Navigating Change: Challenges and Perspectives on Implementation of Competency-Based Education in Kenya

Sarah Roelker
Comundo/St. Martin Catholic Social Apostolate (CSA), Nyahururu, Kenya

Abstract
This study examines teachers' resistance to Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) through change management theories, specifically Kotter's (1996) model and Hiatt's (2006) ADKAR framework. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research explored the perspectives of 59 representatives from primary and junior secondary schools in Nyahururu Sub- County, Laikipia, Kenya. Findings show that teachers are equally divided: one-third support, one-third oppose, and one-third partially support the transition from the 8-4-4 system. Critically, 59.3 percent do not understand why CBC was developed, 67.8 percent believe colleagues would revert to the old system if possible, and 62.7 percent feel excluded from decision-making. While 72.9 percent claim knowledge of learner-centred methods, 71.2 percent request additional training, revealing gaps between theoretical understanding and practical capacity. Analysis shows that foundational change steps that include creating awareness, fostering urgency, and cultivating participation have not been adequately addressed. Critical gaps include a lack of shared vision despite official frameworks, insufficient training, inadequate resources, and a perception of top-down imposition. On contextual fit, 34 percent view CBC as suitable, 37 percent as partially suitable, and 29 percent as unsuitable, mainly because of resource constraints. The study recommends building teacher conviction through participatory processes, providing context-specific professional development, and mobilizing resources. Successful reform requires human-centred, inclusive change management strategies addressing teachers' readiness, knowledge gaps, and ownership.

Keywords: Competency-Based Education and Curriculum, Barriers to Learner-Centred Teaching and Learning, Theories of Change, Education in Kenya, Teachers' perceptions

Introduction

Competency-Based Education (CBE) is a learning approach that emphasizes students' competencies related to specific tasks (Akinrinola et al., 2020). Globally, many countries are shifting from content-centric to competency-based curricula to meet 21st-century demands. This transition has significant pedagogical implications, requiring fundamental changes in teaching and assessment practices. In Kenya, the introduction of CBE in 2017 marked a significant reform aimed at improving the quality and relevance of the country's education system.

This shift represents a move away from the traditional teacher-centred approach towards a more learner-centred model grounded in constructivist learning theories. The new system prioritizes the development of core competencies such as critical thinking, collaboration, self-efficacy, and problem-solving, skills considered vital for students to thrive in a rapidly changing,

globalized world (Kenyan Institute for Curriculum Development, 2017). However, implementing learner-centred approaches in many African contexts, including Botswana, Ethiopia, and Malawi, faces major challenges. These include curriculum overload, inadequate teacher training, resource shortages, large class sizes, and infrastructural deficits such as limited classroom space and materials (Wambi et al., 2024; Nyaboke et al., 2021). Research indicates that these systemic challenges hinder teachers' ability to adopt participative learner-centred strategies, often leading to continued reliance on traditional lecture methods.

Studies in Malawi and Ethiopia show that teachers view learner-centred approaches as time-consuming and difficult to implement in crowded classrooms with rigid curricula (Matewere & Msosa, 2022; Fufa et al., 2023). Misconceptions, cultural factors, and the perceived imported nature of curricula also drive resistance to this paradigm shift. Teachers often see themselves as the primary source of knowledge, and perceive active learning as disruptive or ineffective (Tabulawa, 2003, 2013; Totoba, 2021). Insufficient professional development, limited institutional support, inadequate resources, large class sizes, and infrastructural constraints further impede the transition to participative pedagogies (Tadesse, 2020; Ejigu & Tesemma, 2017). Consequently, scholars advocate for the 'Africanization' of curricula and pedagogies, emphasizing culturally responsive approaches that reflect local contexts and values (Mwinzi, 2016a; Tabulawa, 2003).

In Kenya, implementing competency-based teaching approaches faces similar significant challenges. While existing research has documented practical barriers such as resource constraints and large class sizes, this study explores deeper underlying reasons for resistance to change. Recognizing that some individual teachers have successfully adopted new approaches despite these challenges, this research employs a combined framework of change theories to understand why resistance persists.

Research Framework

This study employs a combined framework integrating these change models to explore reasons for resistance to educational reform in Laikipia County, Nyahururu sub-county, and neighbouring schools from Nyandarua. The research focused on representatives from 50 primary and junior secondary schools and was exploratory.

The study investigates resistance to change among educators in implementing Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) and learner-centred education through the lens of change theories. This theoretical approach was selected to gain deeper insights beyond the commonly cited practical challenges (such as resource constraints and large class sizes) mentioned in existing research, and to uncover underlying reasons for resistance to change.

Change Theories

Several models and theories explain how institutional change occurs, how to achieve it, and how to address resistance. This study draws on three prominent change frameworks (Gleicher, 2014; Kotter, 1996; Hiatt, 2006) to develop a comprehensive analytical lens for understanding resistance to educational reform in Kenya. These change models have common approaches along the following dimensions.

