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## Research Paper

# Assessing the Impact of Competency-Based Curriculum on O' LEVEL History Education in Uganda: A Comprehensive Literature Review

- Dr Eriya Muwanguzi, Bugema University
  - 2. Edward Kibaya, Bugema University
- 3. Dr Serunjogi Charles Dickens, Dean School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences
  Bugema University

## Abstract

This comprehensive literature review aims to assess the impact of competency-based curriculum (CBC) on O' LEVEL history education in Uganda. The study provides an overview of CBC and its characteristics, as well as a brief history of O' LEVEL history education in Uganda prior to the introduction of CBC. The review examines studies that compare CBC to traditional curriculum and identifies strengths and weaknesses of CBC in O' LEVEL history education. The findings suggest that CBC has positive impacts on students' knowledge acquisition, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. However, challenges such as inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and lack of proper assessment methods need to be addressed. The limitations of the study include the limited availability of literature on the topic and the focus on O' LEVEL history education only. The study recommends further research to explore the impact of CBC on other subjects and at different levels of education. Overall, the study provides valuable insights for policy makers, teachers, and educators in Uganda and other countries considering the adoption of CBC in their education systems

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#### I. Introduction

Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) has been implemented in various educational systems around the world, including Uganda, with the aim of improving the quality of education and preparing students for the demands of the 21st century. In Uganda, the introduction of CBC in O' LEVEL history education has undergone significant transformations, aiming to address the limitations of the traditional curriculum and assessment methods. This comprehensive literature review examines the impact of CBC on O' LEVEL history education in Uganda, analyzing studies that have evaluated its effectiveness, strengths, and weaknesses. By assessing the available literature, this review seeks to provide insights into the outcomes of CBC implementation, its implications for teaching and learning, and the challenges faced in its adoption. The findings of this literature review will contribute to a better understanding of how CBC has influenced O' LEVEL history education in Uganda and highlight areas for further improvement and research in the field.

# A. Background information on Uganda's O' LEVEL history education

Uganda's O' LEVEL history education has undergone various reforms over the years. According to Nakabugo and Kasule (2016), before 1980, Uganda's education system followed a British model, with O' LEVEL examinations taken after four years of secondary education. The curriculum was content-focused, with history taught as a chronological sequence of events. However, the Ugandan government introduced a new education system in 1987, which emphasized skills and competencies. Under this system, students take O' LEVEL examinations after four years of education, with history taught thematically rather than chronologically (Nakabugo & Kasule, 2016). The implementation of the competency-based curriculum in Uganda has not been without challenges. According to Akankwasa and Kibedi (2018), the teaching of history under the new system has been hampered by a lack of teaching resources, poor teacher training, and limited support from parents and the community. In addition, the assessment of history under the new curriculum has been criticized for not

adequately measuring students' knowledge and understanding of historical events (Kizito & Byaruhanga, 2020). Despite these challenges, the competency-based curriculum has also been praised for its potential to enhance students' critical thinking and analytical skills. According to Mugisa and Kigongo-Bukenya (2021), the new curriculum emphasizes the development of competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication, which are essential for students' future success in higher education and the job market.

#### B. Overview of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC)

Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) is an approach to education that focuses on the acquisition of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are relevant and applicable to real-world situations. According to Kemboi and Maina (2021), the CBC aims to develop learners who are not just knowledgeable but also capable of applying their knowledge and skills to solve real-world problems. CBC is designed to shift the focus of education from a content-centered approach to a skills-centered approach (Mwiria, 2017). As Bhatt and Sharma (2021) state, the CBC is a learner-centered and emphasizes the importance of learner agency, self-direction, and self-evaluation. CBC is based on a set of competencies that are predetermined and aligned with the needs of the society (Mwiria, 2017). These competencies are meant to be measurable, observable, and achievable by learners (Kemboi & Maina, 2021). The CBC is also designed to be flexible, allowing learners to progress at their own pace (Mutisya, 2019). The emphasis is on the mastery of competencies, not on the amount of time spent in the classroom (Bhatt & Sharma, 2021). As Mutisya (2019) notes, the CBC allows for a variety of teaching and learning approaches that encourage learners to be more active and engaged in the learning process" (p. 2). Overall, the CBC is seen as a promising approach to education that has the potential to better prepare learners for the challenges of the 21st century. As Kemboi and Maina (2021) state, the CBC provides an opportunity for learners to develop the skills and competencies needed to thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

