



Leadership Practices and the Implementation of the Competence-Based Curriculum: A Case Study of Selected Secondary Schools in Nansana Municipality, Wakiso District

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Abstract: *The introduction of the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) in Uganda represents a shift towards learner centred, competency oriented education. However, implementation remains uneven across secondary schools, highlighting the importance of school leadership in supporting instructional change. Despite growing research on CBC implementation, limited qualitative evidence explains how leadership practices operate within school contexts. This study explored how leadership practices influenced CBC implementation in three selected secondary schools in Nansana Municipality, Wakiso District. An exploratory qualitative multiple case study design was employed. Participants comprised 24 purposively selected participants: three headteachers, three Directors of Studies, and eighteen teachers. Data were generated through semi structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Findings revealed that school leaders adopted hybrid leadership practices combining instructional, collaborative, supportive, and supervisory approaches. Leadership supported implementation through instructional supervision, teacher mentoring, professional learning, collaboration, and the creation of supportive organisational conditions for learner centred pedagogy. However, implementation was constrained by large class sizes, inadequate instructional resources, inconsistent policy guidance, uneven teacher preparedness, and limited professional development opportunities. The study concludes that leadership for curriculum reform is a context responsive organisational process through which leaders build teachers' professional capacity and support instructional improvement. It recommends strengthening school based professional learning, instructional leadership, and institutional support to enable school leaders and teachers to respond effectively to CBC implementation demands.*

Keywords: *Competence Based Curriculum, Curriculum implementation, Instructional leadership, Multiple case study, Secondary schools.*

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1. Introduction

Competence based curriculum reforms have gained prominence as education systems seek to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes required to respond to changing social, economic, and

technological demands. Unlike knowledge based curricula that primarily emphasise content coverage and summative assessment, the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) promotes learner centred pedagogy, continuous assessment, and the application of knowledge in real life contexts, with particular emphasis on critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and

problem solving (Tumuheise et al., 2023; Kembabazi, 2023; NCDC, 2020). However, translating these principles into classroom practice remains challenging.

Across Sub Saharan Africa, countries including Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda have adopted competence based curricula to improve educational quality and prepare learners for changing social and economic demands (Amunga, J. 2020; UNESCO, 2023; Tumuheise et al., 2023). Implementation, however, remains uneven because of inadequate teacher preparation, limited instructional resources, overcrowded classrooms, weak professional development systems, and institutional capacity constraints (Adhiambo & Aringo, 2023; Cheruiyot, 2024; Kachope et al., 2024; Namubiru et al., 2024). Differences among schools implementing the same national curriculum further indicate that implementation depends not only on policy design but also on the organisational processes through which schools interpret and support educational change (Okumu, 2025; Rarieya et al., 2026).

Uganda introduced the Lower Secondary Competence Based Curriculum in 2020 to develop innovative and self reliant learners capable of applying knowledge to practical and societal challenges through learner centred pedagogy and competence based assessment (MoES, 2019; NCDC, 2020). Despite generally positive perceptions of the reform, implementation remains constrained by inadequate pedagogical and assessment competence, insufficient instructional resources, large classes, and inconsistent application of learner centred approaches (Najjuma, 2024). These challenges highlight the importance of examining the organisational processes through which schools support teachers in translating curriculum expectations into classroom practice.

School leadership is particularly important because leaders shape the organisational conditions within which teachers interpret and implement curriculum policy. Leadership contributes to curriculum reform through instructional supervision, teacher support, professional learning, collaboration, resource mobilisation, and stakeholder coordination (Hallinger, 2022; Mincu, 2022). Studies from Kenya and Uganda associate these practices with stronger instructional support, teacher collaboration, professional learning, and readiness to implement learner centred pedagogy (Adhiambo & Aringo, 2023; Cheruiyot, 2024; Kachope et al., 2024; Kidega et al., 2024; Wambua et al., 2025). However, leadership effectiveness also depends on how school leaders navigate organisational constraints and mobilise available resources to support instructional change.

Despite this evidence, important conceptual and methodological gaps remain. Existing studies have largely examined leadership as a set of administrative

practices or as an independent factor associated with curriculum implementation, providing limited understanding of how leadership practices are shaped by organisational conditions and, in turn, influence teachers' professional learning and instructional practices. Although quantitative and mixed methods studies provide valuable evidence on relationships between leadership and curriculum implementation (Adhiambo & Aringo, 2023; Cheruiyot, 2024; Namubiru et al., 2024), they offer less insight into how leadership is experienced, adapted, and enacted within everyday organisational contexts.

This gap is particularly evident in Uganda, where research has concentrated on teacher preparedness, instructional resources, assessment practices, institutional support, and implementation challenges (Kachope et al., 2024; Kidega et al., 2024; Namubiru et al., 2024). Less is known about how organisational conditions facilitate or constrain leadership and how leadership practices subsequently shape teachers' professional learning and instructional experiences during curriculum implementation. Understanding CBC implementation therefore requires examining not only whether leadership matters, but how leadership is exercised within and shaped by the organisational contexts in which curriculum reform occurs.

Accordingly, this study explores how leadership practices influence the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum in selected secondary schools in Nansana Municipality, Wakiso District. Using a qualitative multiple case study design, the study conceptualises leadership as a context responsive organisational process through which school leaders support teachers, facilitate professional learning, and respond to conditions affecting instructional change. The study contributes to educational leadership scholarship by showing how organisational conditions shape leadership practices and how these practices, in turn, build teachers' professional capacity and support the translation of CBC policy into classroom practice.

1.1 General Objectives

To explore how leadership practices influence the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum in selected secondary schools in Nansana Municipality, Wakiso District.

1.2 Study Questions

The study was guided by the following study questions:

1. How is the Competence Based Curriculum implemented within the organisational contexts of selected secondary schools in Nansana Municipality, Wakiso District?

2. How do leadership practices influence teachers' instructional practices during the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum in selected secondary schools in Nansana Municipality, Wakiso district?
3. How do organisational factors facilitate or constrain leadership during the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum in selected secondary schools in Nansana Municipality, Wakiso district?

1.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is guided primarily by Fullan's Educational Change Theory, which conceptualises educational reform as a complex process requiring leadership, capacity building, collaboration, and continuous professional learning rather than the introduction of policy alone (Fullan, 2016). The theory emphasises the role of school leaders in creating conditions that enable teachers to understand educational change, develop new instructional practices, and sustain improvements in teaching and learning. It therefore provides an appropriate lens for examining how leadership supports the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC).

From this perspective, leadership supports curriculum implementation by promoting shared vision, professional collaboration, instructional improvement, and responsiveness to implementation challenges. Chen et al. (2025) similarly found that administrative and emotional support from school leadership strengthened teacher collaboration and reform oriented instructional practices. Leadership practices that promote communication, trust, professional learning, and shared decision making can therefore strengthen teachers' capacity and commitment to curriculum reform.

The study is further informed by Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, which views knowledge as constructed through social interaction, collaboration, and shared experience (Vygotsky, 1978; Schunk, 2020). Applied to CBC implementation, this perspective helps explain how teachers develop pedagogical knowledge and professional confidence through dialogue, peer collaboration, mentoring, and reflective practice. This interpretation is consistent with evidence emphasising continuous professional learning and collaboration in supporting teachers' adaptation to changing instructional demands (OECD, 2020). In Uganda, studies similarly identify teacher preparedness, professional development, institutional support, and resource conditions as important influences on CBC implementation (Namubiru et al., 2024; Kachepe et al., 2025).