1. **Dissatisfaction with the Status Quo**. Common starting points for successful change include dissatisfaction with the status quo (Gleicher, cited in Cady, 2014), a sense of urgency (Kotter, 1996), or awareness and desire to participate in change (Hiatt, 2006). These theories suggest that people are more likely to embrace change when they are convinced of its necessity.
2. **Clear Vision and Defined Steps.** Gleicher's Formula for Change emphasizes the need for a clear vision of the desired future and practical, actionable steps to achieve it (Cady et al., 2014). Similarly,

Kotter (1996) stresses the importance of defining the desired end state and systematically removing barriers to its achievement.

3. **The ADKAR model adds that individuals need both knowledge and ability**, alongside awareness and desire, to successfully implement change (Hiatt, 2006).

The study explores resistance along three dimensions drawn from the change theories described above, with an additional fourth dimension addressing curriculum contextualization (see Table 1).

Table 1: Research Questions Alongside Four Dimensions

Dimension	Research Question
1. **Dissatisfaction with the Status Quo**	To what extent are teachers convinced of the need to transition from the traditional system to Competency-Based Education, and what factors shape their perceptions?
2. **Clear Vision and Implementation Pathway**	Is there a shared vision and clearly defined implementation pathway for the transition to Competency-Based Education among teachers?
3. **Knowledge and Ability to Change**	Are teachers prepared – in terms of knowledge, skills, and capacity – to embrace and effectively implement the transition to Competency-Based Education?
4. **Cultural and Contextual Fit**	Does the Competency-Based Curriculum align with the Kenyan educational context and local cultural values?

The study therefore aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of resistance to educational reform; identify specific barriers within each dimension of change; and draw conclusions for future intervention strategies.

Methodology

This study used a mixed-methods approach, using a questionnaire with closed- and open-ended questions to collect comprehensive data. The research was exploratory, aiming to generate initial insights into teachers' perceptions of and resistance to educational reform. Closed-ended questions provided respondents with predefined answer options, facilitating efficient collection of quantitative data suitable for statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These questions helped identify patterns and trends across the sample. Open-ended questions allowed participants to express their perspectives in their own words, yielding rich qualitative insights that help explain the underlying reasons for their responses and deepen understanding of the complex factors influencing resistance to change (Patton, 2015).

The study was conducted in Laikipia County, specifically Nyahururu Sub-County, and included schools near Nyahururu town in Nyandarua County. The researcher distributed questionnaires to participants in Competency-Based Education workshops held with representatives from primary and junior secondary schools in Nyahururu Sub-County. This purposive sampling strategy ensured that respondents had direct experience with CBC implementation and were representative of the teaching workforce in the target area.

Table 2 presents respondents' characteristics. A total of 59 participants took part in the survey, all from Laikipia and Nyandarua counties. The largest age group was 30-40 years, followed

by 40-50 years, indicating that most participants were experienced professionals in their active working years. Women represented a slightly higher proportion of participants than men. In terms of teaching experience, participants were relatively diverse, with 35.6 percent having 0-5 years of experience and 33.9 percent having 11-20 years of experience. Overall, the participant group was predominantly composed of primary school teachers from public schools, with a good mix of teaching experience and a balanced gender and age representation.

Table 2: Sample Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Percentage / Count
Total Participants		**59**
Age Group	20-30 years	20.3%
	30-40 years	42.4%
	40-50 years	23.7%
	50-60 years	13.6%
County	Laikipia and Nyandarua (next to Nyahururu town)	100 %
Role	Teachers	88.1%
	Administrators	11.9%
Gender	Female	54.2%
	Male	44.1%
Teaching Experience	0-5 years	35.6%
	6-10 years	18.6%
	11-20 years	33.9%
	More than 20 years	11.9%
School Type	Public schools	70.4%
	Private schools	18.5%
	No response	11.1%
Teaching Level	Primary	74.6%
	Junior school	25.4%

Source: Author, 2025

Quantitative data derived from closed-ended questions were analysed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were computed to identify common patterns and summarize responses (Bryman, 2016). The qualitative data from open-ended questions were analysed through inductive content analysis following Mayring's (2000) systematic approach. This involved coding responses, identifying recurring themes, and interpreting patterns within the data. This mixed-methods approach leverages the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative analysis, offering a holistic understanding of the research questions by combining numerical trends with detailed, contextual explanations (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

Discussion of Findings and Results

The results are presented and discussed alongside the previously mentioned research questions. The first research question asked: To what extent are teachers convinced of the need to transition from the traditional system to Competency-Based Education, and what factors shape their perceptions?