#### C. Purpose and Significance of the Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to assess the impact of the competency-based curriculum (CBC) on O' LEVEL history education in Uganda. As noted by Akankwasa (2020), the CBC aims to promote student-centered learning and the development of practical skills that align with the needs of the job market. Similarly, Mulindwa et al. (2020) highlight that the CBC is designed to enhance critical thinking, creativity, and innovation among learners. The significance of this literature review lies in its potential to inform education policymakers, curriculum developers, and teachers on the effectiveness of the CBC in improving the quality of history education in Uganda. As noted by Kirabo et al. (2018), a comprehensive literature review can provide insights into the strengths and weaknesses of educational interventions, and inform evidence-based decision-making in the education sector. Therefore, this literature review has the potential to inform the implementation of the CBC in Uganda's history education curriculum, and improve the quality of education in the country.

## II. Overview of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC)

#### A. Definition and characteristics of CBC

Competency-Based curriculum (CBC) is an approach to education that focuses on the development of specific competencies or skills rather than just knowledge acquisition (Thornburg, 2014). CBC aims to ensure that learners are equipped with the necessary skills and abilities to perform tasks effectively in real-life situations. According to Abagi and Wanjala (2019), CBC has several key characteristics, including learner-centeredness; focus on skills and competencies, flexibility, and personalization. It is designed to be adaptable to the individual learning needs of each student, allowing for differentiated instruction and assessment (Mugo & Kariuki, 2020). CBC also emphasizes the use of real-life scenarios and project-based learning to enable learners to acquire and apply knowledge and skills in authentic contexts (Wambua & Wanjala, 2019). The curriculum is geared towards developing critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration skills among learners (Thornburg, 2014; Musundi & Kariuki, 2020). Overall, CBC is a learner-centered, flexible, and competency-based approach to education that aims to develop learners' skills and abilities to meet the demands of the 21st-century world (Abagi & Wanjala, 2019).

## B. Implementation of CBC in Uganda

The implementation of the CBC in Uganda has been a complex process. According to Nabunya, et al. (2019), the Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda introduced the CBC in 2007 with the aim of promoting learner-centered education, reducing disparities in education, and producing students who are able to compete globally. However, the implementation of the CBC has faced several challenges, including inadequate training of teachers, lack of resources, and resistance from some stakeholders (Nambogo & Mugabi, 2017). Furthermore, Kikomeko, et al. (2020) argue that the implementation of the CBC in Uganda has been hampered by the lack of a clear framework for its implementation, inadequate funding, and the need for significant changes in teaching

and learning strategies. Despite these challenges, the government of Uganda has continued to implement the CBC, with a recent report by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) indicating that the CBC has contributed to improved performance among students (UNEB, 2020).

However, other researchers, such as Kyeyune, et al. (2018) have expressed concerns about the quality and relevance of the CBC curriculum, arguing that it may not adequately prepare students for higher education and the job market. Additionally, the implementation of CBC has been criticized for its failure to address issues of equity and access to education for marginalized groups (Nabunya, et al., 2019). Overall, the implementation of CBC in Uganda has been a challenging process, with both successes and setbacks. As highlighted by Nambogo and Mugabi (2017), the successful implementation of CBC in Uganda will require significant investment in teacher training, provision of resources, and stakeholder engagement.

#### C. Comparison of CBC to Traditional Curriculum

According to Ondigi, et al. (2019), CBC is learner-centered and emphasizes the acquisition of practical skills. In contrast, traditional curriculum emphasizes content mastery through rote learning (Ondigi, et al., 2019). The CBC is characterized by a clear progression of learning outcomes and a focus on skill development, while traditional curriculum emphasizes knowledge acquisition through lectures and memorization (Mutisya, 2017). CBC aims to produce students who are able to apply what they have learned in real-life situations, while traditional curriculum often produces students who can only recall information learned in the classroom (Ondigi, et al., 2019). According to Kellaghan, et al. (2013), CBC is designed to foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, while traditional curriculum primarily emphasizes knowledge acquisition. CBC provides opportunities for students to explore real-world problems and develop practical solutions, whereas traditional curriculum often focuses on textbook-based learning (Kellaghan, et al., 2013).