Together, Educational Change Theory and Social Constructivism provide complementary perspectives for

understanding CBC implementation. Fullan's theory explains how leadership and organisational conditions support educational change, while Social Constructivism explains how teachers develop professional knowledge and shared understanding through interaction and collaborative learning. The two perspectives therefore provide a coherent framework for examining how leadership practices and organisational conditions shape CBC implementation in selected secondary schools in Nansana Municipality, Wakiso District.

1.4 Conceptual perspective

This study is guided by two interrelated concepts that is, leadership practices and the enactment of the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC). Leadership practices are conceptualised as patterns of behaviour through which school leaders influence teachers' professional learning, instructional practices, collaboration, and commitment to educational change (Leithwood et al., 2020; Bush, 2020). Within the context of curriculum reform, leadership extends beyond administrative responsibilities to creating organisational conditions that support teacher learning, professional collaboration, instructional improvement, and continuous school development.

The implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum is conceptualised as the process through which curriculum policy is translated into learner centred pedagogy, competence based assessment, active learner participation, and the development of learners' knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through meaningful classroom practice (NCDC, 2020; Tumuheise et al., 2023). This process requires teachers to adopt new pedagogical approaches, assessment strategies, and professional practices consistent with the goals of competence based education.

In contrast viewing these concepts as separate, this study conceptualises leadership Practices and CBC implementation as interdependent organisational processes. Leadership influences the organisational environment in which teachers interpret curriculum expectations, develop professional competence, collaborate with colleagues, and implement learner centred instructional practices. At the same time, the effectiveness of CBC execution reflects the extent to which these organisational conditions support teachers in translating curriculum policy into classroom practice. This conceptualisation is consistent with Fullan's Educational Change Theory, which emphasises leadership as a catalyst for sustainable educational reform (Fullan, 2016), and Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory, which explains how teachers develop professional knowledge through collaboration, dialogue, and shared learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Schunk, 2020). Hence, this study examines how leadership practices contribute to the implementation of the

Competence Based Curriculum in selected secondary schools in Nansana Municipality, Wakiso district.

The relationships among the key concepts and processes guiding the study are synthesised in the conceptual

framework presented in Figure 1. The framework illustrates how leadership practices operate within organisational and contextual conditions to support teachers' professional learning and instructional practices, through which the Competence-Based Curriculum is enacted in classroom practice.

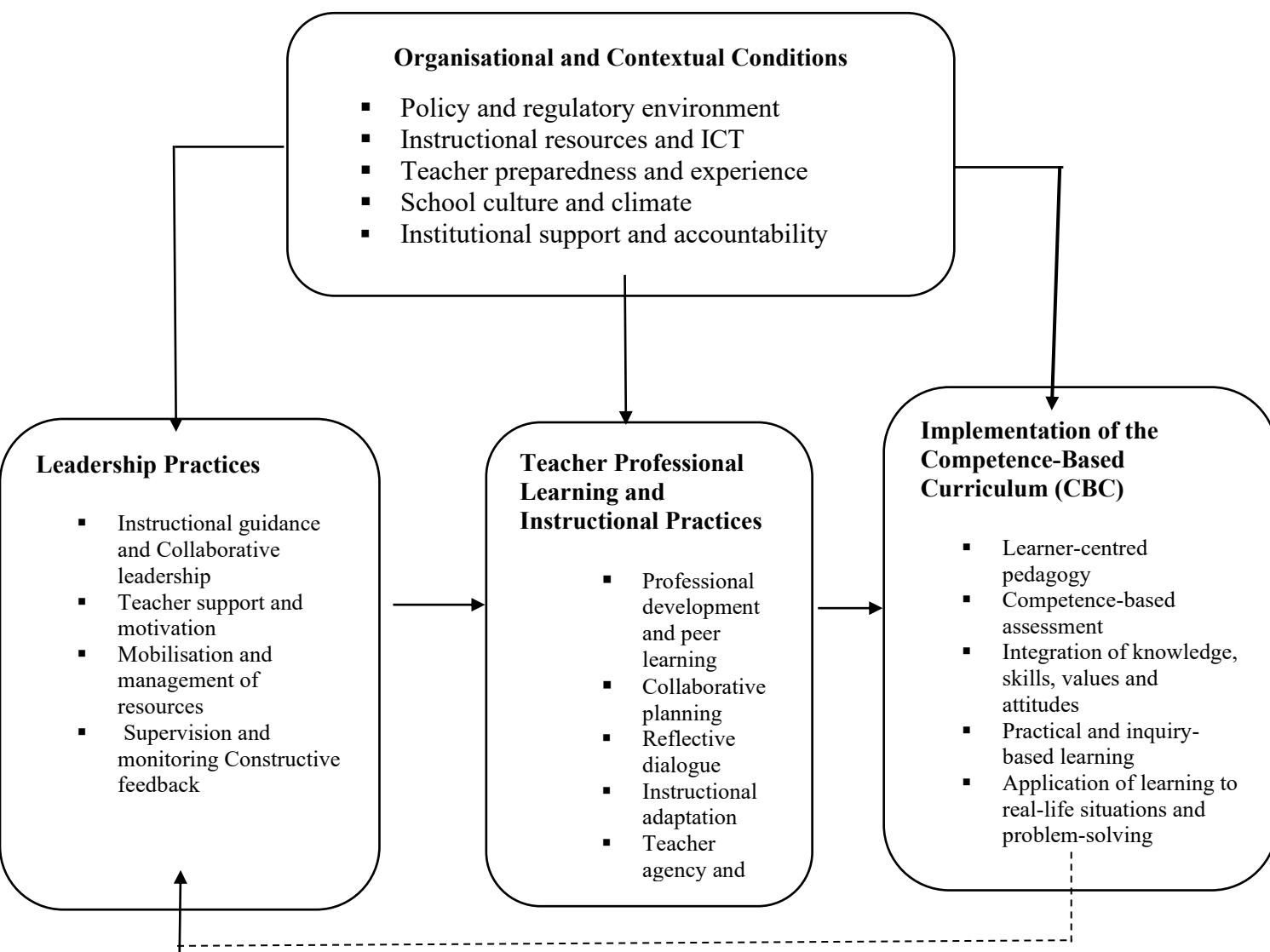


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Leadership Practices and the Implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the conceptual framework presents CBC implementation as a dynamic and context responsive process involving four interrelated components. Organisational and contextual conditions represent the enabling or constraining environment within which leadership and curriculum implementation occur. These conditions shape the opportunities and limitations within which school leaders support teachers and teachers translate curriculum expectations into practice.

Leadership practices represent the instructional, collaborative and supportive actions through which school leaders create conditions for teacher learning and curriculum enactment. Teacher professional learning and instructional practices, in turn, capture the processes through which teachers develop professional understanding, collaborate with colleagues and adapt their instructional practices in response to CBC expectations. This component therefore provides the conceptual connection between leadership support and classroom enactment.

Implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum represents the practical enactment of CBC principles through learner centred pedagogy, competence based assessment, and the development of learners' knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Thus, teacher professional learning and instructional practices represent the process of professional and pedagogical adaptation, whereas CBC implementation reflects how curriculum intentions are translated into classroom practice.

The arrows indicate conceptual and interactive relationships rather than a strictly linear process. The feedback loop further recognises that experiences arising from CBC implementation may generate new organisational, professional and instructional demands, requiring corresponding adjustments in leadership and teacher practices. The framework is informed by Fullan's Educational Change Theory and Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, which together illuminate the roles of leadership, professional learning, collaboration and organisational context in educational change

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical perspective

The literature on curriculum implementation can be understood through theoretical perspectives that explain both the organisational processes through which educational change occurs and the social processes through which teachers develop the professional knowledge and practices required to implement change. In this regard, Fullan's Educational Change Theory provides an organisational perspective on curriculum reform, while Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory offers a complementary explanation of the socially mediated processes through which teachers develop professional understanding and adapt their practice.

Fullan's Educational Change Theory conceptualises educational reform as a complex and continuing process rather than the straightforward adoption of a new policy or programme (Fullan, 2007, 2016, 2020). From this perspective, the introduction of a curriculum does not automatically translate into changes in classroom practice. Meaningful implementation depends on how educational actors interpret the reform, develop the capacity required to implement it, and receive sustained organisational and professional support. This perspective is particularly relevant to the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC), which requires teachers to adapt recognized pedagogical and assessment practices to learner centred teaching, competence based assessment, collaborative learning, practical activities, and the application of knowledge in meaningful contexts. Fullan's perspective therefore provides a basis for understanding how leadership practices, including

instructional guidance, supervision, mentoring, professional development, collaboration, and resource mobilisation, support teachers in responding to CBC expectations within particular organisational and systemic conditions.

Although Fullan provides a strong explanation of the organisational and change processes surrounding curriculum reform, greater attention is required to understand how teachers develop and transfer the professional knowledge needed to implement such change. Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory complements this perspective by conceptualising learning as a socially mediated process involving interaction, dialogue, collaboration, and shared experience (Vygotsky, 1978; Schunk, 2020). Applied to teachers' professional learning, the theory helps explain how teachers develop and polish their understanding of curriculum expectations through mentoring, peer learning, collaborative planning, departmental discussions, reflective dialogue, and the sharing of professional experiences. These socially mediated processes are particularly relevant to CBC implementation because teachers are required to interpret unfamiliar pedagogical and assessment expectations and adapt their instructional practices accordingly. Social Constructivism therefore provides a useful lens for understanding professional learning as a collaborative rather than exclusively individual process.

The two theoretical perspectives are therefore complementary rather than competing. Fullan primarily illuminates the leadership, organisational, and change processes through which curriculum reform is interpreted, supported, and sustained, whereas Vygotsky provides insight into the socially mediated professional learning through which teachers develop understanding and adapt instructional practice. Together, they position CBC implementation as both an organisational change process and a socially situated process of professional and pedagogical learning. Their integration therefore provides a broader analytical perspective than either theory would offer independently.

Importantly, these perspectives do not assume that leadership automatically produces changes in teacher practice or that collaboration necessarily results in effective curriculum implementation. Rather, they provide analytical lenses for examining how leadership practices, professional learning, instructional adaptation, and organisational conditions interact within particular school contexts. This position is consistent with the qualitative orientation of the present study, which seeks to understand how leadership and curriculum implementation are experienced and enacted rather than to test predetermined causal relationships. These theoretical lenses therefore provide a basis for examining the empirical literature on CBC implementation, leadership practices, teachers' instructional practices,

and the organisational conditions within which curriculum reform occurs.

2.2 Empirical review

2.2.1 The nature and process of CBC implementation

The implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) involves pedagogical, organisational, and institutional change as curriculum intentions are interpreted, adapted, and translated into practice within schools (OECD, 2020). CBC emphasises learner centred pedagogy, competence based assessment, collaborative learning, and the development of generic competencies (NCDC, 2020; UNESCO, 2023). Evidence from Uganda and other East African contexts indicates that implementing these principles requires substantial changes in teachers' instructional and assessment practices, supported by appropriate school level conditions (Chacha & Onyango, 2022; Kidega et al., 2024). Curriculum implementation is therefore not merely the adoption of prescribed practices but a contextually situated process through which teachers and school leaders interpret and enact reform.

A dominant theme in the literature is the transformation of classroom pedagogy. Competence based reforms emphasise inquiry based learning, competency based assessment, active learner participation, and the application of knowledge in real life contexts, requiring teachers to assume a more facilitative role (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2023). Studies from Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania report increasing use of collaborative learning, project based activities, experiential learning, and learner centred approaches, although their adoption varies according to teacher preparedness and organisational support (Kubai et al., 2023; Tumuheise et al., 2023; Kidega et al., 2024).

The literature, however, diverges on the extent to which this pedagogical transformation has become embedded in the day to day classroom practice. Tumuheise et al. (2023) describe a gradual transition towards learner centred teaching despite institutional constraints, whereas Wambi et al. (2024) report continued reliance on teacher centred approaches associated partly with uncertainty surrounding curriculum interpretation and competence based assessment. Nankubuge et al. (2024) emphasise variations in teachers' professional competence, while Najjuma (2024) highlights the influence of contextual and institutional conditions on the consistent application of learner centred approaches. Collectively, these findings suggest that variation in CBC implementation cannot be explained by teacher capacity alone but reflects its interaction with the organisational conditions within which teaching occurs (Priestley et al., 2021; Larsson & Löwstedt, 2023).

Assessment constitutes another critical dimension of CBC implementation, with continuous and formative assessment intended to monitor competency development, promote learner reflection, and generate feedback for instructional improvement (Mitana et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2023). However, Ugandan studies indicate continuing difficulties in designing appropriate assessment tasks, documenting competency development, and reconciling formative assessment with examination oriented accountability systems (Najjuma, 2024; Kachope et al., 2025). These difficulties suggest that effective competence based assessment depends not only on teachers' individual knowledge and skills but also on the professional guidance, collaborative learning opportunities, and institutional support available within schools.

Recent scholarship has consequently broadened attention from individual teacher preparedness towards the organisational conditions that enable or constrain instructional change (Priestley et al., 2021; Lowell et al., 2024). Although teacher competence, instructional resources, and readiness for learner centred pedagogy remain important, studies increasingly recognise leadership support, professional collaboration, communication, and continuous professional development as conditions that shape curriculum enactment (Harris & Jones, 2019; Leithwood et al., 2020; Mincu, 2022; McChesney & Cross, 2023). This perspective positions CBC implementation as an organisational endeavour in which leadership can influence the professional conditions under which teachers interpret curriculum expectations and translate them into classroom practice.

Despite this broader perspective, important conceptual and methodological gaps remain. Ugandan research has concentrated largely on teacher preparedness, instructional practices, assessment, resources, and implementation challenges (Mitana et al., 2021; Nankubuge et al., 2024; Najjuma, 2024), while much of the empirical literature employs quantitative surveys and descriptive designs to identify implementation patterns and relationships among variables (Adhiambo & Aringo, 2023; Cheruiyot, 2024; Kachope et al., 2024; Namubiru et al., 2024). Although qualitative studies provide valuable insights into teachers' experiences of CBC implementation (Tumuheise et al., 2023; Wambi et al., 2024), leadership as a context responsive organisational process remains comparatively underexplored. Consequently, limited qualitative evidence explains how leadership practices shape teacher learning, professional collaboration, and instructional decision making, and how organisational conditions facilitate or constrain these leadership processes during CBC implementation in Ugandan secondary schools.