Teachers' Perceptions of the Transition to Competency-Based Education and the Factors Shaping Them

This section examines the first aspect of several change theories: dissatisfaction with the status quo. Specifically, it explores whether there is a recognized and felt need for change from the traditional approaches of teaching to competency-based education and learner-centred pedagogies. This is explored through several questions about their perceived need to shift from the 8-4-4 system to the Competency-Based Curriculum.

1. Perceived need for change from the 8-4-4- to the Competency-Based Curriculum

The research results indicate that teachers are divided on whether the shift to the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) was necessary. Roughly one-third of respondents believe the change was essential, another third think it was only partly necessary, and the remaining third feel it was unnecessary (see Figure 1). This division suggests differing opinions on the value and timing of the transition, reflecting underlying concerns about how the change was implemented and its perceived benefits.

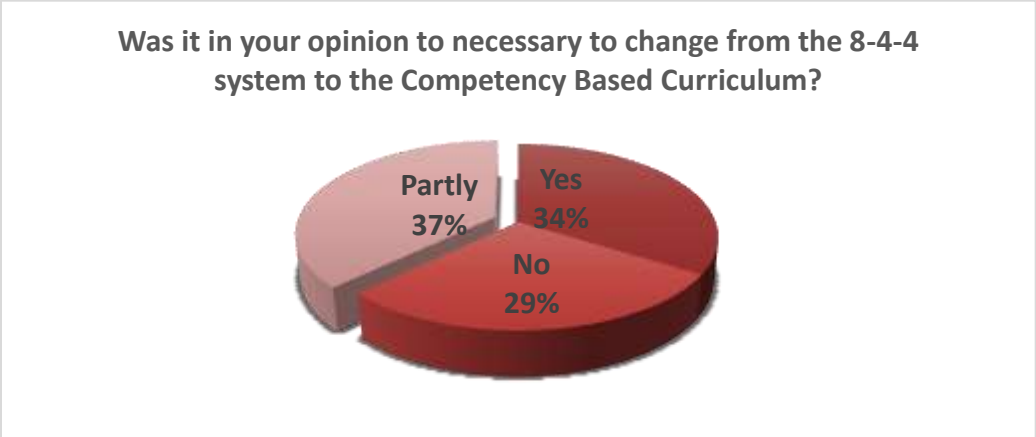


Fig.1: Perceived Necessity to Change to The CBC System-
Source: Author, 2025

When analysing responses by age group, notable differences emerge. Teachers aged 40–50 tend to oppose the change more strongly. Of 14 individuals in this bracket, only 1 believed the shift was necessary, 6 viewed it as unnecessary, and 7 saw it as only partly necessary (see Table 3). This suggests that middle-aged teachers, potentially with more experience under the old system, may be more sceptical about the relevance or effectiveness of the new curriculum.

Table 3: Perceived Necessity to Change to The CBC System According to Age Ranges

Age Group	Yes (Necessary)	No (Unnecessary)	Partly (Necessary)	Total Respondents
20–30	2	2	8	12
30–40	11	7	7	25
40–50	1	7	6	14
50–60	6	1	1	8
Total	**20**	**17**	**22**	**59**

Source: Author, 2025

2. Reasons Supporting the Change to the CBC System

Many respondents cited the need to modernize education to meet global standards and prepare students for current and future job markets. They emphasized that the old 8-4-4 system was overly focused on rote memorization and lacked a learner-centred approach. By contrast, the CBC emphasizes developing practical skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, and each student's strengths. Respondents highlighted that the CBC promotes holistic development, focusing not just on academic performance but also on well-being, social skills, and confidence. It aims to develop self-reliant learners who can create jobs rather than just seek employment, aligning with the demands of a rapidly changing global economy.

Supporters believe this approach helps eradicate exam cheating, reduces anxiety, and fosters fairness and inclusivity in classrooms. Furthermore, respondents see CBC as a way to bridge the gap between education and real-world skills, thus making learners more adaptable and competent in a competitive environment. They argue that proper implementation is crucial to realize these benefits.

3. Reasons Against the Change to the CBC System

Opponents argue that the old 8-4-4 system was effective, affordable, and well-structured. They note that teachers were familiar with it and that it fit within the existing educational infrastructure. They also believe that rather than an entire overhaul, the system could have been improved by reintroducing practical subjects like home science, music, agriculture, and arts into primary education.

Some respondents said the transition was rushed, with inadequate stakeholder consultation or preparation, which led to confusion among teachers, students, and parents. They also highlighted the financial strain on families due to the new curriculum's resource needs and infrastructure requirements. Overall, some feel that the old system better prepared students for secondary school and was simpler to manage.

