisal-should reward instructional leadership and teacher support rather

than administrative compliance alone. Crucially, effective CBC implementation requires alignment between curriculum and assessment policies, ensuring that national examination systems reinforce rather than undermine competency-based teaching practices (MoES, 2022).

At the school level, administrators can adopt micro-level leadership strategies to strengthen teachers' commitment, even within constrained systems. These include regular professional dialogue focused on instructional challenges, recognition of teacher effort, and the creation of collaborative spaces such as subject-based learning communities. Trust-building practices, including transparent communication and shared problem-solving, are particularly important for sustaining affective and normative commitment under CBC reforms (Gitau, 2022). By prioritising instructional support within existing constraints, administrators can reinforce professional identity and foster collective responsibility for curriculum implementation.

Taken together, these findings indicate that systemic challenges facing school administrators rarely operate in isolation but interact to constrain leadership effectiveness under competency-based curriculum reforms. Leadership capacity limitations are intensified by resource scarcity, large class sizes, and accountability pressures, collectively weakening administrators' ability to foster affective and normative teacher commitment. This interactional pattern underscores the systemic nature of barriers to effective CBC implementation in secondary schools.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This narrative review examined the systemic challenges facing school administrators in strengthening teacher commitment for effective competency-based curriculum (CBC) implementation in secondary schools in Sub-Saharan Africa. The synthesis of literature from 1997 to 2025 demonstrates that while school administrators play a pivotal role in shaping teachers' engagement with CBC reforms, their capacity to foster sustained commitment is significantly constrained by structural conditions beyond individual leadership competence. These conditions include limited instructional leadership preparation, persistent resource and staffing shortages, large class sizes, policy-practice misalignment, and examination-oriented accountability pressures. Collectively, these systemic constraints weaken administrators' ability to support affective and normative teacher commitment, often reducing leadership practice to managerial compliance rather than instructional support.

The review reinforces the view that CBC implementation should be understood as a systemic and organisational challenge rather than a purely pedagogical or teacher-level process. Even where administrators demonstrate strong leadership orientations, the absence of enabling institutional conditions limits their influence on teacher motivation and curriculum enactment. Consequently, efforts to enhance teacher commitment without addressing the systemic environments in which school administrators operate are unlikely to produce sustainable curriculum transformation.

5.2 Recommendations

This review recommends that, at the policy level, education systems implementing CBC reforms strengthen leadership preparation pathways that explicitly equip school administrators with competencies in instructional leadership, teacher motivation, and change management. Appointment and promotion to school leadership positions should be accompanied by structured professional preparation rather than relying predominantly on seniority or teaching experience. In addition, greater coherence between curriculum frameworks and assessment systems is essential to ensure that accountability mechanisms reinforce, rather than undermine, competency-based teaching practices.

At the institutional level, ministries of education should provide school administrators with greater professional autonomy and access to resources that enable instructional support, including time for pedagogical supervision, targeted professional development, and mechanisms to recognise teachers' effort. Reducing class sizes and addressing staffing imbalances, particularly in public secondary schools, would further enhance administrators' credibility as instructional leaders and strengthen teachers' confidence in the feasibility of CBC reforms.

For practice, school administrators can adopt micro-level strategies to sustain teacher commitment within constrained systems, including fostering collaborative professional cultures, recognising instructional effort, and maintaining transparent communication about reform expectations. Such practices are particularly important for sustaining affective and normative commitment where structural challenges persist.

Finally, future research should prioritise administrator-centred studies that capture leadership perspectives on CBC implementation and teacher commitment, particularly through mixed-methods designs that integrate organisational, policy, and classroom-level analysis. Greater attention to contextual variation across Sub-Saharan Africa would strengthen understanding of how systemic conditions shape leadership effectiveness and curriculum reform outcomes.

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