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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS AS A PREDICTOR OF CBE IMPLEMENTATION IN KENYA: A CASE OF PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MIGORI COUNTY

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Abstract: Teacher perceptions significantly influence implementation of curricula. Competency-Based Education (CBE), in Kenya could not be any different. Teacher's positive perceptions that could stem from adequate training, limited resources, and a clear understanding of the curriculum, can be associated with the successful or failure in CBE implementation. Conversely, negative perceptions, often linked to perceived inadequacies in training or resources, can hinder the process. This study explores the perceptions of pre-primary educators regarding the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Kenya. With the CBC now making a paradigm shift from sheer nurturing of talent to the actual learning outcomes (use of the talents), understanding the views of early childhood educators of the same remains critical, as they serve as the foundation for lifelong learning. The research examines the extent to which pre-primary school teachers understand CBE principles, their preparedness, the resources available, and the opportunities and challenges they encounter during implementation. A qualitative research design was adopted, using interviews and focus group discussions with pre-primary teachers across selected public and private schools. Findings reveal a mixture of optimism and concern among educators - while many appreciate the learner-centered and skills-oriented approach of the CBE, they also report challenges related to limited training, insufficient instructional materials, and high teacher-pupil ratios. The study recommends targeted professional development, improved resource allocation, and supportive policy frameworks to enhance effective CBC implementation at the foundational level.

Keywords: Pre-primary, Teachers, Perception, CBC, CBE, Implementation.

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Introduction

In recent years, educational systems worldwide have shifted toward curriculum models that prioritize skills, values, and learner-centered approaches. In line with this global trend, Kenya introduced the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in 2017 to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary for the 21st century. Recently (2025), the government redefines CBC to CBE to focus more on not just skills and competencies but to what an individual learner is able to perform. The pre-primary school level—comprising PP1 and PP2—is the entry point into the formal education system and plays a foundational role in shaping children's learning trajectories. It is therefore vital to understand how educators at this level perceive the implementation of CBE.

Pre-primary school teachers are key actors in the success of the CBE. Their attitudes, levels of preparedness, and access to resources significantly influence the fidelity and effectiveness of curriculum delivery. However, the implementation process has not been without challenges. Reports from various stakeholders suggest disparities in teacher training, resource availability, and stakeholder engagement. This study seeks to explore the

perceptions of pre-primary teachers on the ground, focusing on both the enabling and constraining factors they face in implementing the CBC.

Background and Rationale

The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Kenya, was developed as a response to the shortcomings of the former 8-4-4 system, which was largely criticized for its focus on rote memorization, inadequate skills development, and poor alignment with learners' needs and future labor market demands. The CBC, now transitioning to CBE, is anchored on seven core competencies including- *communication, collaboration, critical thinking and problem-solving, creativity and digital literacy*, is designed to nurture holistic development of learners from an early age.

Pre-primary education serves as the foundational phase for the CBC - CBE, and its success is closely linked to how well it is implemented at this stage. Despite the good intentions of curriculum reforms, implementation success often hinges on teacher perceptions, understanding, and capacity. Teachers are not mere recipients of policy they interpret and enact it within their

unique contexts. If their concerns, experiences, and insights are not understood and addressed, even well-designed reforms risk failure at the implementation level. The general objectives of this study were to:

- Identify the specific challenges they face in translating curriculum goals into classroom practice.
- Highlight the opportunities and best practices that can inform more effective CBC implementation.
- Document how pre-primary teachers perceive the CBC in terms of its clarity, relevance, and practicality.

The findings will inform curriculum developers, teacher training institutions, policymakers, and school administrators on how to better support educators at the foundational level of learning in order to achieve the best of the educational programmes.

Statement of the Problem

Despite Kenya's commitment to trans-formative education through the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), its effective implementation at the pre-primary level remains low. Pre-primary school teachers are pivotal in translating curriculum reforms into practical classroom experiences. However, many reports and anecdotal observations point to inconsistencies in teacher preparedness, disparities in training, and contextual challenges, especially in devolved units such as Migori County. While the CBC emphasizes learner-centered and skills-based approaches, limited attention has been given to understanding the front-line experiences and readiness of early childhood educators tasked with implementing this curriculum.