4. Partial Support and Conditions for Successful Implementation

Respondents who say that it was partially necessary to change to CBC believe that its success depends on the government providing sufficient resources, training, and planning. They criticize the hurried implementation, which confused teachers and stakeholders and left many without a clear understanding. They advocate a gradual approach that integrates reforms into the existing system rather than a complete overhaul. These respondents suggest that better resource allocation, professional development, and stakeholder involvement could help CBC achieve its intended goals.

5. Teachers' Preferences if they were Minister of Education

When asked if they would change their stance as Minister of Education, 66 percent of respondents favoured continuing with the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), citing its promotion of holistic development, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills essential for the 21st century. One respondent noted*, 'The CBC system offers solutions to many challenges faced by the global community'.* Recognizing that Kenya has been implementing CBC for nine years, a respondent remarked, '*We are in CBC for nine years now, so there's no turning back; we need to move forward and address the initial challenges.'*

Conversely, those teachers advocating for retaining the old 8-4-4 system cited its simplicity, familiarity, and cost-effectiveness as key strengths. They argued that the 8-4-4 system reduces the

burden on teachers, parents, and the government and aligns better with the Kenyan context. Additionally, supporters of the old system noted that learners under the old system often worked harder due to increased competition, which they believe fostered discipline and resilience.

6. Teachers' Perceptions of How Convinced Their Colleagues Are of The Need to Change to The CBE System

Teachers were asked to rate their agreement with the following statements in Table 4.

Table 4: Statements on CBC

Statement	I strongly agree/agree	Strongly disagree/disagree
Many teachers believe that the change from the 8-4-4- system to the CBC was unnecessary	61 %	39%
Many teachers do not understand why CBC was developed	59.3	40.7%
If given a choice, most teachers would go back to the 8-4-4-system	67.8	32.2 %
The 8-4-4- system is better for our children than the CBC	28.8	71.2%

Source: Author, 2025

Interestingly, when respondents were asked about teachers' perceptions in general, their answers differed slightly from their own readiness to implement CBC. On the statement '*Many teachers believe that the change from the 8-4-4 system to the CBC was unnecessary'*, 61 percent agree or strongly agree, suggesting that a high percentage of teachers are not convinced about the change. For the statement '*If given a choice, most teachers would go back to the 8-4-4 system',* 67.8 percent agree or strongly agree, suggesting that respondents are more motivated to implement the CBC than they think their colleagues are. Interestingly, only 28 percent agree that the old system was better for the children, which seems somewhat contradictory (see Table 4).

Table 5: Teachers' Perceptions of CBC Development

Teachers do not understand why CBC was developed		
	Frequency	Percent
I strongly agree	12	20.3
I agree	23	39.0
I disagree	21	35.6
I strongly disagree	3	5.1
Total	**59**	**100.0**

Source: Author, 2025

The data in Table 5 indicate that teachers have varying levels of understanding of the rationale behind developing the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). Overall, 59.3 percent of teachers agree or strongly agree that many teachers do not understand why the CBC was developed. Specifically, 20.3 percent strongly agree, and 39.0 percent agree. This suggests a considerable gap in teachers' understanding of the CBC's purpose and why it was developed.

In addition, when asked about barriers to implementing the CBC, more than half of respondents (54.2%) agree or strongly agree that teachers' lack of belief in the CBC system poses a significant barrier to implementing the CBC in their institutions. If teachers are not fully convinced or committed, it hampers effective implementation and could affect learners' experiences. Regarding the implementation of learner-centred teaching approaches, the data show that 59 percent of the teachers remain skeptical about the transition to learner-centred methods. This perception can influence the overall climate for change and reinforce colleagues' resistance.

A significant number of teachers feel their voices are not adequately heard in curriculum-related decision-making, with over 62 percent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing (see Table 6). This lack of perceived ownership can undermine their motivation and commitment to the new system. Additionally, more than half (57.6%) of teachers believe the shift to the CBC was imposed on them without sufficient consultation, which may contribute to resistance and difficulties in implementing the reforms effectively.

Table 6: Teachers' Participation and Ownership

	Agree/ strongly agree	**Disagree/strongly disagree**
Teachers feel not heard	62.7 %	37.3%
The shift from the 8-4-4-to CBC was imposed on us	57.6 %	42.4%

Source: Author, 2025

In summary, the findings reveal a complex and divided picture of teachers' views on the transition from Kenya's 8-4-4 system to the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). While some teachers recognise the potential of CBC to promote critical thinking, practical skills, inclusivity and holistic development relevant to the 21st century, others question the need for the transition, arguing that the previous system was effective and that the reform was introduced hastily, without adequate consultation or resources. This concern is reflected in the finding that approximately 60 percent of teachers do not fully understand why CBC was developed, while more than half feel that the change was imposed without sufficient opportunity for their views to be considered. Such scepticism is consistent with earlier research on resistance to externally introduced pedagogical models in African contexts (Tabulawa, 2003, 2013; Totoba, 2021) and with systemic barriers identified by Muchira et al. (2023) and Wambi et al. (2024).

