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Exploring Kiswahili Competence-Based Curriculum Teaching-Learning Approaches in Secondary Schools in Ndurwa West County, Uganda

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Abstract

Uganda rolled out the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) in 2020, replacing traditional teacher-centred approaches aiming at developing key learner competencies, values, and transferable skills. However, previous research has not established subject-based instructional adaptation as well as teachers' awareness of student-centred learning, failing to translate into classroom practice. The study purpose was to explore Kiswahili Teaching-Learning approaches in the Competence-Based Curriculum in secondary schools in Ndurwa West County, Uganda. The two objectives explored the Competency-Based Curriculum teaching approaches and examined teachers' understanding of Student-Centred Teaching in Kiswahili Teaching-Learning in Ndurwa West County, Uganda. The study was guided by constructivist learning theory as advanced by Jean Piaget, which emphasises active learner collaboration in the construction of knowledge. A qualitative phenomenological design was adopted within a constructivist paradigm. Using purposive and expert sampling techniques, data saturation was reached with six (06) Headteachers and Thirteen (13) Kiswahili teachers. Data were collected using semi-structured interview guides and classroom observation checklists that were thematically analysed. The study found that CBC Kiswahili instructional approaches largely reflected learner-centred practices of peer learning and continuous real-time assessments. This increased learner engagement and improved their Kiswahili language proficiency. Teachers' positive CBC experiences highlighted the pedagogical potential of student-centred approaches in enhancing meaningful learning outcomes amidst contextual barriers constraining effective CBC implementation. The study concluded that while student-

centred Kiswahili instructional approaches were evident in Ndorwa West County, CBC implementation remains partial and uneven due to structural and institutional limitations. The study recommended that policymakers, school administrators, and teachers strengthen collaboration and address challenges through professional development, realistic resource allocation, and enhanced institutional support to realise the full potential of the CBC for effective Kiswahili language learning

Key terms: Kiswahili, Teaching-Learning approaches, Competence-Based Curriculum, Secondary Schools.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Quality education is central for sustainable development through training competent human capital irrespective of the social, culture, and economic structural setbacks, a core achievement for competence-based inclusive education to survive the challenges. Kesici and Çavuş (2019) report education institutions adopt learner-focused learning approaches, resources, and actual learning practices to develop and complement necessary learner competencies. However, Sakata, Bremner and Cameron, (2022) reports overreliance on teacher-centredness in most of the learning settings across Africa attributed to multiple setbacks in individual schools, classrooms, policy applications, and the broader community-level challenges.

Suzuki (2014) explains that developed countries have embraced practice-based learning for joint efforts in sustainable community development. A curriculum shift to practical and active learning is core to competence development and applying the acquired skills. Nurin, Noor and Bakar (2025) add that learner-centred curriculum embraces practical learning and the application of real-life skills favoured by practical learning practices and environment. Curriculum modifications to practical and learner-centredness facilitate learner participation, supporting satisfactory competence acquisition important for embracing learner-centred instruction in educational institutions, (Aladawi, 2020).

Simarmata and Mayuni (2023) explains that developed countries have acknowledged the value of a practical-oriented curriculum to provide learning opportunities in both officially and informally designed curriculum settings, with emphasis on achieving the learning competencies and skills. The curriculum reforms prepares education systems for realistic and contextualised education practices. Fufa, Tulu and Ensene, (2023) report concur that embracing practice-based education encountered setbacks and potholes due to preparation oversight and structural mismatches in Ethiopia.

In Kenya, Orina (2022) affirms that embracing practical and skill-based education in schools prioritised teacher training to facilitate learner competence development and achievement. This champions teachers value for the success and effectiveness of the curriculum and instruction processes, in learning instructional approaches, preparation for learning, and implementation (Koskei & Chepchumba, 2020). Similarly, Nyarango (2021) concurs that a well-prepared learning environment supports learners' motivation and mindset preparedness to learn. Nonetheless, teachers with limited skills and capabilities worsens the actual implementation of the curricula, (Ayoti, Koteng & Ong'unya, 2023; Mutua & Waweru, 2023).

Similarly, Nsenga and Andala (2022) report effective implementation of practical-centred curricula for enhanced learner participation in Rwanda to achieve the skills and competences. However, Kwok and Singal, (2021) acknowledge a necessity for validated CBC implementation for competence achievement,

monitoring and assessment aligning with learning goals, learner capabilities, and instructional materials. Oketch (2023) affirm that practical and competence-based instructional strategies lacked in school settings in Tanzania attributed to insufficient instructional materials and the mis-implementation of the Government's set standards.