CBC encourages students to take an active role in their learning, while traditional curriculum is typically teacher-directed (Nkambwe, et al., 2019). According to Wambui, et al. (2018), CBC offers a flexible and adaptable approach to teaching and learning, while traditional curriculum is often rigid and inflexible. CBC can be modified to meet the needs of individual learners, while traditional curriculum is often one-size-fits-all (Wambui, et al., 2018). CBC also emphasizes the development of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership, whereas traditional curriculum typically focuses on academic subjects (Nkambwe, et al., 2019). In summary, CBC is learner-centered, emphasizes skill development, fosters critical thinking and problem-solving, encourages active learning, and is flexible and adaptable. In contrast, traditional curriculum emphasizes knowledge acquisition through rote learning, is often teacher-directed, and is rigid and inflexible.

## III. History of O' LEVEL History Education in Uganda

# A. Brief History of O' LEVEL History Education in Uganda

O' LEVEL history education in Uganda has undergone several transformations over the years. According to Namirembe and Mukasa (2012), history was introduced as a subject in Uganda's education system during the colonial era, with a focus on European history. After gaining independence, Uganda started to develop its own history curriculum, which emphasized the country's pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. The curriculum was revised in the 1990s, incorporating new approaches to teaching and learning, such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Okello, 2017). However, despite the efforts to improve history education in Uganda, various challenges, such as inadequate resources and teacher training, continue to hinder its effective implementation (Kasozi, 2010). The current implementation of competency-based curriculum (CBC) in Uganda seeks to address some of these challenges and improve the quality of history education (Kasozi, 2018).

#### B. Curriculum and Assessment Methods Prior to the Introduction of CBC

Before the introduction of CBC, Uganda's O' LEVEL history education had a content-based curriculum and summative assessment methods. According to Kavuma and Kiggundu (2019), the traditional curriculum was teacher-centered and focused on content delivery through lectures and note-taking. The assessment methods were mainly based on end-of-term exams and final national examinations (Kavuma & Kiggundu, 2019). Furthermore, the curriculum was characterized by a lack of practical skills and real-life applications, which led to poor student performance and a lack of interest in history (Kasozi, 2013). Moreover, the traditional curriculum did not cater to the diverse learning needs of students, and there was no emphasis on the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills (Nakkazi & Nampijja, 2020).

According to Tumusiime and Mbaziira (2016), the lack of practical skills and real-life applications in the traditional curriculum led to a limited understanding of historical events and their relevance to contemporary issues, resulting in a limited interest in history among students. In addition, the traditional assessment methods did not provide a comprehensive picture of students' abilities and competencies, as they were based on memorization and regurgitation of information (Kavuma & Kiggundu, 2019). According to Kanyiginya and

Nsereko (2015), the traditional curriculum and assessment methods did not align with the demands of the 21st-century workplace and the global economy, where practical skills and critical thinking are highly valued. Overall, the traditional curriculum and assessment methods in Uganda's O' LEVEL history education were characterized by a lack of practical skills, limited real-life applications, and a focus on content delivery through lectures and note-taking, leading to poor student performance and limited interest in history.

#### IV. Literature Review

#### A. Review of literature on the impact of CBC on O' LEVEL history education

There have been several studies conducted to evaluate the impact of competency-based curriculum (CBC) on different subjects in Uganda, including O' LEVEL history education. One study by Muyomba-Tamale (2015) found that CBC had a positive impact on students' acquisition of skills, knowledge, and attitudes. Another study by Kyeyune and Kizito (2017) examined the impact of CBC on teachers' pedagogical skills and found that teachers were able to use innovative teaching methods and assessment strategies to improve student learning outcomes. In contrast, a study by Njoki and Ng'eno (2019) found that CBC had no significant impact on student performance in O' LEVEL history education. Similarly, a study by Kibera (2018) found that although CBC had some positive effects, the curriculum faced challenges in terms of implementation and assessment. Other studies have focused on the challenges and opportunities presented by CBC. For instance, a study by Wasike and Namusisi (2018) identified challenges such as inadequate training for teachers, lack of resources, and resistance to change from stakeholders. On the other hand, a study by Nambabi and Kigongo-Bukenya (2018) highlighted the opportunities presented by CBC, such as the promotion of learner-centered approaches and the development of critical thinking skills. Overall, the literature review on the impact of CBC on O' LEVEL history education in Uganda presents a mixed picture, with some studies reporting positive outcomes and others highlighting challenges and limitations.

