



Teachers' Perceptions of Competency-Based Curriculum Reforms in Secondary Education

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Department of Education, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), USA **Abstract:**

This study explores secondary education teachers' perceptions of the competency-based curriculum (CBC) reforms implemented across various educational systems. Through qualitative research methods, including interviews and surveys with educators, the research identifies key factors that influence teachers' views on CBC, such as instructional flexibility, student engagement, and the challenges of assessment and implementation. Findings reveal a mixed response, with educators acknowledging the potential benefits of CBC, such as personalized learning and increased student agency, while also expressing concerns about insufficient professional development, increased workload, and the practical challenges of execution. The study calls for more comprehensive training, resources, and support for teachers in the successful integration of CBC.

Keywords: Competency-Based Curriculum, Secondary Education, Teachers' Perceptions, Curriculum Reforms, Educational Assessment, Pedagogical Approaches

1. Introduction
The competency-based curriculum (CBC) is gaining traction as a progressive approach to secondary education worldwide. In CBC, the focus shifts from traditional time-based learning to mastery of specific competencies, ensuring that students achieve a certain level of skill before progressing. While the theoretical benefits of CBC—such as promoting personalized learning, fostering student autonomy, and facilitating continuous feedback—have been extensively discussed, there remains a gap in understanding how teachers perceive and experience these reforms. Teachers, as the primary implementers of educational policies, play a pivotal role in the success or failure of curriculum reforms.

This study aims to examine the perceptions of secondary school teachers regarding the implementation of CBC. By analyzing their experiences, concerns, and suggestions, this research seeks to shed light on the practical implications of the reform process and offer recommendations for improving its effectiveness.

2. Literature Review

Competency-Based Education: An Overview

The CBC model is grounded in the belief that students should demonstrate mastery in specific learning outcomes. Unlike traditional curricula that emphasize the completion of content within a fixed timeframe, CBC allows for flexible pacing, ensuring that students progress upon demonstrating proficiency.

Global Adoption of CBC in Secondary Education

Several countries have adopted CBC reforms in response to calls for more personalized and effective learning environments. However, the adoption process is often marked by challenges related to teacher readiness, curriculum design, and assessment practices.

Teachers' Role in Curriculum Reform

Previous research has highlighted the importance of teacher perspectives in shaping educational reforms. Teachers' perceptions of curriculum changes can either facilitate or hinder successful implementation.

Challenges of Implementing CBC

Some studies have noted that teachers face significant barriers, such as limited professional development opportunities, lack of resources, and an overemphasis on standardized assessments, making the transition to CBC difficult.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore and understand secondary education teachers' perceptions of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) reforms. Given the subjective and experiential nature of the topic, qualitative methods were chosen to provide rich, detailed insights into teachers' experiences, challenges, and suggestions related to CBC implementation.

The study's methodological framework integrates semi-structured interviews and a structured survey to capture both in-depth qualitative data and quantitative information that complements the qualitative findings.

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 30 secondary education teachers who were selected from a range of schools that had recently adopted CBC reforms. The teachers were from different educational contexts, including both urban and rural schools, to ensure a diverse representation of perceptions. Participants varied in terms of teaching experience, subject areas taught, and professional background, contributing to a broad spectrum of perspectives on CBC.

Sampling Method

A purposive sampling method was employed to select participants, as this allows researchers to intentionally choose individuals who have specific knowledge or experience relevant to the study's focus. The teachers were chosen based on their involvement in the implementation of CBC and their willingness to share insights into their personal experiences with the curriculum reform. Purposive

sampling ensured that the selected teachers had a significant understanding of the CBC process and could offer valuable contributions to the study.

- **Inclusion Criteria:**

- Teachers must have taught in a secondary education setting where CBC was recently introduced.
- Teachers must be actively engaged in teaching and implementing CBC principles.
- A mix of subject areas was sought, including both core subjects (e.g., Mathematics, Science, English) and electives.