Uganda's 2020 curriculum shift from the teacher-centred instruction system aimed at guaranteeing inclusive learning, active learning, competency development, transfer and construction of knowledge in learning, (MoES, 2020). In relation to CBC, Vaičiūnienė and Kazlauskienė, (2022) and Umar (2020) acknowledge that learning classrooms that embrace active, collaborative, learner-centred approaches assist the learners' construction of new knowledge, skills and competencies. Teacher-centred pedagogies is a purposeful strategy in elevating and supporting learner participation (Mugizi, Katuramu, Dafiewhare & Kanyesigye, 2021). This aligns with the CBC's domains of key learning outcomes, values, generic skills, and cross-cutting issues (NCDC, 2021). In contrast, Bwiruka (2023) affirm that Ugandan universities' curriculum pedagogies have not satisfactorily adjusted to competencies for the 21st-century era pedagogies and real-life practices for producing relevant CBC implementers.

Contextual studies in Kabale District and Ndorwa county indicate that CBC implementation requires multifaced prerequisites ranging from pedagogical competency, sufficient human resource, instructional materials, time and infrastructure such as classrooms, (Tumuheise et al., 2023). Additionally, Peter, (2025) and Mugabe, (2023) acknowledge that library readiness in secondary schools and ICT integration plays a core role in learning for CBC implementation. However, challenges in the implementation of CBC still persist unlike government and individual schools' preparedness in staff retooling, resource allocation, and pedagogies, (Muhwezi, 2023).

Kiswahili was accorded a second official language status in Uganda after English, and it was added to the curriculum in 2006 (Jjingo & Visser, 2020; The Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003). The Government White Paper (1993) stipulated that Kiswahili and English be mandatory subjects of study in all school settings in urban and rural areas of Uganda. Kiswahili became compulsory in the lower secondary education curriculum (ordinary level) (MoES, 2010; NCDC, 2021). Existing studies have focused on Kiswahili curriculum development, particularly the inclusion of the alphabet in the syllabus and examining policy recommendations (Jjingo & Visser, 2020; 2017). Similarly, Muhindo (2026) focused on the political dimensions in the implementation of policies in the advancement of Kiswahili in Uganda education setting. Also, studies have cited insufficient pedagogical resources as negatively affecting the implementation and realisation of the envisioned CBC (Tumuheise, Ssempala & Twinamasiko, 2023). Teachers' competencies to effect the curriculum adjustments for active learner-centred pedagogies deficits teaching Kiswahili, (Arishaba & Balimuttajjo, 2024). This study **contextualized on Kiswahili education to explore the implemented teaching-learning approaches in the CBC in secondary schools**.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Revision and implementation of curriculum pedagogical approaches globally has attracted global attention in an effort to improve and achieve learner skilling and competency development. Uganda introduced CBC and shifted from the teacher-centred curriculum in 2020 for enhanced learner participation, critical thinking, cooperation and practicability in language use to develop practical learning skills (NCDC, 2021). National Curriculum Development Centre of Uganda rolled out Kiswahili as a compulsory subject at the lower secondary level, embracing the need and value of executing a practical curriculum for social transformation (NCDC, 2021; MoES, 2020). The setting context of Ndorwa West County is a dominantly rural area of Runyankore-Rukiga speakers, which presents unique instructional demands for Kiswahili. Studies have focused on general factors for CBC implementation, (Tumuheise et

al., 2023); library readiness for CBC implementation, (Peter, 2025); ICT integration in CBC, (Mugabe, 2023) and challenges in the implementation of CBC in business subjects, (Muhwezi, 2023). Studies have not focused on Kiswahili language instruction under CBC. **This necessitated exploration of** Kiswahili teaching and learning approaches in the Competence-Based Curriculum in secondary schools in Ndorwa West County, Uganda.

1.3 Research Objectives

(i). To explore the Competency-Based Curriculum Teaching Approaches adopted in Kiswahili Classroom Lessons in secondary schools in Ndorwa West County, Uganda.

(ii). To examine teachers' understand Student-Centred Teaching in Kiswahili Teaching-Learning secondary schools in Ndorwa West County, Uganda.

1.4 Research Questions

(i). What is the Competency-Based Curriculum Teaching Approaches adopted in Kiswahili Classroom Lessons in secondary schools in Ndorwa West County, Uganda.

(ii). What are the teachers' Understand Student-Centred Teaching in Kiswahili Teaching-Learning secondary schools in Ndorwa West County, Uganda.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is helpful to the stakeholders in education implementing Active Teaching and Learning (ATL) and collaborative pedagogical practices and approaches supporting realistic curriculum implementation in learning institutions. The study is important for the educators on adopting the relevant pedagogical practices, methods, approaches and materials for assuring learners' skills and competency identification, development and achievement. This support for the CBC tenets to purposefully identify, develop and achieve learners' skills and competence for practical application in real-life problem solving.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The review, analysis and synthesis of the previous related studies was contextualised on Competency-Based Curriculum Kiswahili teaching-learning approaches, teacher experiences of CBC Kiswahili teaching, and the barriers teachers faced in the adoption of learner-centred instruction in the Competence-Based Curriculum.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study adopted a constructivist learning theory advanced by Jean Piaget (1964). It views learning as an active construction of knowledge, skills and competences shaped by prior existing knowledge and insights. Constructionism considers knowledge as an outcome of practical orientations rather than being considered as an outcome of reality through shaping models and making transformations. Piaget (1964) suggested that learning is built on coordination between a situation (stimulus) that awakens (elicits) responses affecting the way we observe the world and knowledge construction. External stimuli influence humans' thinking about an object by acquiring new knowledge and changing cognitive information to take up new concepts from their surroundings (Alhabib, 2021). Constructivist approaches in classrooms support constructing and sharing new knowledge and ideas collaboratively, making teachers facilitators rather than actual instructors in the study in progress. This implies that teachers must restructure and adjust pedagogical approaches and practices to align with the learners' understanding and conceptualization of the contexts taught through learners' prior experiences, active, collaborative and