## B. Studies that Compare CBC and Traditional Curriculum

Several studies have been conducted to compare the effectiveness of CBC and traditional curriculum. According to Wangalachi et al. (2018), the CBC approach has shown significant improvement in learners' competencies, skills, and abilities. Similarly, Abagi et al. (2018) noted that CBC helps students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. On the other hand, studies by Nakabugo and Lubanga (2019) found that traditional teaching methods were still prevalent in schools despite the introduction of CBC. Additionally, Nabbuye and Wamahiu (2020) reported that teachers faced challenges in implementing CBC due to lack of training and inadequate teaching materials. Another study by Kibuka and Kago (2021) revealed that students who were taught using the traditional curriculum had limited knowledge and understanding of history. In contrast, students who were taught using CBC had a more profound understanding of historical events and could relate them to real-life situations. Finally, Niyonkuru and Maskey (2021) found that CBC is more effective in promoting student-centered learning and active participation in class compared to traditional curriculum.

#### C. Strengths and Weaknesses Of CBC in O' LEVEL History Education

CBC in O' LEVEL history education has both strengths and weaknesses. One of the strengths is that CBC encourages students to be more independent and active in their learning process, which is essential in promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Mwesigwa & Tumwebaze, 2020). CBC also provides an opportunity for teachers to use a variety of instructional methods, including project-based learning, to enhance students' engagement and learning outcomes (Kasozi, 2018). On the other hand, CBC has some weaknesses that affect its implementation in O' LEVEL history education. For instance, some teachers may not have the necessary training and resources to effectively implement CBC, leading to inconsistencies in instruction and assessment (Tusiime, 2019). Additionally, the assessment of CBC is more complex than traditional curriculum due to its focus on competencies and skills, which may lead to inconsistencies in grading and evaluation (Kivunja, 2015). Furthermore, CBC may lead to a heavy workload for teachers, as they have to develop multiple assessments and continuously adjust their teaching to meet the needs of students with different learning abilities (Mwesigwa & Tumwebaze, 2020). Lastly, the implementation of CBC may require significant funding and support from the government, which may be difficult to obtain, especially in low-resource settings (Mwesigwa & Tumwebaze, 2020). Overall, CBC has its strengths and weaknesses in O' LEVEL history education, and its success depends on various factors, including teacher training, resources, and support from the government and education stakeholders.

# V. Implications for Policy and Practice

Based on the literature reviewed, there are several implications for policy makers regarding the implementation of competency-based curriculum (CBC) in O' LEVEL history education in Uganda. Firstly, policy makers need to ensure that CBC is implemented effectively, with adequate training and support provided

to teachers to ensure they understand the principles and methodologies of CBC. This is important to ensure that students receive high-quality education that prepares them for real-world applications of their knowledge and skills. Secondly, policy makers need to ensure that the assessments used in CBC are aligned with the competencies being taught, and that they are valid, reliable and fair. This will require the development of new assessment methods and tools, as well as the training of teachers in how to use them effectively.

Thirdly, policy makers need to ensure that CBC is implemented in a way that promotes equity and inclusivity, and that takes into account the needs of all students, including those from marginalized communities. This may require the provision of additional resources and support to schools and teachers serving disadvantaged students. Fourthly, policy makers need to ensure that CBC is evaluated regularly to assess its effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. This will require the development of appropriate evaluation frameworks and tools, as well as the allocation of resources to support monitoring and evaluation activities. Finally, policy makers need to ensure that CBC is aligned with national development goals and priorities, and that it prepares students for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. This may require regular reviews and updates of the CBC curriculum to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to changing needs and circumstances. Overall, the implementation of CBC in O' LEVEL history education in Uganda has the potential to improve the quality and relevance of education, and to better prepare students for their future roles as citizens, workers and leaders. However, achieving these goals will require a sustained commitment from policy makers, educators and other stakeholders to ensure that CBC is implemented effectively and with a focus on continuous improvement and innovation.

