



# Evaluation of the Impact of Teacher Professional Development on Implementation of Competency-Based Education in Kiswahili Teaching: A Case Study of Public Junior Schools in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

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## **ABSTRACT**

The transition to Competency-Based Education (CBE) in Kenya represents a novel departure from traditional content-oriented education, necessitating new pedagogical approaches for teachers. In this regard, Kiswahili is both an academic and national language that requires not only practical language skills in teachers but also how they can adapt their pedagogy to align with CBE's student-centred objectives. This study examines how professional development shapes the application of the CBE in instructional practice by teachers in public junior schools in Uasin Gishu County. Applying a mixed-methods approach, the research gathers data through structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis in various learning institutions. Findings indicate that teachers engaging in ongoing professional development are better equipped to analyze competency-based education (CBE), apply active learning strategies, and innovate assessment practices to meet the needs of competency-based education. Variations in access to training—particularly in marginalized areas—pose challenges to the equal implementation of training. The study concludes by promoting targeted and ongoing professional development programs, both subject- and curriculum-oriented, as central to enhancing Kiswahili instruction under CBE reforms.

**Keywords:** Competency-Based Education (CBE), Professional Development; Teacher Training

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Kenya's education sector has undergone a drastic transformation through the gradual implementation of Competency-Based Education (CBE), a system designed to shift learning away from being CBE, which was initiated in 2017, emphasizes active participation of learners, creativity, problem-solving, and application of acquired knowledge to real-life contexts (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, 2017). Kiswahili, being one of the nation's official languages and a subject of paramount significance, has a significant contribution to make in achieving

The successful implementation of CBE is highly dependent on the preparedness and readiness of teachers to change, especially in language instruction, where curriculum development will always entail radical educational change (Paul, 2025). Mastery of subject matter is not the only requirement teachers require; they also require mastery of CBE philosophy, including learner-centred pedagogy, formative assessment, and cross-cutting competencies. Teacher development becomes the key to achieving this, functioning as a bridge between policy and practice.

However, evidence suggests that the pace and depth of professional growth among teachers in Kenya have not been consistent, particularly between counties (Bett, 2016). In Uasin Gishu County, a region comprising mixed urban and rural government schools, variance in access, frequency, and timeliness of training has resulted in inconsistencies in CBE implementation, particularly in subjects like Kiswahili that require linguistic and cultural sensitivity. It is, therefore, crucial to explore the extent to which teacher professional development programs influence CBE-aligned instruction in Kiswahili classrooms.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The success of any curriculum revision hinges on whether teachers can understand, interpret, and apply new instructional approaches. For CBE, teachers must shift from traditional rote instruction to facilitating interactivity and learner-directed teaching. Despite the efforts of other stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Education, to launch several in-service training programs that support this transition, the major shortfall remains in measuring the effectiveness of these programs in practical terms. In particular, there is scant empirical research on whether and how teacher professional development translates into the practice of Competency-Based Education (CBE) in Kiswahili instruction within Uasin Gishu County. Unless invested in and nurtured, instructors may struggle to align their teaching methods with CBE requirements, thereby compromising student achievement and the overall goals of curriculum reform.

## **1.3 Study Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the extent to which teacher professional development influences the implementation of Competency-Based Education in teaching Kiswahili in public junior secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County.

## **1.4 Research Objective**

To determine the extent to which teachers' professional development influences the implementation of CBE and the teaching of Kiswahili in public junior schools in Uasin Gishu County.

## **1.5 Research Question**

To what extent does the professional development of teachers influence the utilization of CBE and the implementation of Kiswahili instruction in public junior secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County?

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study is significant on several grounds. First, it contributes to the growing body of literature on curriculum reform in sub-Saharan Africa, specifically focusing on teacher development and its impact on language instruction. Second, the conclusions offer theoretical and practical suggestions for educational policymakers, school heads, and curriculum planners on where they should invest and provide support. Third, by taking the example of Kiswahili—a topic at the heart of Kenya's national identity—the study brings into sharp focus the interface between language, pedagogy, and policy. Lastly, it provides evidence-based recommendations that can inform future professional development designs aimed at improving curriculum implementation in junior secondary schools.