learner-centred approaches for the construction of new knowledge, skills and competencies (Vaičiūnienė & Kazlauskienė, 2022). This creates a participatory democracy in a classroom setting to provide meaningful and realistic learning for the autonomy of learners in developing individualised learning and competencies for daily challenges. The study acknowledged the constructionist worldview (Alhabib, 2021; Piaget, 1964) that knowledge construction is a shared process between the teacher-facilitators and learners in sharing knowledge in learning.

2.2 The Competency-Based Curriculum Teaching Approaches

Hettithanthri and Hansen (2021) studied student-centred learning approaches in Architectural Design Education and observed an emphasis on student-centred learning, collaborative engagement, reflective assessment, and active participation in the learning process. This implies that teachers' supplementing instruction with relevant assessment methods helps students realise their learning potential while enabling teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching process. However, Hettithanthri and Hansen (2021) focused on Architectural Program students in Jordan within a university context, which differs from the secondary school context that is the focus of the current study.

Sisternans' (2020) study on the Integration of CBE in Health Sciences Studies showed teachers' use of problem-based learning approach in their teaching implying that students are the focal point with the aim of developing competency and skills. Problem-based learning facilitates group discussions, brainstorming sessions, peer evaluations, and collaborative learning, all of which deepen and enrich learning and improve interpersonal, communicative, and self-reflection skills necessary for a workplace in the twenty-first century.

Boateng, Ankrah and Manteaw's (2023) study on Competence-Based Education in Teaching Agriculture in Ghana found that instructors used hands-on pedagogy to teach the curriculum unlike insufficient teaching facilities and teacher resources that limited the application of CBC pedagogy. This means that competence-based instructional pedagogies that adopt a learner-centred approach to be effective require the combined efforts of teachers, students, and material providers. Also, Njagi's (2020) observed that the competency-based curriculum lacked adequate instructional materials for the learners' in-depth understanding in Kenyan primary schools. However, the study was situated in a primary school setting, whereas this study adopted a qualitative methodology to establish **the student-centred Kiswahili teaching-learning approaches, the teachers' experiences with these approaches, and the teachers' implementation of these approaches** in the competence-based curriculum.

Existing literature concur that CBC reforms have championed emphasis on learner-centred pedagogies for active learning, participation, critical thinking, problem-solving and competency-focused assessments irrespective of the instructional material inadequacies and contextual constraints compromising effective implementation (Hettithanthri & Hansen, 2021; Njagi, 2020; Sisternans, 2020; Boateng, Ankrah & Manteaw, 2023). Though these studies have established the worth of adopting to learner-centredness in learning and constraining situations, they were focused in non-Kiswahili disciplines and learning levels. This presents shallow understanding of the applicability in secondary schools in Kiswahili discipline which was a focus of this research on learner-centred Kiswahili-teaching learning approaches, and the way teacher' experience these approaches in CBC implementation.

2.3 The teachers' understanding of Student-Centred teaching in Kiswahili Teaching-Learning

Catacutan, Abendan, Kilag, Diano, Tiongzon, and Malbas (2023) studied Competence-Based Curriculum development in a Globalised Education Landscape, noting that it emphasises the positive impact of competence-based education on learners, enhancing students in problem-solving, critical thinking, and

adaptability, aligning with the evolving needs of a globalised society, emphasising real-world application and experiential learning, further igniting learner motivation and engagement. Arguably, Catacutan et al.'s study shows the milestones that can be achieved once CBC is well implemented, thereby tuning learners to the dynamics of daily life. Concurrently, Oluwafunmilola (2024) established that student-centred teaching-learning approach facilitates effective learning practice observed across different aspects of a learner's development, with real-world implications.

Wafubwa (2021) examined the implementation of the competence-based curriculum in Kenya and observed that competence-based education is an important approach for equipping learners with practical skills, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities needed in the 21st century. This imply that effective curriculum implementation requires learner-centred teaching approaches, appropriate assessment practices, and adequate teacher preparation. Similarly, Phan (2024) study observed that teachers' positive involvement in helping students' learning skills and their supportive roles facilitate student autonomy, regardless of the implementation difficulty. Implementation of the CBC programme is possible through teacher professional development, the availability of resources, the development of expertise, and the material knowledge they need to grow personally and effectively, supporting the autonomy of their students.