The successful implementation of CBC - CBE depends not only on the curriculum designs but also on teacher capacity, attitude, and contextual enablers. In areas like Migori County, where infrastructure, professional support, and teacher development are of low quality and uneven, it is crucial to interrogate teachers' readiness and the specific teacher-related factors influencing CBC implementation. Without this understanding, the national efforts toward competency-based education risks being undermined at the foundational level.

Specific Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to achieve the following specific objectives:

- To determine pre-primary school teachers' readiness for the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC)
- To analyze specific teacher-related factors affecting the implementation of the CBC in Migori County.

Research Questions

Study sought to answer the following questions:

- What is the level of readiness among pre-primary school teachers to implement the CBC in Migori County?
- What teacher-related factors influence the implementation of the CBC at the pre-primary level in Migori County?

Justification of the Study

The success of any educational reform largely depends on how well it is understood, accepted, and implemented by teachers—the primary agents of curriculum delivery. While the

CBC now CBE was rolled out to reform teaching and learning practices in Kenya, there remains a gap in understanding the preparedness and experiences of pre-primary school teachers, particularly in rural and semi-rural settings like Migori County. Previous studies have often focused on primary or secondary school implementation, leaving a gap in literature concerning the foundational level of learning.

Given that pre-primary education sets the pace for later academic and social development, examining the readiness and influencing factors among early childhood educators is both timely and necessary. This study is justified by the need to generate empirical insights that reflect ground-level realities, thereby informing policy adjustments, teacher training, and resource allocation strategies tailored to early years education within a devolved context.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study was delimited to **pre-primary school teachers** working in **Migori County**, Kenya. It specifically examines their perceptions, levels of readiness, and teacher-related factors influencing the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). The focus is limited to **PP1 and PP2 classes** within both public and private early childhood education centers.

The study does not cover CBC implementation in primary or secondary school levels, nor does it address student outcomes or parental perceptions. Additionally, the study focuses only on teacher-related factors (e.g., training, experience, attitudes) and does not examine systemic or infrastructural issues beyond those directly linked to teachers' classroom practice.

Empirical Literature Review

Introduction

This section reviews scholarly and policy-based literature relevant to the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in early childhood education. The review is structured thematically according to the study objectives: (i) teacher readiness for CBC implementation and (ii) teacher-related factors affecting CBC implementation in Migori County. The review adopts a funnel approach beginning with broad concepts and narrowing down to specific issues in the Kenyan pre-primary education context.

Teacher Readiness for CBC Implementation

Teacher readiness for curriculum change is multifaceted, involving prior training, pedagogical understanding, resource access, and motivational alignment. In the Kenyan context, Ouko, Ireri and Mweru (2023) conducted a critical analysis of CBC implementation in rural pre-primary schools in Embu County and found that low levels of teacher competency directly hindered effective CBC implementation. Their study revealed that many ECDE teachers lacked familiarity with CBC assessment methods, experiential pedagogy, and curriculum design—a challenge similarly reported by KICD (2019) and Mweru (2020).

Ouko et al. (2023) also noted that while some teachers were enthusiastic about CBC, their practical engagement was constrained by inadequate exposure to child-centered strategies. This finding supports the argument by Fullan (2007) that successful implementation of curriculum reform requires not just training but sustained pedagogical mentor-ship.

Teacher-Related Factors and CBC Implementation

In evaluating how teacher-level variables affect CBC roll-out, Vihenda and Ouko (2018) highlight disparities between public and private ECDE centres in Nairobi. Their findings indicate that factors such as teacher motivation, institutional leadership, and staffing levels significantly influence the quality of curriculum delivery. Public centres—plagued by under-staffing and low morale—reported greater resistance and less innovation in implementing learner-centered approaches, a situation also observed in many public ECDE centres in Migori County.

Similarly, Ouko et al. (2023) emphasized that even trained teachers may fail to apply CBC effectively when working in demotivating environments with high pupil-teacher ratios and poor infrastructure. These findings reinforce earlier studies (e.g., Nyambura & Ochieng, 2020; Tiro, 2021) which identify workload, resources, and attitude as critical teacher-related barriers.

Summary of Literature Review

While the literature affirms the importance of teacher readiness and related factors in curriculum implementation, most existing studies are national in scope and do not give sufficient attention to county-level realities, especially in marginalized areas like Migori. Furthermore, limited research exists on how pre-primary teachers in such settings perceive and adapt to the CBC. This study fills this gap by providing localized, teacher-centered insights that can inform more context-responsive CBC support strategies.