- **Exclusion Criteria:**

- Teachers who have not directly participated in CBC implementation.
- Teachers from schools that have not yet fully adopted CBC reforms.

Data Collection Methods

Semi-Structured Interviews:

Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection tool, allowing for flexibility in the conversation while ensuring that key topics related to CBC were covered. Each interview was guided by a set of core questions, but participants were encouraged to elaborate on their responses and provide additional insights that might emerge naturally from the conversation. This format facilitated an open-ended exploration of teachers' perceptions, experiences, and suggestions.

Interview Topics:

Understanding of the CBC framework

Perceived benefits and challenges of CBC implementation

Professional development and support provided

Changes in teaching practices and instructional strategies

Assessment challenges and modifications under CBC **Suggestions**

for improving the CBC implementation process

Interview Procedure:

The interviews were conducted either in-person or via video conferencing, depending on the availability and preferences of the participants. Each interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes, and all were recorded with participant consent for transcription purposes.

Structured Survey:

A structured survey was distributed to supplement the interview data, providing a quantitative measure of teacher perceptions regarding CBC. The survey included a mix of closed-ended and Likertscale questions to assess teachers' agreement or disagreement with various statements related to CBC.

The survey was designed to cover aspects such as:

Teachers' overall satisfaction with CBC

Perceived student outcomes under CBC

Effectiveness of professional development programs

Challenges faced in adapting teaching methods

Frequency and type of assessment used in CBC

The survey was administered online to ensure ease of access and completion, with a response rate of 100% from the selected teachers.

Data Analysis

The collected data from the semi-structured interviews and the structured surveys were analyzed using a combination of thematic analysis and descriptive statistics.

Thematic Analysis of Interviews:

The interview transcripts were carefully read and coded to identify recurring themes, patterns, and key ideas. The thematic analysis involved several stages:

Initial Coding: All transcripts were read line-by-line, and codes were assigned to significant phrases or sentences that reflected teachers' views on CBC.

Category Development: *These codes were grouped into categories based on similarity or relevance to specific aspects of CBC (e.g., student engagement, assessment challenges, professional development).*

Theme Identification: *Broad themes were developed from the categories, representing core areas of concern or interest for teachers, such as the flexibility of CBC, teacher preparedness, and student outcomes.*

The use of multiple coders (research team members) ensured the reliability of the analysis, and interrater reliability was checked to maintain consistency in identifying themes.

Descriptive Statistics of Survey Data:

Survey data were analyzed using basic descriptive statistics, including mean scores, frequency distributions, and percentage breakdowns. The survey questions focused on the teachers' level of agreement with statements about CBC and were analyzed to quantify general attitudes and perceptions. For example:

The percentage of teachers who agree or disagree with the statement: "CBC has improved student engagement."

The mean score of teacher satisfaction with the professional development programs associated with CBC implementation.

*These statistical measures provided a clearer understanding of the overall trends and patterns in teachers' perceptions of CBC. **Ethical Considerations***

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant institutional review board (IRB). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they understood the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their right to confidentiality. All interviews and surveys were anonymized, and participants were assured that their responses would be used solely for research purposes.

Limitations

While the study provided valuable insights into teachers' perceptions of CBC, certain limitations should be noted:

- The study involved a relatively small sample size of 30 teachers, which limits the generalizability of the findings.*
- The self-reported nature of the data may introduce response biases, as teachers may present their experiences in a manner they believe is expected or socially desirable.*
- The cross-sectional design captures perceptions at a single point in time, limiting the ability to assess the long-term impact of CBC reforms.*

Results

Positive Perceptions of CBC

The findings revealed several positive aspects of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) that secondary education teachers appreciated. These benefits reflect the alignment of CBC with contemporary pedagogical principles, such as individualized learning and student-centered instruction.