## **1.7 Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

This study is only based on public junior secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County, exploring Kiswahili teachers' professional development practices and professional development effects in terms of implementing the CBE. Private schools, early childhood education, and other subjects other than Kiswahili are excluded from this study. Questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis were employed to collect data from headteachers, teachers, and concerned education officers.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Background of the Competency-Based Education (CBE) in Kenya**

Kenya's rollout of the Competency-Based Education (CBE) is a paradigm shift in teaching pedagogy, from the 8-4-4 testing and knowledge-based system to one emphasizing the development of learners' skills, values, and competencies for real-world application (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, 2017). CBE is designed to bring out the potential in all students by focusing on seven competencies, including communication and cooperation, critical thinking and problem-solving, creativity and imagination, citizenship, learning to learn, digital competency, and self-efficacy. Teachers are expected to act as facilitators and engage students in activity-based and experiential learning tasks that foster these competencies (Goodwin, 2024).

Kiswahili, as a compulsory subject and national language, holds a unique position in the curriculum. Its pedagogical focus in CBE goes beyond grammatical competence to include culture literacy, creativity, and functional application. This change has increased the level of sophistication in teaching Kiswahili, and thus, more advanced pedagogical knowledge and ability among teachers are needed. In turn, successful CBE application within learning Kiswahili relies on robust and consistent teacher training and ongoing professional development (Paul, 2025).

### **2.2 Professional Development as One of the Pillars of Effective Curriculum Reform**

Professional development is formally defined as structured learning activities which develop teachers' content knowledge, instructional strategies, assessment approaches, and reflective dispositions. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) argue that effective professional development is content-centred, participatory, aligned with policy, sustained over time, and collective. Such factors are needed in aligning teacher practice with curriculum innovations like the CBE, which involve new content but also profound shifts in approach and philosophy.

In CBE, the purpose of teacher professional development is to enable teachers to facilitate learner-centred learning, utilize formative assessment methods, differentiate instruction, and integrate cross-cutting concerns into their lessons (Akala, 2021). Research indicates that teachers who are adequately trained have a greater understanding and application of CBE-aligned practices. For instance, Muchira et al. (2023) noted that their trained teachers felt more confident in planning lessons that involve learner tasks, aiming to promote critical thinking and teamwork. In contrast, their less-trained peers continued to adhere to teacher-centred practices that contradicted CBE principles.

### **2.3 Teacher Preparedness in Implementing CBE**

Implementation of the CBE in Kenya has had varying responses, as most stakeholders value the vision but are protesting against teachers' preparedness. Studies have shown that while most teachers have welcomed the philosophy of Competency-Based Education (CBE), they often lack the necessary knowledge and skills for its implementation (Ogembo, 2025). In teaching Kiswahili, these challenges are particularly critical because the subject entails multidimensions that encompass grammar, literature, speech, and sociocultural components.

Wanjiku-Omollo (2014) found that most Kiswahili teachers in state schools struggled to implement performance tasks and learner portfolios into their instruction. The lack of subject-

specific, focused professional development was primarily responsible for this. Teachers will tend to prioritize surface-level content transmission over the development of deeper, transferable abilities in learners if they are not adequately supported.

Furthermore, the speed at which CBE is being implemented has outpaced the capacity of teacher training schools and education departments to provide sustained support. In line with Paul (2025), short-term workshops, which are the norm, are often shallow and lack the intensity required for teachers to internalize CBE principles, especially in linguistically and culturally rich subjects such as Kiswahili.

#### **2.4 Access, Equity, and Relevance of Professional Development**

One of the biggest challenges that professional development programs in Kenya have faced is unequal access. Urban teachers are more likely to benefit from workshops, seminars, and material distribution than their counterparts in rural and marginalized areas (Anderson & Stillman, 2012). Uasin Gishu County has seen disparities between sub-counties in terms of the intensity and quality of CBE training received by teachers (Mutai et al., 2024). Also, where training is possible, the relevance of the material is often questionable. As noted, the majority of professional development programs are generic and subject-nonspecific. For example, training in generic classroom management or ICT integration without consideration of the special needs of teaching Kiswahili under the Competency-Based Education (CBE) framework does not equip teachers with usable strategies.