Nsengimana's (2021) study on the implementation of a Competence-based Curriculum in Rwanda found that the curriculum faced challenges, including a lack of teaching and learning materials, laboratory equipment, and chemical reagents. Arguably, the successful implementation of the curriculum requires both resources and pedagogical skills. Also, Hakizimana's (2020) study in Rwanda found teachers positive perceptions though they needed support. This means that teachers need support to connect their perceptions and practices with existing policies to make entrepreneurship education more effective. The current study will focus on exploring student-centred Kiswahili teaching and learning approaches within the competence-based curriculum in secondary schools in Ndorwa West County, Uganda.

Kanyonga, Mtana, and Wendt's (2019) study on the Implementation of a Competence-Based Curriculum in Technical Colleges of Arusha City in Tanzania shows that CBET was introduced without the necessary preparations with the majority of trainers having limited awareness and understanding of competency-based education, limiting the effective implementation. Concurrently, Kabanga, Mugimu and Oonyu (2019) explored pedagogical practices used in Competence-Based Education (CBE) Training of Nurses and Midwives in Uganda and observed staffing, inadequate resources, and poor support for trainees impeding the application of appropriate pedagogical approaches in CBE training. The current research will thus focus on secondary school students and on Kiswahili language teaching and learning under the CBC approach in Ugandan settings.

Analytical review of existing literature shows converging view that teachers' understanding, preparedness, support and resources adequacy are vital for the effective learner-centred pedagogies, (Phan, 2024; Wafubwa, 2021; Kanyonga et al., 2019). However, these studies expose a divergence between positive teachers' perceptions of CBC pedagogies and their actual classroom execution especially due to resource constraints and teacher preparedness and competency inconsistencies (Nsengimana, 2021; Hakizimana, 2020; Kabanga et al., 2019). Notably, these studies were done outside Uganda's Kiswahili education context which makes them provide insufficient understanding of teachers' experiences with student-centred approaches in secondary school Kiswahili classrooms. This literature addressed the study in areas of teachers' understanding of student-centred Kiswahili teaching, their experiences in using these approaches, and their implementation of the approaches within the CBC, however, this study focused on a Uganda secondary schools' setting in Ndorwa West County, addressing the contextual and subject-specific gaps.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research study was done in secondary schools of Ndoorwa West County, Kabale District, in South-Western Uganda due to its limited empirical evidence on CBC Kiswahili teaching-learning and the dominance of traditional instructional methods (Tumuheise et al., 2023).

3.1 Research Design

This study was guided by a qualitative phenomenology design suitable for the exploration and interpretation of the research problem through participants' experiences, meanings, and perspectives within their real-life contexts (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). Phenomenology study design in the constructivist paradigm was important in obtaining rich, contextualised, and in-depth information in a holistic school and classroom setting to understand the instructional practices of the CBC Kiswahili implementation.

3.2 Target Population and Sample Size

This research study targeted a population of all the language teachers and Headteachers in the secondary schools of Ndoorwa West County, Kabale District, as they implement the CBC instructional system. A sample size was achieved through data saturation, with a range of six (6) Headteachers and thirteen (13) teachers. The study adopted purposive sampling, including participants with reliable and in-depth data about the research questions (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The study adopted a classroom observation checklist and semi-structured interview guides to holistically understand Kiswahili teaching-learning instruction within CBC in the historical setting.

3.3 Research Instruments

The researcher adopted a classroom observation checklist and semi-structured interview guides to holistically understand Kiswahili teaching-learning instruction within CBC in the historical setting, secondary schools in Ndoorwa West County, Uganda. Classroom observation guides helped to generate contextually rich and in-depth data guided by the study objectives in a holistic, historical and systematic observation of classroom practices. Qualitative interview guides also explored rich and in-depth information and maintained the researchers' focus on the research objectives that explored the Competency-Based Curriculum teaching approaches, and **examined** teachers understand Student-Centred Teaching in Kiswahili Teaching-Learning secondary schools in Ndoorwa West County, Uganda.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection is a procedure of collecting and generating data on the variables of the study to respond to the study questions and objectives, (Dash, 2017). The researcher obtained authorisation from Moi University, Board of the School of Graduate Studies (BSGS), to apply for a research permit from the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST), obtain local permits and access the field to conduct a study in Kabale District, Ndoorwa West County. The research documents were presented to the Secondary schools' authorities to access participating schools, and prioritising participants' written consent, voluntariness, privacy, confidentiality, anonymity and protection from any harm in the research process. Teachers were provided with codes TA (Teacher A) and HTA (Headteacher A) for the Headteachers, with additional numbers like Teacher A1 (TA1) where teachers were many, for privacy and anonymity.