2.2.2 Leadership practices and teachers' instructional practices during competence based curriculum implementation

Although teachers are the immediate implementers of curriculum reform, their instructional practices are shaped by the leadership and organisational environments within which they work. Contemporary research therefore conceptualises curriculum implementation as an interaction between teachers' professional capacity and school level organisational conditions (Hayes et al., 2025; Lowell et al., 2024; Priestley et al., 2021). Within this perspective, leadership extends beyond administrative authority to an organisational and instructional practice through which school leaders support teachers in interpreting, adapting, and implementing curriculum reform (Bush, 2020; Hallinger, 2022; Mincu, 2022). This is particularly relevant to the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC), which requires teachers to adopt learner centred pedagogy, competence based assessment, collaborative learning, and real life problem solving.

Instructional supervision is one mechanism through which leadership shapes classroom practice. Studies from Kenya and Uganda indicate that classroom observation, instructional feedback, mentoring, and pedagogical guidance can strengthen teachers' confidence and capacity to implement learner centred instruction (Adhiambo & Aringo, 2023; Kubai et al., 2023; Emmanuel & Chakrawarty, 2026). However, the literature distinguishes between regulatory and developmental approaches to supervision. While monitoring and feedback can promote consistency with curriculum and assessment expectations (Adhiambo & Aringo, 2023; Cheruiyot, 2024; Mitana et al., 2021), compliance oriented supervision alone may have limited influence on sustained pedagogical change. Developmental supervision places greater emphasis on mentoring, reflection, professional learning, and instructional improvement.

This distinction reflects a broader debate about how leadership influences instructional practice. One perspective emphasises monitoring, accountability, and instructional oversight as mechanisms for maintaining consistency with curriculum expectations (Adhiambo & Aringo, 2023; Cheruiyot, 2024). In contrast, distributed and change oriented perspectives emphasise professional collaboration, shared decision making, mentoring, school based professional learning, and collaborative inquiry (Kidega & Khaing, 2023; Wambua et al., 2025; Heenan et al., 2023; McChesney & Cross, 2023). These perspectives are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Instructional oversight can strengthen implementation consistency, while collaborative leadership can support changes in teachers' pedagogical reasoning and willingness to adopt learner centred practices (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Mincu, 2022). Effective leadership during CBC implementation therefore requires a balance between instructional accountability and professional support.

Evidence from Ugandan secondary schools further indicates that teacher preparedness alone does not account for variations in CBC implementation. Despite growing familiarity with the curriculum, teachers continue to experience difficulties related to assessment, ICT integration, instructional resources, and pedagogical adaptation (Namubiru et al., 2024; Kachope et al., 2025). Organisational support through mentoring, collaborative planning, instructional feedback, and continuous professional learning can strengthen teachers' capacity to respond to these challenges (Hayes et al., 2025; Meyer et al., 2023). Instructional improvement can therefore be understood not solely as an individual teacher responsibility but as an organisational process supported through leadership.

Leadership also shapes instructional practice through resource mobilisation and utilisation. Studies from Kenya indicate that school leaders support curriculum implementation by mobilising instructional materials, engaging parents and governing bodies, and developing partnerships that strengthen teaching and learning (Cheruiyot, 2024; Wanjiru & Gitonga, 2026). However, resource availability alone does not determine instructional quality. Schools operating under comparable resource conditions may experience different implementation outcomes because leaders differ in how they prioritise, coordinate, and integrate available resources into instructional practice (Larsson & Löwstedt, 2023). Leadership effectiveness therefore depends partly on the capacity to align available resources with instructional priorities and curriculum goals.

Taken together, the literature identifies instructional supervision, professional learning, collaboration, communication, and resource mobilisation as important pathways through which leadership shapes teachers' instructional practices. However, important conceptual and methodological limitations remain. Much of the existing research establishes relationships between leadership and curriculum implementation without explaining how teachers experience leadership or translate leadership support into everyday instructional decisions. Similarly, the predominance of quantitative surveys and correlational designs provides valuable evidence of associations but limited insight into the organisational processes through which leadership operates. Although qualitative studies have examined teachers' experiences of CBC implementation (Tumuheise et al., 2023; Wambi et al., 2024), less is known about how teachers interpret leadership practices, negotiate instructional expectations, and adapt their pedagogy within different organisational contexts. An in depth qualitative multiple case study is therefore needed to examine how leadership is experienced and translated into instructional practice during CBC implementation.

2.2.3 Organisational Factors Shaping Leadership Practices during Competence Based Curriculum Implementation

School leadership during curriculum reform is embedded within the organisational environments in which it is exercised. Contemporary scholarship conceptualises leadership as a relational and organisational practice shaped by institutional structures, professional relationships, governance arrangements, resources, and policy contexts (Constantinides, 2023; Larsson & Löwstedt, 2023; Lindkvist, 2024). Leadership effectiveness therefore depends partly on the conditions that enable school leaders to mobilise teachers, coordinate instructional improvement, foster professional collaboration, and sustain educational change.

Resource availability is an important organisational condition shaping leadership during Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) implementation. CBC reforms require instructional materials, ICT facilities, adequate staffing, manageable class sizes, and financial resources to support learner centred pedagogy, competence based assessment, and practical learning. Evidence from Kenya and Uganda indicates that resource shortages constrain leaders' capacity to provide instructional support, organise professional development, and promote innovative teaching (Adhiambo & Aringo, 2023; Kachope et al., 2024; Namubiru et al., 2024; Cheruiyot, 2024). Scholars differ, however, in explaining the role of resources. While some emphasise material shortages as constraints on implementation (Kidega et al., 2024; Majiwa et al., 2025), others demonstrate that schools with comparable resources may achieve different outcomes because leaders vary in how they prioritise, coordinate, and utilise what is available (Larsson & Löwstedt, 2023; Lowell et al., 2024). Resources therefore matter not only through their availability but also through how effectively they are mobilised for instructional purposes.

Professional learning structures constitute another important organisational condition. Competence based reforming requires sustained teacher learning through mentoring, instructional coaching, collaborative planning, peer observation, and professional learning communities (Hayes et al., 2025; Meyer et al., 2023). Evidence from African contexts indicates that professional dialogue, instructional feedback, and school based professional development strengthen teachers' confidence and capacity to implement CBC (Kidega et al., 2024; Majiwa et al., 2025; Shinda & Banda, 2024). Although externally organised training can provide common understanding of curriculum expectations, its influence on classroom practice may be limited unless reinforced through continuous school based professional learning (Hayes et al., 2025; Lowell et al., 2024). Sustained professional development therefore appears to

depend on both system level guidance and organisational routines that support teacher learning within schools.

Communication similarly shapes leaders' capacity to coordinate curriculum reform. Effective communication promotes shared understanding, instructional coordination, problem solving, and collective ownership among teachers, school leaders, curriculum agencies, governing bodies, and parents (Dingili and Yungungu (2023). While participatory communication can strengthen teacher engagement and professional commitment, leadership also requires clarity of instructional direction (Harris & Jones, 2019; Hallinger, 2025). Effective communication therefore involves balancing professional participation with clear guidance during curriculum implementation.