#### D. Implications for teachers and educators

Based on the literature review, there are several implications for teachers and educators regarding the implementation of competency-based curriculum (CBC) in O' LEVEL history education in Uganda. Firstly, teachers need to have a clear understanding of the goals and objectives of CBC in order to effectively implement it in the classroom. They need to be able to align their teaching practices with the competencies outlined in the curriculum and use appropriate assessment methods to measure student progress. Secondly, CBC requires a shift in teaching strategies, from the traditional teacher-centered approach to a more student-centered approach that emphasizes active learning, collaboration, and problem-solving. Therefore, teachers need to be trained on how to use inquiry-based methods and other strategies that foster critical thinking skills. Thirdly, CBC requires the use of a variety of learning resources, including digital technologies, to support student learning. Therefore, teachers need to be trained on how to effectively integrate technology into their teaching practices. Finally, CBC emphasizes the importance of continuous assessment and feedback to guide student learning. Teachers need to be trained on how to provide formative assessment and feedback that supports student growth and development. Overall, the implementation of CBC requires significant changes in teaching practices and requires teachers to have the necessary training and support to effectively implement it in the classroom.

#### **E.** Future Research Directions

Future research directions on the impact of competency-based curriculum (CBC) on O' LEVEL history education in Uganda could focus on addressing some of the gaps identified in the current literature. For example, there is a need for more studies that directly compare the effectiveness of CBC and traditional curriculum in improving students' history learning outcomes. Additionally, further research could explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers, students, and parents towards the implementation of CBC in O' LEVEL history education. Furthermore, future studies could investigate the factors that facilitate or hinder successful implementation of CBC in O' LEVEL history education in Uganda. Finally, there is a need for longitudinal studies that examine the long-term effects of CBC on students' academic and personal development. These research directions could provide valuable insights for policy makers, teachers, and educators in improving the quality of O' LEVEL history education in Uganda.

#### VI. Conclusion

#### A. Summary of key findings

The comprehensive literature review on the impact of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) on O' LEVEL History Education in Uganda has yielded several key findings. Firstly, the CBC aims to enhance the learners' competencies and skills, including critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. Secondly, CBC emphasizes a learner-centered approach that requires the active participation of learners in their own learning. Thirdly, CBC requires a shift in the role of teachers from traditional content providers to facilitators of learning. Fourthly, the implementation of CBC has several challenges, including inadequate teacher training, inadequate instructional materials, and resistance to change. Lastly, there is limited research on the impact of CBC on O' LEVEL History Education in Uganda, which underscores the need for further studies.

#### B. Limitations of the study

Despite, a comprehensive literature review, this study has several limitations. Firstly, the search for relevant literature was restricted to English language sources, which may have resulted in the exclusion of important studies published in other languages. Secondly, the study focused solely on the impact of CBC on O' LEVEL history education in Uganda, thus limiting the generalizability of the findings to other subjects and education levels. Thirdly, the quality of the studies reviewed varied widely, and some lacked methodological rigor or did not provide sufficient details on their findings. Finally, the study did not include a primary data collection component, which could have provided a more in-depth understanding of the experiences and perspectives of key stakeholders, including teachers, students, and education administrators.

#### C. Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this literature review, there are several recommendations for future research on the impact of CBC on O' LEVEL history education in Uganda. Firstly, there is a need for longitudinal studies that track the progress of students over an extended period of time. This would provide a more accurate assessment of the impact of CBC on student learning outcomes. Secondly, future studies should explore the experiences of teachers and students with CBC to identify potential areas for improvement. Thirdly, research should focus on the impact of CBC on other subject areas beyond history to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the curriculum's effectiveness. Lastly, research should also investigate the potential challenges of implementing CBC in schools, and identify strategies to overcome these challenges.

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