3.5 Data Processing and Analysis

The field qualitative data generated with the aid of semi-structured interviews and classroom observation guides by engaging the Kiswahili teachers and Headteachers were cross-checked, errors identified, and data cleaned to prepare for analysis. The researcher adopted qualitative thematic analysis for semi-structured interviews and classroom observation data, from **data familiarisation** to identifying the participants' views with relevant data patterns to generate initial codes, searching, reviewing and redefining names of themes and writing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Involving participants' direct quotes generated and gathered from the field was important for clear and impartial explanations of the field information to develop truthful themes and report.

Confirming trustworthiness ensured the strengths of the study findings and their applicability (Sirwan, 2024; Stahl & King, 2020). The researcher triangulated data generation methods, data sources, and participant categories. The researcher involved expert reviewers, who were the supervisors, to ensure accuracy, consistency and objectivity of the findings. The researcher's reflexivity, triangulation of research instruments and data sources, maintaining audit trails and impartial interpretation of data strengthened unbiased data collection, interpretation and reporting. Guarding against ethical misconduct ensured ethical standards and an accurate account of the study results, conclusions, and recommendations (Creswell, 2014).

4.0 STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study mainly explored student-centred Kiswahili teaching and learning approaches within the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) in secondary schools of Uganda in Ndoorwa West County. Data saturation was attained at six headteacher interviews and thirteen classroom observations while focusing on Kiswahili lessons in secondary schools of Ndoorwa West County.

4.1 Competency-Based Curriculum Teaching Approaches Adopted in Kiswahili Classroom Lessons in Secondary Schools of Ndoorwa West County

To achieve this objective, the researcher conducted interviews and classroom observations to observe the progress of Kiswahili lessons with a focus on the context of CBC-recommended approaches that teachers implemented in their daily teaching arrangements. Participants were assigned alphabet codes for privacy and confidentiality.

Focused Group Discussions

These are approaches where teaching and learning are prepared, conducted and assessed as a learning group in the classroom or outside the classroom. Teachers frequently mentioned that focused group discussions are an essential component of the CBC approach in Kiswahili classrooms. They considered it an effective way to promote collaboration and ensure learners practised the language actively.

TB1: *"You see these students; you labour and give them notes and they relax. For me in this new system, CBC, what I do, I formed groups of 10-10-10 but group members are twisted in every lesson. Now, I do divide the topic segments in questions that are assigned to each particular group. Because as the students are interacting in a move to solve the items, they learn a lot. They seriously become active and engage within their groups"*

From the data above, group discussions were embraced in Kiswahili classrooms. This shows a positive indicator as it embodies the CBC principle of **collaborative learning**. This presents learners with discovery and critical thinking, and develops communication skills. This practice is relevant for Kiswahili and CBC as it offers interactive learning, as learners practice language use interactively rather than

memorising grammar rules. Collaborative learning opportunities enhance language practice, engagement, and peer learning (Arishaba & Balimuttajjo, 2024; Ayoti, Koteng & Ong'unya, 2023). An important insight is that group discussions distribute responsibility, allowing teachers to manage large classes more effectively. This implies that Kiswahili teachers have to be equipped with how to balance groups, monitor interactions, and assess participation to minimise off-task chats in learning.

Role Play and Drama

Role-play and drama are systematic approaches to engaging learners in making classroom presentations. This approach can contextualise teaching and learning to real-life situations, making learners actively participate in learning and develop their competencies. Teachers enacted role-play to make learning engaging, as data evidenced.

TC: *"Quite interesting with this CBC system is that multiple approaches can fit in. You know, our classes have those learners who are 'role-takers'; they can simply take part in making demonstrations for the others. And, mind you, role-playing and making a dramatic presentation, such as a medical worker, a patient, a businessman, etc can make learners understand far better in their own situations. Learners develop Kiswahili skills and enjoy learning rather than when I only explain"*

The participant data above evidenced the adoption of role-playing in Kiswahili classrooms during instruction. Relevance to CBC is that the approach can transform the classroom learning setting into a **real-world communication laboratory for concept comprehension**. This benefits learners to practice Kiswahili beyond rote memorisation to **functional language use**. The use of drama and role-play aligns with Yusoff, Karim, Othman, Mohin & Rahman (2013), who show that performing increases learner motivation, retention, and application of language in real-life contexts. Teachers have to invest time in preparing realistic learning scenarios, guiding learners' performances, and linking role-plays to curricular goals to successfully build vocabulary and **boost learner confidence and creativity**.