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological approach adopted for the study. It outlines the research design, study location, target population, sample size and sampling techniques, data collection methods and instruments, procedures for data analysis, validity and reliability considerations, and ethical considerations. The focus of the chapter is to provide a transparent and replicable approach to examining pre-primary teachers' perceptions of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC-CBE) implementation in Migori County.

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design. The design was considered appropriate for the study as it allows for a systematic collection and analysis of data to describe the characteristics, perceptions, and attitudes of a specific group—in this case, pre-primary school teachers. The descriptive design is particularly suited for studies that aim to gather in-depth information without manipulating variables (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). It was chosen to facilitate the exploration of teacher readiness, attitudes, and perceived challenges or opportunities surrounding the implementation of CBC.

Study Location

The study was conducted in Migori County, located in the southwestern region of Kenya. Migori is characterized by a mix of rural and semi-urban settings with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds partly fishing and largely subsistence agriculture. The choice of Migori County was purposive due to its limited data on CBC implementation and the concerns raised in local education reports regarding teacher preparedness and resource allocation in early childhood education.

Target Population

The target population comprised all PP1 & PP2 pre-primary school teachers in both public and private Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) centres in Migori County. This included teachers working in PP1 and PP2 classes who are directly involved in the implementation of the CBC at the foundational level.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select participants:

- **Stage 1: Purposive sampling** was used to select five sub-counties within Migori County that are representative in terms of rural-urban mix and school typologies.
- **Stage 2: Stratified random sampling** was used to select ECDE centres within each sub-county, stratified by public and private status.
- **Stage 3: Simple random sampling** was applied to select pre-primary teachers within the sampled schools.

A total sample of **80 pre-primary school teachers** was selected, ensuring diversity in terms of gender, school type, and years of teaching experience. The sample size was determined based on the Cochran formula (1977) for descriptive studies and adjusted to fit logistical feasibility.

Data Collection Instruments

The study employed two primary instruments for data collection:

Structured Questionnaire

A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data on teacher demographics, readiness indicators (training, confidence, resources), and perceived challenges and opportunities. The questionnaire included: Closed-ended items on a 5-point Likert scale with sections corresponding to each objective.

Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview guide was used to gather in-depth qualitative insights from selected participants (one from each sub-county). These interviews explored teachers' lived experiences, perceptions, and contextual realities of CBC implementation.

Ethical considerations and Data Collection

To address ethical issues, permission was sought from relevant education authorities, including the County Director of Education and school administrators. Ethical clearance was sought from a recognized Ethics Review Committee. Participants were informed of the purpose and scope of the study and were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Consent forms were signed voluntarily. No participant was coerced, and they retained the right to withdraw from the study at any point.

Data were collected over a period of four weeks. Trained research assistants administered questionnaires and conducted interviews, ensuring ethical protocols were followed. Respondents were assured of confidentiality, and participation was voluntary.

Data Analysis Techniques

- **Quantitative Data:** Responses from questionnaires were coded and entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 for analysis. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, percentages) were used to summarize the data. Cross-tabulations and charts were

used to visualize key findings aligned with study objectives.

- **Qualitative Data:** Data from interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically. Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework, identifying patterns related to teacher readiness, challenges, and opportunities in CBC implementation.

Validity and Reliability

Validity: Content validity was ensured by aligning the questionnaire items with the study objectives and consulting with curriculum experts and ECDE professionals. A pilot test was conducted with 4 teachers (2 from either public or private schools) outside the sample schools to refine the instruments.

Reliability:

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistency. An alpha coefficient of 0.78 was obtained, indicating acceptable reliability for social science research (George & Mallery, 2003).

Findings and Interpretation of Results

Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes the findings of the study based on the data collected from 80 pre-primary teachers in Migori County. The analysis is structured around the two main objectives of the study; to determine pre-primary school teachers' readiness for the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), and to analyze specific teacher-related factors affecting the implementation of the CBC in Migori County.

Both quantitative and qualitative data are presented using descriptive statistics, tables, charts, and thematic summaries. The findings are interpreted in relation to the existing literature and study objectives.