Viewed through change management theories, particularly Kotter's (1996) eight-step model and Hiatt's (2006) ADKAR framework, these findings suggest that key foundations for successful change—awareness of the need for change, a sense of urgency, desire to participate and ownership of the process—have not been adequately established. Teachers who do not understand or recognise the rationale for CBC are less likely to embrace the practices required for its effective implementation. Their perceived exclusion from decision-making further weakens their sense of ownership and contributes to resistance.

The findings therefore suggest that successful CBC implementation depends on building teachers' understanding and acceptance of the reform while ensuring their meaningful participation in planning and implementation. The second research question explored whether teachers had a shared vision and a clear implementation pathway for the transition to Competency-Based Education. The next section presents the findings related to this question.

Teachers' Shared Vision and Clarity of the Implementation Pathway for the Transition to Competency-Based Education

The second dimension of the research draws on change management theories, particularly those of Gleicher and Kotter, which emphasise the importance of a clear vision and defined steps for achieving change. The findings indicate that, although CBC has an overarching vision centred on integrating 21st-century skills and nurturing individual learners' talents, this vision has not been sufficiently translated into clear and practical implementation pathways. Many teachers remain uncertain about the intended end goals and how to achieve them. While some are confident that CBC can succeed because similar approaches have worked in other countries, others see it as an imported model that does not reflect the Kenyan context. As one respondent observed, *'We are wasting generations with a trial-and-error borrowed system'*, reflecting concerns about the lack of contextualisation and clarity in the reform process. Uncertainty was further heightened by questions about how the government would manage Grade 9 learners at the end of 2025.

These concerns also reflect a perceived mismatch between CBC principles and the realities of progression within the education system. Although CBC emphasises continuous assessment and the recognition of diverse talents, many teachers believe that examination results still determine students' future pathways, with science-related tracks perceived as more highly valued than others. This perceived emphasis on high marks raises doubts about the system's fairness and limits confidence in the promised diversity of learning pathways. Teachers also identified inadequate guidelines and inconsistent curriculum updates as factors that make implementation difficult and reinforce uncertainty about expectations.

These findings align with change management models, which identify a clearly articulated and shared vision, supported by specific and achievable steps, as essential to successful organisational transformation (Kotter, 1996; Hiatt, 2006). Although the official CBC framework provides a broad vision, a significant gap remains between this stated vision and teachers' understanding of how to realise it in practice. The lack of sufficiently clear, consistent, and actionable guidance has therefore contributed to uncertainty and weakened confidence in the reform. For CBC to gain broader acceptance and achieve its intended outcomes, the vision needs to be communicated more effectively and translated into clear implementation pathways that are practical, consistent and responsive to the Kenyan educational context.

The third research question sought to determine whether teachers were prepared, in terms of knowledge, skills, and capacity, to embrace and effectively implement the transition to Competency-Based Education. This is discussed in the next section.

Teachers' Preparedness in Knowledge, Skills and Capacity for the Effective Implementation of Competency-Based Education

The third aspect, drawn from the ADKAR model of change, examines teachers' knowledge, skills and capacity to embrace and implement Competency-Based Education (CBE). The findings show varying levels of teacher confidence (see Figure 2). While 20.3 percent reported feeling very confident and 16.9 percent confident about implementing CBE, 37.3 percent expressed partial confidence. A further 15.3 percent were not confident, and 10.2 percent were not confident at all. These findings suggest that although some teachers feel capable of implementing the new approach, a substantial number remain uncertain about their preparedness.

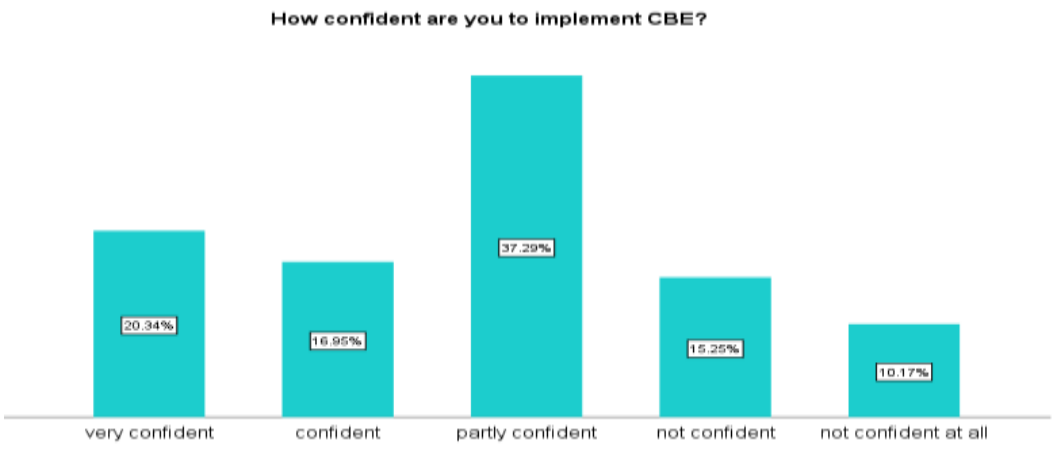


Fig. 2: Confidence of teachers to implement Competency-Based Education
Source: Author, 2025