Governance and stakeholder relationships also influence leadership practice. School leaders operate within networks involving governing bodies, parents, communities, education officers, and curriculum authorities. Strong stakeholder partnerships can enhance resource mobilisation, accountability, and institutional support for curriculum reform (Cheruiyot, 2024; Wanjiru et al., 2026). At the same time, differing expectations among stakeholders may require school leaders to negotiate competing priorities while maintaining support for curriculum implementation. Leadership consequently involves not only coordinating school level activities but also mediating educational priorities within the wider school community.

Organisational climate further determines the extent to which leadership can influence instructional practice. Schools characterised by trust, collegiality, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration provide supportive environments for teacher learning and instructional innovation (Hayes et al., 2025; Meyer et al., 2023). Conversely, fragmented professional relationships, low trust, and rigid hierarchical structures can restrict leaders' influence despite their formal authority. The relationship is reciprocal, leadership contributes to organisational culture, while existing organisational cultures can enable or constrain leadership practice.

Taken together, these organisational influences demonstrate why leadership cannot be treated as a uniform practice across schools. Leadership effectiveness depends on how school leaders interpret and respond to the particular combination of institutional, professional, material, and policy conditions within their contexts (Constantinides, 2023; Larsson & Löwstedt, 2023; Lindkvist, 2024; Hallinger et al., 2022). Evidence from Uganda similarly indicates that school leaders combine instructional guidance, collaborative decision making, administrative coordination, resource mobilisation, and professional support according to contextual demands (Okumu,

2025). Leadership during curriculum reform is therefore better understood as a context responsive organisational practice than as the application of a predetermined leadership model.

Despite these advances, important conceptual, methodological, and contextual gaps remain. Existing research has often examined leadership and organisational factors as separate determinants of curriculum implementation, providing limited understanding of how organisational conditions enable, constrain, and shape leadership practices during curriculum reform (Namubiru et al., 2024; Kachope et al., 2024; Kidega et al., 2024). Methodologically, the predominance of quantitative surveys and correlational designs has established important relationships among leadership, organisational factors, and implementation outcomes but offers less insight into how these relationships are experienced and negotiated within everyday school settings. Although Ugandan research has advanced understanding of teacher preparedness, resources, assessment, and administrative support, limited qualitative evidence explains how school leaders navigate organisational conditions while implementing CBC. Consequently, qualitative inquiry is needed to explain how organisational conditions facilitate or constrain leadership practices as school leaders navigate the everyday demands of CBC implementation within different school contexts.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

This study adopted an exploratory qualitative multiple case study design to examine how leadership practices influenced the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) in selected secondary schools in Nansana Municipality, Uganda. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand how school leaders and teachers experienced, interpreted, and implemented leadership practices within their natural school settings. Consistent with the interpretive paradigm, the study focused on developing an in depth understanding of participants' perspectives and the meanings they attached to leadership during curriculum implementation, rather than on measuring predetermined variables or testing causal relationships (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

A multiple case study design was selected because leadership during CBC implementation is a contemporary organisational phenomenon that is inseparable from the contexts within which it occurs (Yin, 2018). Case study methodology therefore provided an appropriate framework for investigating the complex interactions among leadership practices, organisational conditions, and curriculum implementation in real life

school settings. Each participating secondary school constituted a distinct case, while leadership practices supporting CBC implementation formed the primary unit of analysis.

Three contrasting secondary schools were purposively selected to capture variation in organisational contexts. The inclusion of two private secondary schools and one government aided secondary school enabled both within case and cross case analyses, facilitating the identification of leadership practices that were common across schools while also revealing how organisational contexts determine their enactment. Examining multiple cases strengthened the analytical depth of the study by distinguishing recurring patterns from context specific variations, thereby providing a richer understanding of how leadership influenced the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum under different institutional conditions (Yin, 2018).

3.2 Study setting

The study was conducted in Nansana Municipality, Wakiso District, located in the central region of Uganda. Nansana Municipality is one of the country's rapidly expanding urban municipalities and is characterised by a diverse mix of government aided and private secondary schools serving learners from varied socio economic backgrounds. Like many urban municipalities in Uganda, schools in Nansana have been implementing the Lower Secondary Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) since its nationwide rollout in 2020, making the municipality an appropriate context for examining leadership during curriculum reform.

Nansana Municipality was purposively selected because it presents diverse organisational contexts within a relatively similar policy environment. Although all secondary schools operate under the same national curriculum framework prescribed by the Ministry of Education and Sports and the National Curriculum Development Centre, they differ in ownership, governance structures, resource availability, leadership practices, and organisational cultures. These contextual variations provided an opportunity to examine how leadership practices were implemented across different school settings while implementing the same curriculum reform.

The study focused on three purposively selected secondary schools comprising two private schools and one government aided school. The participating schools had implemented the Competence Based Curriculum for at least three years and had established organisational structures to support curriculum implementation. To maintain confidentiality, the schools are presented using pseudonyms throughout the study.

3.3 Case and Participant Selection

Three secondary schools were purposively selected using a maximum variation sampling strategy to capture diverse organisational contexts in which the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) was implemented. Variation was sought across school ownership, governance arrangements, organisational structures, leadership contexts, and resource availability. Accordingly, the sample comprised two private secondary schools and one government aided secondary school. Each school had implemented CBC for at least three years and had established organisational structures to support curriculum implementation, making them information rich cases capable of generating in depth insights into leadership practices across contrasting institutional settings. Selecting diverse cases enabled the study to identify both common leadership practices and context specific organisational influences on curriculum implementation.

Participants were purposively recruited because of their direct involvement in leading or implementing CBC. The study included three headteachers, three Directors of Studies, and eighteen classroom teachers, with six teachers selected from each school. Headteachers and Directors of Studies were included because of their responsibility for instructional leadership, curriculum coordination, and school level implementation, while teachers were selected because they possessed first hand experience of translating curriculum policy into classroom practice.

Teachers were eligible to participate if they were actively teaching lower secondary classes, had at least two years of experience implementing CBC, and were willing to participate in the study. Within each school, teachers were selected from different subject specialisations to capture diverse perspectives on instructional leadership, professional learning, assessment, collaboration, and the organisational conditions shaping curriculum implementation.

The adequacy of the sample was guided by the principle of information power (Malterud et al., 2016), which proposes that smaller samples are appropriate when the study aim is focused, participants possess specialised knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation, the sample is highly specific, the inquiry is informed by established theory, and the quality of dialogue is rich. These conditions were met in the present study, where participants occupied key instructional roles and provided detailed accounts of leadership during CBC implementation. Consistent with Yin's (2018) multiple case study design, the three cases generated sufficient depth for within case analysis while providing enough variation to facilitate meaningful cross case comparison. Data collection concluded when successive interviews and focus group discussions yielded no substantially new

conceptual insights relevant to the research questions across the three cases.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Semi Structured interviews

Semi structured interviews were conducted with the three Headteachers and three Directors of Studies because they occupied key instructional leadership positions and possessed first hand knowledge of how leadership practices affected the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) within their respective schools. Semi structured interviews were considered appropriate because they enabled an in depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations while providing sufficient flexibility to probe emerging issues, clarify responses, and pursue unanticipated but relevant lines of inquiry (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was conducted in a private office within the participant's school. Conducting the interviews in familiar settings ensured privacy, minimised interruptions, and encouraged participants to discuss their leadership experiences and organisational practices openly.