Response Rate

Out of the 80 questionnaires distributed, 76 were successfully completed and returned, representing a **response rate of 95%**. In addition, five interviews were conducted with one teacher from each selected sub-county.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 presents respondents demographic information. It illustrates the gender, age, qualifications and working experience, being important aspects focused in the study as they may be relating to teachers' perceptions.

Table 1:

Demography of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=76)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	22	28.9%
	Female	54	71.1%
Age	20–30 years	18	23.7%
	31–40 years	36	47.4%
	41 years and above	22	28.9%
Qualification	Certificate in ECDE	29	38.2%
	Diploma in ECDE	35	46.1%
	Degree in ECE	12	15.8%
Teaching Experience	Less than 5 years	19	25.0%
	5–10 years	34	44.7%
	Over 10 years	23	30.3%

Majority of the respondents were female (71.1%) with those who had a diploma in ECDE at over 46%. Teachers who had 5–10 years of teaching experience were the majority at 44.7%. This means that most teachers had good academic qualifications and had enough experience to handle learners at this level.

Table 2:

1. Training Coverage

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Received training	50	65.8%
Not received training	26	34.2%

Teacher Readiness for CBC Implementation

Readiness was assessed based on four indicators: CBC-CBE training, pedagogical understanding, confidence, and availability of CBC materials.

Despite efforts by the Ministry of Education, more than one-third of the respondents indicated they had **not received formal**

training on CBC implementation at 26%. this implies that quite some good numbers of teachers need roper training on CBC-CBE.

Table 3:

Teachers’ Confidence in Implementing CBC-CBE

Confidence Level	Frequency	Percentage
Very confident	9	11.8%
Confident	28	36.8%
Neutral	18	23.7%
Not confident	21	27.6%

Only 48.6% of the respondents felt confident or very confident in implementing CBC, suggesting a need for targeted capacity-building. This revelation is critical noting that over half of the teachers indicating that they were not competent enough to implement CBC-CBE. This could partly due to inadequate training.

On the other had most teachers reported a lack of adequate CBC-aligned materials, especially in public schools with over 68% indicating that they relied on locally improvised or outdated materials.

Interview Insights:

From the interview insights, some teachers were reported saying that;

“We are expected to use learner-centered activities, but there are no materials or sample lesson plans for guidance. Sometimes we just guess.” — ECDE Teacher, Uiri Sub-County

These revelations indicate that the teachers are not having a positive perspective of the implementation of the CBC-CBE at the grass root. This could also have a negative impact on the overall teaching/learning outcomes hence negating any gains made so far.

Teacher-Related Factors Influencing CBC Implementation

One of the teacher related factors investigated was teachers’ workload. Table 4 illustrates the teachers’ workload.

Table 4:

Workload and Class Size

Class Size	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25 learners	11	14.5%
26–40 learners	38	50.0%
Above 40 learners	27	35.5%

This study sought to understand teacher-related factors affecting CBC_CBE implementation. As can be noted in table 4, over 85% of teachers taught a class of more than 25 learners per class, making individualized CBC implementation challenging. This

meant that the issue of teacher-learner ratio was high and did affect the smooth implementation of the new competency curriculum.

Teacher-Attitudes towards CBC

Teacher attitude was another teacher-factor this study investigated. The responses are collated in table 5 below.

Attitude	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	41	53.9%
Neutral	20	26.3%
Negative	15	19.7%

Teachers' attitude also was investigated where it was established that while most teachers expressed support for CBC ideals, negative attitudes were tied to the reported workload, **inadequate training and unclear assessment procedures.**

Teaching Experience and Competence

It was also hypothesized that teachers' teaching experience could have toll on teachers' efficacy to implement CBE at the foundational level. It was revealed that experienced teachers with over 10 years of experience reported more confidence in adapting CBC than novice teachers. It was concluded that teacher experience did have a negative influence on teachers' perceptions of CBC-CBE implementation. However, younger teachers were more likely to adopt digital tools and flexible learning strategies when trained.

Interview Insights

"Those of us who have taught for long have to unlearn a lot. The new graduates seem more familiar with interactive approaches, but they still struggle without mentor-ship." (Teacher, Nyatike Sub-County).

Emerging Opportunities

The study also sought to identify contextual opportunities of CBC-CBE implementation in Migori County. The opportunities as captured in the interviews and FGDs highlights on the following three aspects;

- ✓ **Improved learner engagement-** through play and projects.
- ✓ **Parental involvement-** has slightly increased due to home assignments.
- ✓ **Creativity and local material use** - are being embraced by some teachers.