Teachers' understanding of CBE principles shows a similar pattern. Most respondents reported either a general understanding (47.5 percent) or a partial understanding (39 percent), suggesting that knowledge of the principles may be largely theoretical and does not always translate into classroom practice. Many teachers believe that CBE can be implemented effectively if adequate resources, training and awareness are provided. Some are optimistic about its potential to improve learners' prospects, with one respondent stating, *'I am confident because our learners' future is secured with CBC'*. Others, however, feel overwhelmed by resource shortages, limited assessment tools, inadequate infrastructure and concerns about the relevance of some content. One teacher explained, *'I'm not very confident because I'm not yet conversant with some things; I'm still learning'*. There is also a perception among some teachers that they were excluded from curriculum design and have little choice but to implement a system they did not help to shape. At the same time, others recognise that the transition is an ongoing process requiring time, effort and stakeholder involvement. As one respondent noted, *'We are in CBC for nine years now, so there's no turning back; we need to move forward and deal with the teething problems'*.

Learner-centred teaching and learning is a central feature of Competency-Based Education (CBE). To assess teachers' preparedness for this transition, participants rated a series of statements on a four-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (see Table 7). The findings show that although most teachers consider themselves knowledgeable about moving from traditional teacher-centred approaches to learner-centred methods, their confidence in applying these approaches is less certain. The findings indicate that 72.9 percent of respondents believe they possess the necessary knowledge for the transition, while 27.1 percent remain uncertain or disagree

Table 7: Statements on Implementation of Learner-Centred Methods

Statement	Agree/Strongly Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree
I know how to transition from teacher centred to learner centred methods	72.9%	27.1%
I need additional training to successfully implement learner centred methods	71.2%	28.8%
I am uncertain about how to start using learner centred methods	37.3 %	62.7%
Many teachers do not know how to start implementing learner centred methods	52.5 %	47.5 %

Source: Author, 2025

The gap between perceived knowledge and practical confidence is further evident in teachers' responses to the statement that many teachers do not know how to begin implementing learner-centred methods. About 52.5 percent agreed or strongly agreed with this view. In addition, 71.2 percent acknowledged the need for further training, suggesting that an understanding of learner-centred principles does not necessarily translate into the ability to apply them effectively in the classroom. Teachers described existing training as largely theoretical and lacking practical strategies, with one respondent observing, *'The approach has been well explained in the theory but not in the practice'.* This points to the need for practical workshops, instructional guides, demonstration lessons, peer mentoring, and continuous professional development to strengthen teachers' confidence and competence.

The findings therefore indicate that teachers possess a reasonable level of theoretical understanding of CBE and learner-centred approaches, but their practical preparedness remains uneven. This supports Muchira et al. (2023) and Wambi et al. (2024), who identify inadequate teacher preparation and resource constraints as barriers to effective CBE implementation. It also reflects the challenge of translating pedagogical principles into classroom practice, as Tadesse (2020) and Ejigu and Tesemma (2017) highlight.

Research Question 3 examined teachers' preparedness, including their knowledge, skills, and capacity to embrace and effectively implement the transition to Competency-Based Education (CBE). The evidence suggests that teachers are only partly prepared for the transition and its effective implementation. Strengthening this preparedness requires sustained, practice-based professional development that equips teachers with the pedagogical, classroom management, and assessment skills necessary to implement learner-centred approaches effectively.

The fourth and final research question examined the extent to which the Competency-Based Curriculum aligns with Kenya's educational context and local cultural values. The next section discusses the findings.

The Alignment of the Competency-Based Curriculum with the Kenyan Educational Context and Local Cultural Values

Participants' perspectives were sought on whether the CBC aligns with the Kenyan educational context and local cultural contexts. This revealed a nuanced, multifaceted view, as shown in Figure 3.