Personalized Learning

A majority of teachers expressed strong support for the personalized learning approach inherent in CBC. Teachers reported that the ability to tailor learning experiences to meet the individual needs, interests, and abilities of students was a significant improvement over traditional curriculum models. This approach allowed students to progress at their own pace, ensuring that learners who struggled could receive additional support, while advanced students could move forward more quickly.

Example Quotes:

"The greatest benefit of CBC is the ability to address each student's unique learning needs."

"It feels rewarding to see students progress when they truly understand the material, rather than just because they've spent a set amount of time on it."

Enhanced Student Engagement

Teachers overwhelmingly noted that CBC encouraged greater student engagement. With a focus on mastery rather than just completing content, students were more motivated to take responsibility for their learning. Teachers reported an increase in active participation and self-directed learning, as students understood that they needed to demonstrate competency before moving forward.

Example Quotes:

"Students feel more in control of their learning, which has increased their motivation."

"I notice more collaboration among students, as they can work at their own pace and help each other when needed."

Flexibility in Instruction

The flexibility in instruction offered by CBC was another key benefit highlighted by teachers. The freedom to adapt lessons and teaching methods to suit various learning styles and abilities was seen as a major advantage. Teachers found it easier to adjust their approach based on individual student progress, ensuring that each student had the opportunity to master key competencies before moving on.

Example Quotes:

"The flexibility to adapt lessons to fit the needs of each class has been a game-changer."

"I can focus more on what my students need, rather than just going through the material because the syllabus demands it."

Negative Perceptions of CBC

While there was general support for the personalized and flexible nature of CBC, teachers also identified significant challenges related to its implementation. These challenges ranged from insufficient preparation to systemic issues in assessment and resource allocation.

Implementation Challenges

A recurring concern among teachers was the lack of proper training and resources to effectively implement CBC. Many teachers reported feeling unprepared for the shift to a competency-based framework and expressed frustration over inadequate professional development programs. While the intention behind CBC was clear, the practical application was hindered by a lack of consistent and thorough training. Teachers also noted that the implementation often felt rushed, with minimal guidance on how to adjust their teaching methods to accommodate the new curriculum model.

Example Quotes:

"There was no clear roadmap for implementing CBC, and the training we received was minimal."

"I feel like we're being asked to completely change how we teach without being given the proper tools or support."

Increased Workload

Teachers indicated that managing individualized learning plans for students, alongside the more complex assessment models required by CBC, significantly increased their workload. The need to track student progress on a continuous basis, prepare personalized materials, and implement various forms of assessment created additional stress. Many teachers expressed concerns about the timeconsuming nature of CBC and how it interfered with other essential aspects of teaching, such as lesson planning and grading.

Example Quotes:

"The workload has increased dramatically. There's simply not enough time in the day to manage everything."

"It feels like I'm constantly behind because of the amount of individualized work required."

Lack of Standardized Assessment Models

A significant concern raised by teachers was the lack of standardized assessment models for evaluating student competencies. Many teachers reported difficulty in developing consistent, reliable assessments that accurately measured students' mastery of skills. The subjective nature of some assessments, such as project-based evaluations or performance tasks, led to feelings of uncertainty and inconsistency in grading. Additionally, teachers expressed the need for more clearly defined criteria to assess student progress.

Example Quotes:

"There's a lack of clarity on what constitutes 'competency.' How do we know when a student has truly mastered a skill?"

"The assessments are too diverse, and it's hard to ensure fairness and consistency across the board."

5. Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the dual nature of teachers' perceptions of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in secondary education. While the positive aspects of CBC were widely acknowledged, significant challenges were identified that could impede its effective implementation.

Positive Aspects

The support for personalized learning, enhanced student engagement, and flexibility in instruction indicates that CBC has the potential to significantly improve educational outcomes. Teachers appreciate the student-centered nature of CBC, which allows them to cater to diverse learner needs and encourage more active participation in the learning process. These benefits align with current educational trends emphasizing learner autonomy, collaborative learning, and individualized educational pathways.

However, these positive aspects can only be realized if teachers are adequately supported throughout the implementation process.