However, these opportunities were inconsistently leveraged due to lack of **policy alignment** and **training gaps**.

Summary Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This section presents a summary of the study, draws conclusions based on the key findings, and offers recommendations to address the challenges and enhance the opportunities related to the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in pre-primary schools in Migori County. The implications for policy, practice, and future research are also discussed.

The summary is that;

A significant portion of pre-primary teachers have inadequate training and had low levels of confidence in CBC delivery. Teachers with positive attitudes toward CBC had generally received better training or mentor-ship. There are resource constraints including large class sizes, and inadequate support from administration and parents.

Thematic Summary

- **Teacher Readiness for CBC Implementation:** While a majority (65.8%) of teachers had received some CBC-related training, over one-third had not been trained.
- Less than half of the teachers (48.6%) felt confident in implementing CBC.
- Many teachers struggled with lack of CBC materials, inadequate sample activities, and insufficient assessment tools.

Teacher-Related Factors Influencing Implementation

Teacher-related factors were identified as under;

- ✓ **Large class sizes**, especially in public ECDE centres, impeded individualized learning.
- ✓ Teachers cited **increased workload** and unclear expectations as key challenges.
- ✓ **Attitudes toward CBC** were mixed; those with more training or support tended to have more positive perceptions.
- ✓ Teachers with longer teaching experience showed greater classroom adaptability, but younger teachers showed more openness to using digital tools and interactive methods.
- ✓ **Resource disparities** between private and public ECDE centres created implementation gaps.

Emerging Opportunities

Teachers reported that CBC encouraged learner engagement, creativity, and more interactive learning. A modest improvement in parental involvement was noted where use of locally available materials was being embraced, particularly in better-supported schools. This underscores the critical role of training to promote the skill of improvisation among educators.

Conclusions

From the findings, the following conclusions were drawn in order to promote CBC-CBE implementation at the foundational level of education.

- ✓ There is a moderate level of readiness among pre-primary teachers for CBC implementation, but significant gaps exist in training, resources, and support systems.
- ✓ Teacher-related factors, such as level of qualification, teaching experience, attitude, workload, and access to teaching materials, significantly influence the success of CBC implementation.
- ✓ The potential benefits of CBC in early childhood education—such as learner-centered pedagogy and creativity—are acknowledged by teachers, but these remain underutilized due to systemic and contextual challenges. Unless these gaps are addressed, implementation fidelity at the foundational level will remain compromised, affecting the overall success of the CBC reform.

Recommendations of the Study

The recommendations are targeted on specific service providers in a bid to augment CBC-CBE roll-out in particularly underprivileged regions of the country.

Policy and Training

The Ministry of Education and County Governments should invest in continuous, inclusive, and practical in-service training for all ECDE teachers on CBC pedagogy and assessment strategies.

The MoE should think of developing context-specific training modules that reflects the realities of rural and semi-urban ECDE centres. This can have a positive impact if they ensure equitable distribution of CBC-aligned materials, including sample lesson plans, activity books, and assessment tools, especially in public schools and increased budgetary support for ECDE infrastructure and learning materials through county government allocations.

➤ Teacher Support and Supervision

The government should further strengthen the role of Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs) to provide school-based mentor-ship and follow-up training and facilitate teacher collaboration platforms where educators can share CBC implementation strategies, successes, and challenges.

The support systems should include recruitment of additional ECDE teachers to address the issue of large class sizes, particularly in overcrowded public schools and engagement of assistant teachers or caregivers to support CBC activities, especially in lower-resource centres.

➤ Suggestions for Further Research

The question of how and whether CBE is achieving its purpose in Kenya is far from over. There is need for focused studies to unravel the successes, challenges and opportunities standing on the way of CBC-CBE in Kenya to inform policy and timely intervention. The following are some suggestions for further study. There is need for;

- ✓ A longitudinal study examining **learner outcomes** under CBC at the pre-primary level.
- ✓ A comparative study of **CBC implementation in public versus private ECDE centres**.
- ✓ Research on **parental involvement** and its influence on CBC success in early childhood education.
- ✓ A study exploring the **impact of digital tools** and innovation in CBC instruction at the pre-primary level.

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