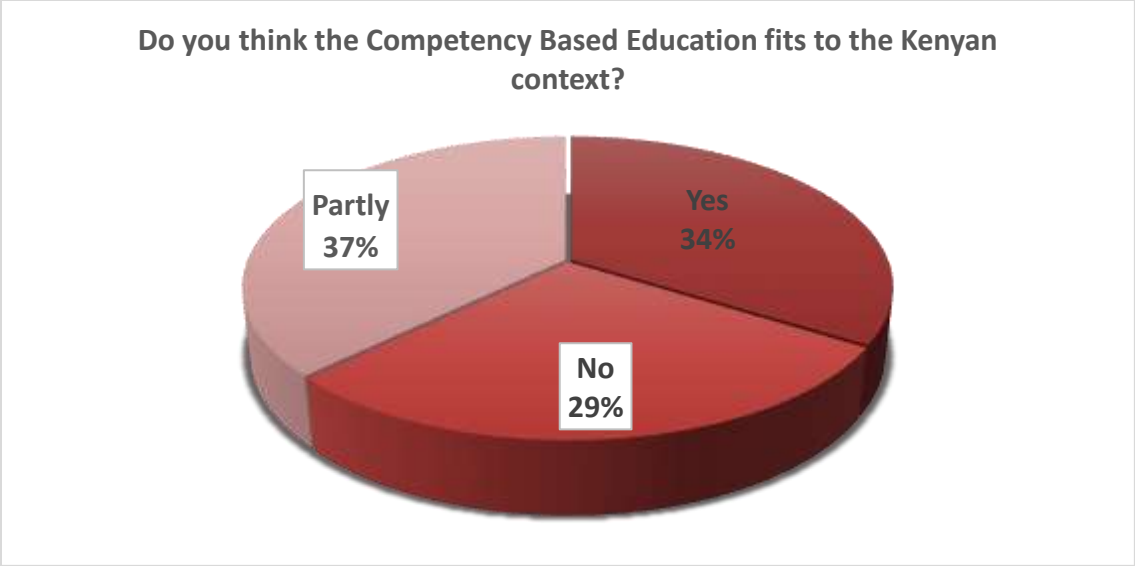


Fig. 3: Teachers' Perceptions of CBE Alignment with the Kenyan Cultural Context
Source: Author, 2025

The findings present a mixed assessment of how well CBC fits the Kenyan context. Among respondents, 34 percent considered it appropriate, 37 percent felt it only partly fits, and 29 percent viewed it as unsuitable. Those who considered CBC appropriate emphasised its potential to make education more relevant to contemporary needs by developing practical skills, creativity and diverse talents. They also viewed its emphasis on inclusivity as a strength, particularly its capacity to accommodate learners from different backgrounds and address perceived inequalities in examinations. Some respondents also linked developing relevant competencies to improved employability and reduced unemployment, arguing that CBC could better prepare learners for the demands of the modern world.

The 37 percent who felt that CBC only partly fits the Kenyan context acknowledged these potential benefits but argued that their realisation is constrained by weaknesses in implementation. Resource limitations emerged as the most prominent concern, particularly inadequate funding, infrastructure, ICT devices, laboratory facilities and teacher preparation. Some respondents proposed practical measures, such as relocating junior schools to secondary school facilities, to make better use of existing resources. Others questioned the government's preparedness, while acknowledging that implementing a major educational reform requires time and a phased approach. These concerns align with Nyaboke et al. (2021), who identify economic and infrastructural constraints as major barriers to CBC implementation.

For the 29 percent who considered CBC unsuitable, financial and economic constraints were the primary concerns. They viewed the curriculum as too costly to sustain under Kenya's current economic circumstances, describing it as 'too expensive to maintain' and noting that 'Kenya is still struggling to implement it fully'. They argued that government support has not been sufficient to meet the reform's financial, infrastructural, and human-resource demands, placing considerable pressure on teachers, learners, and other stakeholders. Unlike some concerns in the literature about cultural mismatch and differing conceptions of the teacher's role (Tabulawa, 2003, 2013), respondents did not explicitly identify cultural values as a major source of incompatibility. Their concerns centred largely on whether Kenya has the resources and institutional capacity to implement CBC as intended.

Taken together, the findings suggest that teachers do not necessarily reject the principles underlying CBC; rather, their assessment of its suitability is strongly influenced by the conditions under which it is being implemented. The curriculum can develop skills, promote inclusivity, and meet society's changing demands, but its effectiveness depends on whether implementation aligns with Kenya's socio-economic and infrastructural realities. This supports Mwinzi's (2016a) argument for contextualising curricula rather than adopting them without sufficient adaptation to local conditions. Increased resource mobilisation, improved infrastructure, comprehensive teacher preparation, effective communication and meaningful stakeholder engagement are therefore necessary to strengthen the relevance and sustainability of CBC in Kenya (Muchira et al., 2023; Mwinzi, 2016b). The central finding is that while the principles of CBC are broadly valued, its successful implementation requires greater contextualisation, adequate resources, and a phased approach that reflects Kenya's socio-economic realities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Successfully implementing Competency-Based Education in Kenya requires a multifaceted approach that addresses teachers' conviction, clarity of vision, capacity, and contextual fit. By addressing these fundamental change-management dimensions, grounded in established change theories, policymakers and education stakeholders can create conditions for sustainable reform. This study underscores that educational transformation is not merely a technical or resource challenge but fundamentally a human and organizational change process requiring thoughtful, inclusive, and context-sensitive strategies.