Cultural and Literary Activities

This engages the aspects of culture intertwined in literary scenarios for achieving learning. This means that teachers who have to think beyond Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) recommendations and tenets incorporate resourceful traditional oral literature into their teaching, making lessons more engaging and culturally relevant. This was evidenced in teacher-participant data:

TA2: *"Now, you see most of our classrooms are multicultural, with students from varying backgrounds. So, for me, I share with them, let's say, Kiswahili folktales, proverbs and riddles. Now, these students share from their traditions and culture; now they connect to our classroom lesson. This gives students learning opportunities beyond gaining Kiswahili skills only"*

Data presented showed that were integrating individual teacher skills and competencies to make learning appeal to the learners. Additionally, this makes learners appreciate their cultural diversities and integration. The relevancy of this approach lies in its integration of **language learning with cultural identity**, enriching Kiswahili lessons with local context flavour. This motivates learners to learn while familiarizing with other cultures expanding their expressive skills and social unification. The integration of riddles, proverbs, and folktales resonates with Owhida (2006) and Mazrui & Mazrui (1993), supporting the value of connecting language lessons to learners' cultural backgrounds. This implores teachers to be **creative in use of indigenous resources** to supplement CBC methods that can in-turn ensure the teaching of Kiswahili a living reality, social and cultural language.

Brain Teasing Competitions and Games

These are teacher-adaptive pedagogies incorporated to engage learners in stimulating the cognitive and develop motivation for learning. These pedagogies help learners “get out” of single instructional approaches. In this cause, teachers personalized learning by organizing competitions and games that made learners more eager to participate as presented.

TD: *“You see, as a teacher, I can’t sit and watch, no..... I have designed this thing; I give my students contests like writing a short story on something and spelling competitions. Students compete with excitement, do research and enjoy the learning. This plan has actually helped me in picking up the slow learners.”*

Field data indicated teacher engagements with brain twisters to make learners psychologically aroused and engage in learning. Exposing learners to a healthy and academically planned learning competitions makes them eye for the best outcomes. This finally compels learners to do research and engage with different learning sources to win the competitions as they finally get to know much in their learning. Similarly, such engaging learning competitions makes Kiswahili learning both enjoyable and motivating, fostering **peer learning**, and sustaining learners’ interest in the subject. Competitive activities increase learners’ engagement, motivation, and active participation in learning activities, (Mukamwambali, 2012; Ratinho & Martins, 2023). Most important is that such activities can be easily adapted even in resource-limited settings that offer teachers with flexible practical ways to enliven lessons. This implores teachers especially Kiswahili teachers to strategically integrate brainteasers **and competitive contests** to reinforce learning aspects such as grammar and vocabulary while keeping learners actively engaged.

Arts-Based Approaches (Songs and Poems)

This involves the use of artistic approaches involving engaging songs and poems in teaching and learning. This requires an individual teacher to align the song or poem with the topical objectives, adhering to ethical conduct. Teachers used music and poetry as creative strategies to foster active learner involvement in Kiswahili. Data from teachers evidenced this:

TG: *“Like I can enter a classroom for a lesson and sing my own song, but of course I focus on the topic content. Now, I entice the learners to follow up the tune. We also have these students who usually want to try. I cling to them; I introduce them to something like a competition, making a short song about a topic. You find that, in so doing, students search for grammar to use, think critically and learn a lot.”*

Data generated in the field, as presented above, show the extent of teachers' creativity in CBC implementation through their own adaptive pedagogies. Incorporating poems and music stimulates learners' motivation and engagement in learning activities. This approach is that it taps into learners' creativity and love for music, transforming Kiswahili into a lively and memorable experience and making them feel engaged in learning the content. This system promotes **language retention, rhythm, listening, speaking and pronunciation**, most of which are key to language domains. This is reinforced by Suzuki (2014) and Umida, Diloru & Umar (2020), showing that music and poetry boost creativity, language retention, and learner enjoyment, calling for teachers’ **innovation and flexibility**, using artistic methods to break monotony and appeal to diverse learner preferences. This not only meets CBC’s emphasis on creativity but also cultivates an enjoyable learning atmosphere.

4.2 Teachers’ Understanding of Student-Centred Teaching in Kiswahili Teaching-Learning in Secondary Schools of Ndarwa County

Student-centred teaching approaches are the efforts that teachers employ to adapt to the CBC philosophies in teaching and learning. Embracing CBC-aligned and supportive learner-centred approaches

embraces the planning, implementation and achievement of CBC in educational institutions. This focused on how Kiswahili teachers in secondary schools understood the student-centred approach to teaching and learning.

Learner Responsibility

Learner responsibility largely perceives learning as an effort of the learner in joint efforts with the teacher. Learner-centred Kiswahili teaching largely gives learners responsibility over their own learning. Teachers noted that learners learn best when they take initiative rather than passively wait for the teacher's explanations. This perspective shows a shift in mindset from traditional rote learning to approaches in which learners become agents in their own knowledge construction, as participant data presented:

TA1: *"...like for my case, this system, I mean the CBC teaching and learning gives the students their actual responsibility to lead the learning. In my Kiswahili lessons, I encourage them to take charge and read... to try make research, understand the meanings, share among themselves before my input. I join the class activity to complement and correct if need be."*

As evidenced in the data above, teachers' conceptualisation of CBC lay in its advocacy for learner-centredness, attributed to the core philosophy of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), which positions learners as active constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients. This has the capability to nurture independence and critical thinking among learners, with the skills transferable beyond Kiswahili lessons. This aligns with Piaget (1964) and Alhabib (2021), who argue that learners construct knowledge actively and develop autonomy through self-directed engagement. Emphasising learner-centeredness nurtures critical thinking and lifelong learning skills (MoES, 2010; NCDC, 2021). This reduces teacher dominance and shifts the burden of learning to learners, allowing teachers to serve as facilitators, ensuring learners develop lifelong learning skills. Teachers must **design tasks that encourage exploration, inquiry, and collaboration**, requiring creativity and flexibility in lesson planning.