The interview guide was developed from the study objectives, research questions, and theoretical framework. It explored instructional leadership, teacher professional learning, mentoring, collaboration, communication, competence based assessment, resource mobilisation, and the organisational conditions that facilitated or constrained CBC implementation. Although the guide ensured consistency across the three case schools, the interviews remained flexible and conversational, allowing participants to elaborate on issues they considered important while enabling the researcher to probe emerging ideas and seek clarification where necessary.

3.4.2 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with classroom teachers to explore their shared experiences of leadership and the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC). FGDs were considered appropriate because they enabled participants to reflect collectively on shared experiences, stimulate discussion through group interaction, and generate insights into organisational practices that might not emerge through individual interviews (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Morgan, 2019).

One focus group discussion was conducted in each of the three participating schools, comprising six teachers per group, resulting in a total of three focus groups involving

eighteen teachers. Each discussion lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and was conducted after teaching hours in a private room within the respective school. These arrangements ensured confidentiality, minimised interruptions, and provided participants with a comfortable environment in which to discuss their experiences openly.

The focus groups were deliberately homogeneous, comprising only classroom teachers. Excluding school administrators minimised the influence of organisational hierarchies and encouraged participants to discuss their instructional experiences, leadership support, and curriculum implementation challenges freely without fear of criticism or reprisal (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

The discussion guide was developed from the study objectives, research questions, and theoretical framework and explored the same broad issues addressed during the interviews, including instructional leadership, professional learning, collaboration, competence based assessment, resource mobilisation, and organisational factors influencing CBC implementation. However, unlike the interviews, participants were encouraged to interact with one another, compare experiences, challenge differing perspectives, and introduce issues they considered important. These interactions generated rich, contextually grounded accounts of how leadership practices were collectively experienced and interpreted within each school.

3.4.3 Document Analysis

Document analysis was employed to complement the interview and focus group data by providing an additional source of evidence on leadership practices and the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC). Within qualitative case study research, documentary evidence provides insights into naturally occurring organisational records, enabling researchers to examine institutional policies, routines, and practices while strengthening contextual understanding and the credibility of findings (Bowen, 2009; Yin, 2018).

The documents reviewed included departmental meeting minutes, instructional supervision reports, lesson plans, schemes of work, continuous assessment records, school based professional development plans, and policy documents related to CBC implementation. These documents were purposively selected because they captured organisational processes associated with instructional leadership, teacher professional learning, curriculum planning, instructional supervision, and competence based assessment. Documents were interpreted as organisational artefacts reflecting how schools documented, communicated, and implemented curriculum reform, recognising that they do not constitute objective accounts of school practice.

Document analysis was integrated throughout the analytical process rather than conducted as a separate stage. Documentary evidence was examined alongside interview and focus group data to corroborate participants' accounts, clarify inconsistencies, identify patterns of convergence and divergence, and provide contextual explanations for observed leadership practices. This triangulation of multiple sources of evidence strengthened the credibility, dependability, and richness of the findings while providing a more comprehensive understanding of leadership during CBC implementation (Bowen, 2009; Yin, 2018).

3.5 Ethical Consideration

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study to protect participants' rights, privacy, and confidentiality. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Nansana Municipal Education Office and the headteachers of the participating schools. Before data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and their right to decline participation or withdraw at any stage without penalty. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews and focus group discussions, including consent for audio recording. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms for the participating schools and the removal of information that could identify individual participants. The data collected were securely handled and used solely for the purposes of the study.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2021) six phase framework, that is, familiarisation with the data, coding, generating initial themes, developing and reviewing themes, refining, defining and naming themes, and writing up. This approach was appropriate because the study sought to interpret how school leaders and teachers experienced and understood leadership during the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC). Consistent with reflexive thematic analysis, the researcher adopted an active interpretive role, recognising that themes are constructed through sustained engagement with the data rather than existing as objective entities awaiting discovery. Therefore, the analysis was iterative, recursive and reflexive, allowing movement between the six phases as interpretations developed and prioritising patterns of meaning over coding consensus or inter coder reliability (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Analysis commenced with the verbatim transcription of all interviews and focus group discussions. Documentary evidence was organised alongside the interview transcripts to facilitate the integrated analysis of multiple

data sources. The researcher repeatedly read the transcripts and documents to become thoroughly familiar with the dataset while recording initial reflections and analytical insights through memo writing. This process of immersion enabled a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and the organisational contexts within which they occurred.

Coding was undertaken manually using coding sheets and analytical memos because the volume of data was manageable and manual analysis facilitated close engagement with participants' narratives throughout the interpretive process. The analysis combined deductive and inductive coding strategies. Deductive coding was informed by the study objectives, research questions, and theoretical framework, while inductive coding remained open to unexpected ideas and meanings emerging from participants' accounts. Initial codes were iteratively refined into categories and subsequently developed into themes that captured shared patterns of meaning across the dataset.

Consistent with Yin's (2018) multiple case study approach, the analysis proceeded in two complementary stages. The first involved within case analysis, whereby each school was analysed independently to develop a comprehensive understanding of its organisational context, leadership practices, and experiences of CBC implementation. The second involved cross case analysis, through which similarities and differences across the three schools were systematically compared. This analytical strategy enabled the identification of leadership practices that were common across cases while also revealing context specific variations in the enactment of leadership during curriculum implementation.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Leadership as an instructional rather than administrative practice

Across the three case schools, participants portrayed leadership as shifting from predominantly administrative management towards greater involvement in teaching and learning. Headteachers and Directors of Studies engaged in classroom supervision, teacher mentoring, continuous assessment, professional development, and support for learner centred pedagogy. Participants largely attributed this shift to the demands of the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC), which required school leaders to engage more directly with curriculum implementation. As one headteacher from School A explained, *"the curriculum changed our role from administrators to instructional leaders."*

Although this shift was evident across the cases, leadership practices varied according to school context. School A emphasised mentoring and lesson observation, School B focused on supportive feedback and professional dialogue, while School C placed greater emphasis on monitoring curriculum implementation and supporting teachers. These variations indicate that instructional leadership was enacted differently across schools while maintaining a common focus on improving classroom practice.

Instructional supervision was predominantly described as developmental rather than evaluative. Participants viewed lesson observation as an opportunity for reflection and instructional improvement rather than fault finding. One participant from School A described it as *"a conversation about improving teaching rather than finding mistakes,"* while a teacher from School B explained that *"feedback is given positively because our intention is to improve teaching, not to punish teachers."* Similarly, the Director of Studies in School C stated that *"our work now is to closely monitor CBC implementation and support teachers throughout the process."* These accounts show that supervision combined monitoring with coaching, constructive feedback, and professional support.

Teachers also described school leaders as accessible instructional partners with whom they could discuss classroom challenges and seek guidance. This accessibility strengthened professional dialogue and encouraged shared responsibility for instructional improvement. Across the cases, leadership therefore emerged as an instructional and developmental practice through which school leaders supported teachers in translating CBC requirements into classroom practice.