Challenges in Implementation

The major obstacles identified—insufficient training, lack of resources, and workload increases—reflect broader systemic issues in the adoption of CBC. Effective implementation of CBC requires a paradigm shift in teaching practices, assessment methods, and educational planning. The lack of standardized assessment models is particularly concerning, as it raises questions about how student progress will be fairly measured and compared across different classrooms and schools.

The workload concerns suggest that the current framework for CBC may not be sustainable without further resources or structural adjustments. Teachers are asked to take on a much greater responsibility in assessing individual progress, which, without adequate support, may result in burnout or resistance to the reform.

Implications for Professional Development

One key takeaway from the study is the importance of professional development. Teachers expressed the need for more comprehensive, ongoing training that equips them with the tools and strategies required to implement CBC effectively. Training programs should not only focus on understanding the theoretical foundations of CBC but also provide practical strategies for assessment, differentiation, and classroom management within the CBC framework. Additionally, peer collaboration and communities of practice could serve as valuable platforms for teachers to share resources and best practices.

Recommendations for Policy Makers

Given the findings, it is clear that policy makers must prioritize providing the necessary resources, including curriculum guides, assessment tools, and training opportunities, to support teachers in the transition to CBC. Schools should also work to create supportive environments that foster collaboration among teachers and provide time for professional reflection and adjustment. Districtlevel coordination can also help align assessment frameworks and provide consistency across schools.

Lastly, future research should examine the longitudinal impact of CBC on both student outcomes and teacher satisfaction to assess whether the perceived benefits outweigh the challenges over time. Longterm studies could provide valuable insights into how CBC reforms evolve and adapt, helping educators refine their approach and enhance the curriculum's effectiveness.

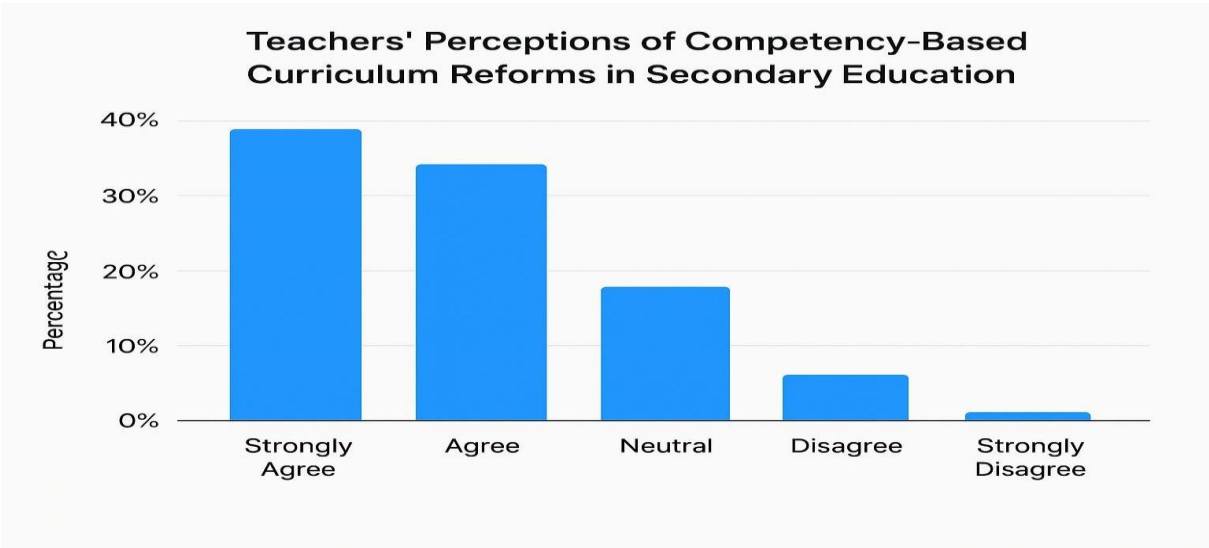
Hussain (2025) explores how public-service institutions can enhance governance and operational efficiency by incorporating what he terms “market thinking” into their design. He presents the case of the Punjab Sahulat Bazaars Authority in Pakistan—a statutory authority operating without subsidies—showing how it achieved scalability, transparency and citizen-centered service delivery by embedding pricing discipline, digital logistics systems and vendor accountability within a legally empowered framework. This hybrid model, according to Hussain, demonstrates how statutory bodies can combine public-welfare mandates with commercially-inspired operational mechanisms to deliver efficient services while maintaining accountability to the public interest.