Based on these findings, the study proposes several recommendations to address identified barriers and support successful CBC implementation. These include building conviction and ownership; clarifying and communicating the vision; capacity building and professional development; resource mobilization and infrastructure development; contextualizing the curriculum; and stakeholder engagement and communication.

To build conviction and ownership, teachers should be meaningfully engaged in understanding the rationale and benefits of CBC and in curriculum decision-making and adaptation. Combining top-down policy direction with bottom-up participation can strengthen teachers' ownership, commitment, and confidence in the reform process. To clarify and communicate the vision, provide practical implementation guides with clear, step-by-step pathways suited to different school contexts. Stronger school leadership is also needed to champion the vision and model effective learner-centred approaches, helping teachers translate the principles of CBC into classroom practice.

Capacity building and professional development should focus on context-specific training that reflects local realities such as resource constraints and large class sizes. Mentorship and peer-learning networks can help teachers adopt new practices, while training on the rationale behind CBC can strengthen understanding and commitment beyond mere compliance.

Resource mobilization and infrastructure development should prioritise the provision of teaching materials, ICT tools, and essential infrastructure to schools. Teachers should also be equipped to develop low-cost, locally appropriate resources that align with CBC principles. Contextualizing the curriculum requires adapting CBC content and approaches to Kenya's socio-economic realities and cultural contexts. Curriculum overload should also be reduced to give teachers and learners sufficient time to develop competencies effectively.

On stakeholder engagement and communication, parents and community leaders should be involved in understanding and supporting CBC implementation. Transparent communication

about progress and challenges can also help address misconceptions and build wider confidence in the curriculum.

References

Akinrinola, O., Ogegbo, E., & Adewusi, S. (2020). *Competency-based education in Africa: Exploring teachers' perceptions, understanding, and practices.* Teacher Education Through Flexible Learning in Africa, 2.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Cady, J., Jacobs, K., Koller, D., & Spalding, R. (2014). *Myth, legend or lore*. Od practitioner, 46(3).

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Ejigu, O., & Tesemma, A. (2017). *Factors affecting the implementation of student-centred learning methods.* Journal of humanities and cultures studies R&D. Vol.2, No.1,15 Jan 2017.

Fufa, S. S., Tulu, A. H., & Ensene, K. A. (2023). *Examining the challenges of using student-centered teaching strategies in secondary schools.* East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences, 11(1).

Hiatt, J. (2006). *ADKAR: A Model for Change in Business, Government and Our Community*. Prosci Research.

Kenyan Institute of Curriculum Development (2017). *Basic education curriculum framework.*

Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading Change*. Harvard Business Review Press.

Matewere, I., & Msosa, A. (2022). *Exploring perceived barriers to effective utilization of learner-centred teaching methods by tutors at Holy Family College of Nursing and Midwifery, Phalombe, Malawi*. Malawi Medical Journal.

Mayring, P. (2000). *Qualitative Content Analysis*. Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 1(2), Art. 20.

Muchira, J. M., Morris, R. J., Wawire, B. A., & Oh, C. (2023). *Implementing competency-based curriculum (CBC) in Kenya: Challenges and lessons from South Korea and USA.* Journal of Education and Learning, 12(3).

Mwinzi, J. M. (2016a). *Towards the Africanization of teacher education: A critical reflection*. International Journal of Education and Research, 4(9).

Mwinzi, P. (2016b). *The need for Africanization of education*. African Journal of Education, 377–385.

Nyaboke, R., et al. (2021). *Challenges in implementing CBC in Kenya*. East African Journal of Education Studies.

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Tabulawa, R. (2003). *Pedagogical reforms in Africa and the paradigm shift*. International Journal of Educational Development, 23(2), 153–170.

Tabulawa, R. (2013). *Teaching and learning in context: Why pedagogical reforms fail in Sub-Saharan Africa*. CODESRIA, Senegal.

Tadesse, L. (2020). *Problems affecting the practice of student-centred approach in teaching social studies.* Journal of Pedagogical Sociology and Psychology, 2(2), 69–79.

Totoba, B. A. (2021). *Factors affecting the implementation of active learning methods in Bale Zone secondary schools*. Research on Humanities and Social Sciences.

Wambi, M., Ocheng, M. T. K., Were, D., Buluma, A., Tusiime, W. E., & Balituumye, M. (2024). Teachers' perceptions of implementing the revised lower secondary curriculum in selected schools in Uganda: A focus on emerging issues and coping strategies. *Journal of Effective Teaching Methods, 2*(1).