4.1.2 Professional Learning and Teacher Adaption

Professional learning emerged across the three schools as a key process through which teachers adapted to CBC requirements. Participants reported that initial implementation was characterised by uncertainty because many teachers were unfamiliar with the curriculum's pedagogical and assessment expectations. As one teacher from School B reflected, *"initially we were amateurs with our learners,"* while another observed that *"teachers are still on the journey of understanding CBC."* These experiences highlighted the need for sustained professional learning as teachers adjusted to new instructional expectations.

The three schools supported teacher learning in different ways. School A emphasised mentoring and post observation reflection, School B relied more on external workshops followed by school based knowledge sharing, while School C emphasised departmental collaboration and peer support. Across the cases, however, professional learning extended beyond formal

workshops to become embedded in teachers' everyday professional interactions.

Departmental meetings were particularly important spaces for exchanging instructional ideas, discussing implementation challenges, reviewing assessment practices, and sharing classroom experiences. As one teacher from School A explained, *"we learn from one another through departmental meetings, peer learning and discussions after classroom observation."* Teachers who attended external workshops also shared acquired knowledge with colleagues, extending professional learning beyond individual participants.

These findings indicate that teacher adaptation to CBC developed through a combination of formal training and continuous school based learning. By creating opportunities for mentoring, collaboration, reflection, and knowledge sharing, school leaders supported the gradual development of teachers' confidence and instructional capacity to implement CBC.

4.1.3 Leadership Promoted Learner centered Pedagogical Transformation

Participants across the three schools described a gradual shift from teacher centred instruction towards learner centred pedagogy following the introduction of the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC). Group discussions, project work, presentations, practical activities, collaborative learning, peer assessment, and continuous assessment became more prominent in classroom practice. Teachers associated this transition with leadership support that encouraged them to adopt the pedagogical expectations of CBC.

Teachers also described changes in their professional roles, with greater emphasis on facilitating inquiry, collaboration, and problem solving. As one teacher from School C explained, *"the role of the teacher has changed from teaching to guiding learners,"* while another observed that *"learners are expected to discover and create knowledge instead of simply receiving it."* Similarly, teachers in School B noted that *"the teacher is no longer the centre of knowledge,"* as learners became more involved in research, collaboration, and classroom presentations.

Although this pedagogical shift was evident across the cases, its expression varied. School A emphasised classroom participation and continuous assessment, School B highlighted collaborative learning, learner research, and presentations, while School C placed greater emphasis on learner independence, practical activities, and the application of knowledge in authentic contexts. Participants also associated these practices with improvements in learners' confidence, communication, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. As one teacher from School C observed, *"different learners*

discover different talents and skills that were never visible before." Projects, presentations, practical tasks, and continuous assessment also enabled teachers to monitor learner progress and provide feedback.

Overall, learner centred pedagogy emerged as a visible expression of leadership support for CBC implementation. By supporting instructional innovation and teachers' adaptation of classroom practices, school leaders contributed to learning environments characterised by greater learner participation and responsibility for learning.

4.1.4 Organizational and Systemic Constraints to CBC Implementation

Despite acknowledging the contribution of school leadership, participants identified organisational and systemic conditions that constrained CBC implementation. Across the schools, resource shortages, limited ICT infrastructure, financial constraints, heavy workloads, overcrowded classrooms, and inconsistent policy guidance affected learner centred teaching and competence based assessment.

The emphasis varied across the cases. School A participants highlighted shortages of instructional materials and inadequate funding for practical activities. In School B, concern centred on changing curriculum guidance, with one teacher explaining that *"teachers don't know what to teach because the guidance keeps changing."* Participants in School C similarly reported inconsistencies in directives from education agencies, with one observing that *"sometimes we receive different instructions from NCDC and UNEB."* These accounts indicate that implementation difficulties arose from both school level conditions and wider policy processes.

Participants also reported that learner centred teaching and continuous assessment increased teachers' workload through the preparation of practical activities, assessment tasks, record keeping, and individual learner support. Resource shortages intensified these demands. As one teacher from School B remarked, *"improvisation is important, but it cannot solve every problem,"* illustrating the limits of school level responses where specialised resources were unavailable.

School leaders responded by encouraging improvisation, mobilising available resources, supporting teacher collaboration, and maintaining instructional support. However, participants acknowledged that some challenges exceeded the capacity of individual schools to address. CBC implementation was therefore shaped by the interaction between school leadership and the wider organisational and systemic conditions within which schools operated.

4.1.5 Leadership Fostered Teacher Agency and Organizational Learning

Participants also described leadership as contributing to organisational cultures in which teachers assumed greater responsibility for curriculum implementation. Mentoring, peer learning, reflective dialogue, and collaborative problem solving enabled teachers to exchange knowledge, address instructional challenges, and share responsibility for improving classroom practice.

Teachers demonstrated professional activity through peer mentoring, sharing instructional resources, experimenting with learner centred approaches, and developing collaborative responses to implementation challenges. As one teacher from School A explained, *“we should not close the door to innovation or new ideas because of CBC.”* This reflected teachers’ willingness to participate actively in adapting instructional practice rather than depending solely on formal training or leadership direction.

Collaboration nevertheless took different forms across the schools. School A participants emphasised innovation and the exchange of instructional experiences, School B highlighted teamwork and collective problem solving, while School C emphasised reflective discussions following lesson observations. These variations illustrate how collaborative learning developed according to each school's organisational context.

Leadership also supported adaptation where organisational constraints limited implementation. Participants described teachers modifying instructional approaches, improvising materials, reorganising classroom activities, and developing locally appropriate responses to resource limitations. By allowing room for professional judgement and experimentation, school leaders supported teachers in adapting CBC requirements to their contexts.

Overall, leadership contributed to organisational cultures characterised by professional collaboration, teacher agency, and adaptive practice. These processes strengthened teachers’ collective capacity to respond to implementation challenges and sustain CBC within their respective school contexts.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Leadership as a driver of organizational change rather than Administrative Compliance

The findings indicate that CBC implementation repositioned school leadership from predominantly administrative management towards greater instructional

engagement. Headteachers and Directors of Studies became directly involved in supporting instructional practice and teacher professional learning, positioning leadership as a mechanism through which curriculum policy was translated into everyday school practice.

This finding is consistent with Fullan's Educational Change Theory, which emphasises capacity building and professional learning as central to sustainable educational change (Fullan, 2007, 2020), and with Hallinger's (2025) conception of instructional leadership, which positions school leaders as active participants in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. While Ugandan studies have identified instructional supervision and professional support as important to CBC implementation (Namubiru et al., 2024; Kachope et al., 2024), the present study extends this evidence by showing how leadership became embedded in teachers' everyday professional practice through mentoring, reflective dialogue, classroom based coaching, and instructional support. The study therefore contributes to existing scholarship by demonstrating that leadership facilitates curriculum reform not merely through administrative oversight but by building the professional and organisational capacity through which policy is translated into instructional practice.