Facilitating Learning

This entails preparing and engaging in the implementation of the syllabi and curriculum activities in learning settings. Teachers still have a critical role as curriculum facilitators rather than being the sole source of knowledge. It is to note that while student-centred learning empowers learners, the teacher's guidance remains indispensable, as the data presented:

TG: *"We now teach with less burden compared to the past. As a teacher I know I still have a role to play in a CBC classroom. Because, like I am the one to do lesson plans, classroom activities and practices to ensure a successful lesson delivery. Honestly, these students must have me, their teacher for guidance.... otherwise, they can lose focus and end up wasting time in a lesson session."*

Data showed teachers' reduced burden in teaching and learning implementation to a facilitator position, reflecting a **balanced conception of pedagogy** where teachers scaffold, supporting learners while gradually withdrawing direct control. This presents a notable paradigm shift from formerly entirely teacher-led to active learning and teaching engagements in classroom activities. This shift agrees with Hettithanthri and Hansen (2022) and Phan (2024) that teachers scaffold and support learners while promoting autonomy in student-centred classrooms. Teachers' facilitation provides students with structured freedom to explore the language while still being guided toward meaningful outcomes, preventing misinterpretation of content in the learning process. Kiswahili teachers must master the art of **blending freedom with control**, ensuring lessons remain productive, focused, and aligned with

curriculum objectives.

Reducing Teacher Dominance

Teacher dominance entails learning activities being entirely under the teachers' planning, application and implementation in a classroom setting. Teachers are an important aspect of a curriculum for its realistic implementation and success. Student-centred learning reduces teacher talk and increases learner participation. Education institution expected that teachers should adopt CBC in their daily practice as data presented:

HTC: *"We welcomed this new thing, the CBC system. We have embraced CBC as always; we have been telling and we continue telling these teachers to get away from the old system. Here, we advise the teachers to reduce their extent of dominating the lessons. We tell them to structure the learning plan, prepare the environment, avail the necessary resources for a productive lesson. We do advise the teachers for come in for the assistance and adjustments in students' ideas but not solely dominating the lesson progression."*

Particularly as data presented, the school's headteacher demonstrated a positive ideological shift from the old-teacher-centred curriculum, as they always cautioned and reminded their teacher to adjust to the new curriculum reforms. This reflects a school-level push towards active pedagogy, granting learners the opportunities to engage in active learning practice outside teacher dominance. This builds learners' competency through opportunities to use **the language** rather than merely listening to the teacher as would be in the old-curriculum system. Sakata, Bremner and Cameron (2022) noted that minimising teacher talk and maximising learner interaction builds the learners' communication competence. Importantly, this aligns classroom practice with policy reforms under the CBC, ensuring teaching compliance with inspection and quality assurance standards. The imply that Kiswahili teachers must adopt classroom and instructional strategies that reduce teacher-centred lecturing and embrace **student-driven dialogue, group work, and peer assessment**.

Inclusivity of all Learners

This entails the adoption and application of approaches that can accommodate the learners during the teaching and learning processes. Learner inclusion is core in ensuring that learning takes place harmoniously without disproportionately compromising the learners' diverse levels and characteristics. Teachers perceived student-centeredness as ensuring inclusivity for participation in classroom processes. Teachers' interview data showed that:

TE: *".... for these last four years, I have been active with CBC. And I interpret it that nearly all the students in a certain learning activity of session be involved in any ways possible. I know that if we, as teachers embrace this curriculum, we can have all learners appreciating the system. Like this thing of group works and peer-talk-and share learning session you find even the so called silent, shy, and the ungifted students engaged at their pace and will."*

Data presented above indicated that teachers focused on inclusive learning in the classroom operationalisation of CBC learning. Narrowing down the curriculum and engaging learners in collaborative and engaging learning sessions was a core tenet of teachers' CBC preparation and implementation, underlining the **equity dimension of pedagogy**. This relevance is profound in multilingual, diverse classrooms, where weaker learners often withdraw or are overshadowed. This reflects the importance of equity in pedagogy, as Nsenga & Andala (2022) emphasise, and underscores the need for all learners to actively participate in the learning process and activities. It is important to note that student-centeredness is not only about equity and equality in the instruction methods but also about ensuring

democratic participation in learning. The implication is that teachers must **differentiate instruction** and deliberately create spaces where weaker learners can express themselves without intimidation. This requires patience, innovative questioning, and supportive feedback.