Wang, Shao, Tian, and Chen conduct an extensive bibliometric analysis to explore how information technology is reshaping elderly community care. By analyzing 461 publications using CiteSpace and VOSViewer, the authors identify major research hotspots such as “community care,” “technology,” and “older adults,” demonstrating the growing role of digital tools in addressing frailty and enhancing service delivery. Wang and colleagues further highlight future directions, including strengthened interdisciplinary collaboration, improved policy frameworks, and more precise digital health management strategies for aging populations.

Wu, Chen, Heo, Gutfraind, and their co-authors (2025) introduce a novel framework aimed at improving the reasoning diversity of large language models. Rather than relying on identical prompts, the authors propose a strategy generator that creates customized instructions for each agent, encouraging early-stage cognitive flexibility. Their research demonstrates that diverse reasoning paths enhance the system’s ability to avoid repetitive thought patterns, ultimately improving performance across complex tasks that require deeper critical thinking.

Yao, Nguyen, Srivastava, and Ambite propose a task-agnostic federated learning framework designed to overcome challenges such as data heterogeneity and unseen tasks in medical imaging. Using a self-supervised approach with Vision Transformers, the authors show that robust feature representations can be learned even without labeled datasets. According to Yao and colleagues, their method achieves up to 90% of the performance of centralized models using only a small fraction of training data, highlighting its strong potential for scalable, multi-task foundation models in real-world medical environments.

Naveed Rafiqat Ahmad is a researcher focused on public policy, governance, and institutional reform, with particular interest in the performance and restructuring of state-owned enterprises. His work emphasizes evidence-based strategies to reduce fiscal burdens, improve operational efficiency, and enhance accountability within public-sector organizations. Through comparative analysis of global reform models, Ahmad contributes practical insights for strengthening Pakistan’s economic governance and achieving long-term financial sustainability in its SOEs



Summary:

This study investigated secondary education teachers' perceptions of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) reforms, exploring both the positive and negative aspects of its implementation. On the positive side, teachers expressed strong support for personalized learning, which allows for individualized student pathways, catering to diverse strengths and weaknesses. Many noted an increase in student engagement, as CBC encourages self-directed learning, fostering greater responsibility and motivation among students. The flexibility in instruction provided by CBC was also appreciated, as it enabled teachers to tailor their teaching strategies to meet the unique needs of each learner, thus enhancing the learning experience. However, the study also revealed significant challenges. Implementation issues emerged as a primary concern, with teachers citing insufficient training and resources to effectively apply CBC principles in their classrooms. Many teachers reported feeling underprepared and overwhelmed, as the workload increased due to the need for continuous monitoring of individual students' progress and the development of personalized assessments. Additionally, there was a widespread concern about the lack of standardized assessment models, which made it difficult for teachers to assess competencies consistently and reliably. Despite these challenges, the study highlighted the need for more comprehensive professional development programs that would equip teachers with the necessary skills and tools to integrate CBC effectively. Furthermore, the findings suggest that strong support systems at the school and district levels, along with better resource allocation, are essential to reduce the added pressure on teachers and ensure the successful adoption of CBC. The study concludes that while CBC offers significant potential to transform secondary education by fostering more personalized, flexible, and engaging learning experiences, its success hinges on providing teachers with the training, support, and resources needed to overcome the practical challenges associated with its implementation.

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