4.2.2 Professional Learning as a Link Between Leadership and Pedagogical Change

Professional learning emerged as a key pathway through which teachers adapted their practice to CBC requirements. Opportunities for collaborative planning, peer learning, reflective dialogue, and professional inquiry enabled teachers to interpret unfamiliar pedagogical and assessment expectations, test new approaches, and refine their practice over time. This suggests that changes in classroom instruction developed through sustained professional learning rather than through curriculum directives alone.

This finding supports Fullan's (2007, 2020) conception of educational change as a process of continuous learning and resonates with Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, which emphasises the social construction of knowledge through interaction and shared experience. Teachers' pedagogical understanding developed through engagement with colleagues, making adaptation a collective as well as an individual process. This interpretation is consistent with international evidence that sustained, school based professional learning can contribute more meaningfully to instructional improvement than isolated training activities (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

The influence of this learning process was reflected in teachers' reported use of collaborative learning, inquiry, practical activities, and dependable assessment. This

finding is consistent with Robinson et al. (2008), who argue that leadership can affect learning through its influence on teachers' instructional practice. However, variation across the three schools indicates that pedagogical change was gradual and shaped by how teachers interpreted, experimented with, and adapted CBC expectations within their contexts. The study therefore adds to existing scholarship by identifying professional learning as the connecting process through which leadership support was converted into pedagogical change during CBC implementation

4.2.3 Organizational and systemic conditions Shaped Leadership effectiveness

Leadership effectiveness varied according to the organisational and systemic conditions surrounding CBC implementation. Resource shortages, limited ICT infrastructure, heavy workloads, overcrowded classrooms, and inconsistent policy guidance restricted what school leaders could accomplish, even where there was commitment to instructional improvement. This indicates that leadership does not operate independently of context, its capacity to support curriculum reform is mediated by the material, institutional, and policy environments within which schools function.

This interpretation is consistent with Fullan's Educational Change Theory (2007, 2020), which places educational change within the interaction of leadership, organisational capacity, and systemic support. It also aligns with evidence from Sub Saharan Africa identifying resource limitations, teacher preparedness, and policy inconsistency as persistent challenges to competency based curriculum reform (Orodho et al., 2021; Wambua et al., 2025). The present study, however, shows that leaders exercised intervention within these constraints by mobilising available resources, encouraging improvisation, and coordinating local responses to implementation challenges. Such strategies enabled schools to manage some difficulties but could not overcome structural deficiencies requiring system level intervention.

The study therefore contributes a contextual understanding of leadership effectiveness by showing that the influence of school leaders is neither fixed nor autonomous but emerges from the interaction between leadership practice and the organisational and systemic conditions surrounding curriculum implementation.

4.2.4 Leadership Built Organizational Capacity through Teacher Agency and Collective Learning

A further contribution of the study is that teachers emerged as active participants in CBC implementation rather than passive recipients of leadership direction. They shared instructional knowledge, mentored colleagues, experimented with teaching approaches, and

participated in collective problem solving. These practices indicate that leadership became distributed across professional relationships, enabling teachers to actively contribute to the school's capacity to respond to implementation challenges.

This finding resonates with Spillane's (2006) distributed leadership perspective, which conceptualises leadership as emerging through interactions among multiple organisational actors rather than existing solely in formal positions. Although headteachers and Directors of Studies provided direction, teachers contributed through peer support, professional initiative, and instructional experimentation. The study therefore extends understanding of CBC implementation by showing that sustaining curriculum reform depends partly on leadership creating space for teachers to exercise professional activity and assume collective responsibility for change.

4.3 Practical Educational Implications

The findings have practical implications for school leaders, teachers, students, and education authorities involved in competence based curriculum reform. For school leaders, they highlight the importance of approaching curriculum implementation as an instructional and organisational process rather than primarily an administrative responsibility. Creating supportive conditions for professional learning and teacher participation can strengthen teachers' capacity to interpret curriculum expectations and adapt their instructional practices.

For teachers, the findings highlight the value of professional activities, collaborative learning, and reflective practice in translating curriculum expectations into classroom practice. Such environments can support learner centred teaching while providing students with greater opportunities for active participation, inquiry, collaboration, problem solving, and practical application of knowledge. Although learner performance was not directly examined, the study indicates that the professional and organisational conditions surrounding teachers are important to the quality of students' learning experiences.

At the school levels, effective instructional leadership requires coherent policy guidance, adequate resources, and sustained institutional support. Translating curriculum policy into classroom practice therefore depends on the alignment of school leadership, teacher capacity, organisational support, and system level policy. The findings emphasise that curriculum reform requires investment in school level capacity alongside changes in curriculum and policy.

5. Conclusions, and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study explored how leadership practices influenced the implementation of Uganda's Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) in three secondary schools in Nansana Municipality. The findings indicate that leadership supported curriculum implementation through instructional guidance, teacher professional learning, collaboration, and the creation of conditions conducive to learner centred pedagogy. However, the effectiveness of these practices was shaped by organisational and systemic conditions, particularly resource availability, policy coherence, and sustained professional support.

The study's distinctive contribution lies in explaining how leadership influences CBC implementation as an organisational process rather than merely establishing that leadership matters. It shows that organisational and systemic conditions shape leaders' capacity to support professional learning, while professional learning and teacher activities enable curriculum expectations to be translated into classroom practice. This extends Fullan's Educational Change Theory by illustrating how instructional leadership, organisational conditions, and collective professional capacity interact in sustaining curriculum reform. CBC implementation should therefore be understood as a socially and organisationally situated process in which leadership effectiveness depends on both the professional capacity developed within schools and the wider conditions supporting educational change.

5.2 Limitations of the study

This study was limited to three purposively selected secondary schools in Nansana Municipality, comprising two private schools and one government aided school. Given the qualitative multiple case design and context specific nature of the study, the findings are intended to provide in depth understanding rather than statistical generalisation to all secondary schools in Uganda. In addition, the study relied primarily on participants' accounts, focus group discussions, and documentary evidence, which may not fully capture all dimensions of leadership and classroom practice. Nevertheless, the inclusion of headteachers, Directors of Studies, and teachers across contrasting school contexts, together with the use of multiple data sources, provided opportunities for triangulation and strengthened the credibility of the findings.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. School leaders should institutionalise continuous school based professional learning by providing regular opportunities for mentoring, peer learning, collaborative lesson planning, reflective dialogue, and school based professional development that complement externally organised training and strengthen teachers' capacity to implement the Competence Based Curriculum effectively.
2. Secondary schools should strengthen instructional and collaborative leadership by maintaining a clear focus on teaching and learning, involving teachers in instructional decision making, promoting professional collaboration, and creating supportive conditions for teachers to adapt their practices to emerging curriculum demands.
3. The Ministry of Education and Sports, National Curriculum Development Centre, and Uganda National Examinations Board should strengthen coordination and provide clear guidance on curriculum implementation and assessment to reduce ambiguity and enable school leaders and teachers to respond consistently to CBC requirements.
4. Government and school governing bodies should strengthen the provision of instructional materials, ICT facilities, practical learning resources, appropriate staffing, and support for continuous assessment, while school leaders should strategically prioritise and align available resources with instructional needs to support effective CBC implementation.
5. Future research should examine leadership practices and CBC implementation across a wider range of schools, geographical settings, and school ownership categories using longitudinal and mixed methods designs to establish how leadership practices and organisational conditions evolve over time and their potential implications for curriculum implementation and learner outcomes.

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