Narrowing to Question-Answer Method

This conceptualises the curriculum as an engagement with the learners for collaborative questions and answer interactions. To an extent, this offers learners opportunities to understand some concepts through probing, though limiting their full potential in curiosity, discovery, analysis and application of learnt knowledge. Teachers demonstrated a narrow view of CBC preparation and implementation, reducing it to simple teacher-student questioning, as established in interviews:

TD: *“Like for my case, I take CBC as for give the learners the highest opportunities to lead the learning process. If you can see my classroom of 92 students, you can really bear with me. I reduced the challenges. I only stick to questions and answers mostly. And by the way, you can see the students seriously labouring to and respond with correct and all sorts of responses”*

Interview data from the teachers above revealed the narrow interpretation of CBC as a pedagogy reform for questioning and answering sessions. This perception likely engaged learners with shallow content and learning autonomy opportunities limiting their discovery and knowledge application. This limited interpretation reveals a gap between **policy intentions and classroom realities**. The relevance here is that it exposes barriers, substantial **class sizes, and limited resources that** make it hard for teachers to fully implement CBC. This interpretation is consistent with Shah (2020) and Fufa, Tulu & Ensene (2023), which show that large class sizes and limited resources limit the full implementation of CBC strategies. For teachers, the importance lies in going beyond questioning to more diverse strategies that promote deeper learner involvement. The implication is that teacher training and support must be strengthened so that teachers can acquire a broader repertoire of student-centred strategies, even under constrained circumstances.

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section was guided by the purpose and objectives of the study. The purpose was to explore Kiswahili Teaching-Learning approaches in Competence-Based Curriculum in Secondary Schools of Ndurwa West County, Uganda. The objectives explored the Competency-Based Curriculum teaching approaches, and **examined** teachers understand Student-Centred Teaching in Kiswahili Teaching-Learning secondary schools in Ndurwa West County, Uganda.

5.1 Summary of the Findings

Guided by the first objective, the study established that across schools teaching emphasized the implementation a diverse approach focusing on student-led teaching and learning in secondary schools. Kiswahili approaches implemented under CBC were; **paired-desk classroom group discussions; student participation in role-playing and dramatizing** learning contexts such as cultural contexts; **the debating system; paired learner peer-teaching and self-assessment though** reliability of the learner-led instruction was wide-ranging majorly attributed to individual teacher capability, resource accessibility, and individualized school provisions. With a focus on the second objective, the study found varying teachers' experiences of learner-initiated approaches under the CBC; **teachers experienced an increase in learner participation and self-enthusiasm with** observed increase in Kiswahili learner numbers; **learners steadily improved their Kiswahili competences across different language domains; shifts in teacher duties to** learning facilitators; **teacher-encountered structural challenges; teachers need for broader understanding of CBC and learner-centred pedagogies.**

5.2 Study Conclusions

The study concluded that CBC rollout and implementation is well sought in secondary schools through learner-centred instructional approaches, though partial and inconsistent, limiting actual implementation and realisation. Teachers were aware of CBC and cognizant of the benefits of learner-centred instructional strategies, but were also cognizant of structural and systemic challenges that limit the implementation of the curriculum in Kiswahili teaching-learning. Kiswahili teachers had positive experiences with the implementation of learner-centredness in Kiswahili teaching, stemming from learners' motivation for Kiswahili learning and offering it as a subsidiary, which improved Kiswahili skills and general knowledge and skills. Nonetheless, positive teacher experiences encountered setbacks due to inadequate curriculum preparation, inadequate instructional materials, and large class sizes. Strategies of group discussions, debating, roleplays, and paired-peer learning were employed by Kiswahili teachers, matching with constructivist theoretical notions and CBC presumptions for learner-centred teaching-learning. Teachers interpreted CBC and learner-centred instruction in a shallow view equating the system as a teacher-learner question and answer session, implying that the system is impartially embedded in classroom practical approaches. This generally highlights the existing implementation gaps and reveals the need for CBC paperwork transformation to realistic and actual application of learner-centred classroom practices.

5.3 Recommendations

The research purpose, findings, and conclusions guided this study's recommendations;

- (i). Schools should provide regular in-service training and continuous professional development programs to equip teachers with practical skills in CBC pedagogy.
- (ii). Schools should strengthen monitoring and evaluation frameworks to ensure that student-centred methods are implemented consistently in schools.
- (iii). **Teachers should** broaden the range of learner-centred strategies employed in classrooms, incorporating problem-solving tasks, project-based learning, and experiential activities.

5.4 Areas of Further Research

Future studies should focus on;

- (i) Understanding school administration of teachers' efficiency in the CBC system in Ugandan schools' environment.
- (ii) Establishing the reality in the translation of CBC projections to realisation among the post-school learners in a Ugandan setting.

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