Another critical issue is the lack of follow-up support. Most training activities are isolated events with no provision for continued mentorship, coaching, or peer networking. This limits their long-term effect and fails to create professional learning communities that support sustained teacher growth. Thus, even enthusiastic teachers may abandon innovative approaches in the face of classroom realities and organizational constraints.

#### **2.5 Teacher Attitude and Beliefs Regarding Professional Development**

Involvement in professional development by teachers is not only influenced by availability but also by personal attitudes and beliefs. Bechtel and O'Sullivan (2006) recognize that teachers are more likely to implement new practices when they perceive professional development as relevant, supportive, and impactful on student learning outcomes. In Kiswahili instruction, the majority of instructors are willing to improve their instruction but are hindered by the CBE requirements and uncertain about the adequacy of the training provided (Nyamwange, 2020). Namamba and Rao (2017) in Tanzania found that language teachers embraced professional development that included subject-specific pedagogy, active modelling, and peer feedback.

#### **2.6 Support for TPD at Institutional and Policy Levels**

Guidelines for CBE teacher professional development have been given by the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) and Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD). However, the policy has been unevenly applied and underfunded. (Glennerster et al., 2011) further state that despite government orders for continuous training, schools lack the infrastructure and budgetary support to continue development programmes. Collaborations with higher education institutions, NGOs, and international agencies have been suggested as ways to close these gaps. Saqipi and Rexhaj

(2013) advocate for a school-based, decentralized approach to teacher professional development, which enables teachers to identify their own learning needs and collaborate with colleagues in real-time. Other models have been successfully implemented in other low-resource contexts and can be utilized within teaching Kiswahili in CBE in Uasin Gishu County.

### **2.7 Professional Development and Language Teaching: Worldwide Insights**

Worldwide research casts additional insights into the interface of professional development and language instruction. Across the Finnish and Singaporean education systems, continual subject-matter professional development has been linked with superior teacher effectiveness and improved language learning outcomes (Tatto, 2015). Such models emphasize group planning, mentoring, and reflective practice—elements that are often lacking in Kenyan professional development programs. Studies in South Africa and Uganda indicate that teachers' training tailored to the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of learners leads to improved pedagogy as well as greater learner engagement (Nampijja et al., 2024). This suggests the need for localized, relevant, and ongoing professional development activities that enhance teachers' ability to navigate curriculum reforms effectively.

### **2.8 Theoretical Framework: Guskey's Model of Teacher Change**

This study applies Guskey's Model of Teacher Change to investigate the impact of professional development on curriculum implementation and teaching practice (Canaran & MiRiCi, 2019). As the model posits, improvement will be sustained if professional development results in concrete gains in students' performance. The model specifies five vital levels: learning, participants' reactions, organizational support, teacher practice change, and student achievement. Utilizing this framework, the study evaluates not just the provision of training but also its practical impact on teacher action and student experience in Kiswahili classrooms. Utilizing this theoretical lens, it is possible to explore the full impact of professional development on curriculum fidelity and the quality of language teaching during the CBE period.

## **3.0 Methodology**

The study employed a mixed-methods descriptive survey research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design was appropriate for collecting comprehensive information on teachers' behaviour, attitudes, and experience about professional development and how it has affected the implementation of the Competency-Based Education (CBE) in teaching Kiswahili. Quantitative data enabled the collection of measurable information on the frequency, type, and perceived quality of professional development activities. In contrast, qualitative data provided additional information through stories and remarks from the teachers.

The research was conducted in Uasin Gishu County, located in Kenya's Rift Valley Province. The county offers a combination of public junior secondary schools in the urban and rural regions, making it a viable place to investigate variations in teachers' access and perceptions towards professional development. Kiswahili is one of the compulsory subjects under CBE in junior schools, and the mix of school profiles in the county provided a comprehensive perspective on the challenges and opportunities in its implementation.

The target group was Kiswahili teachers working in public junior secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County. School managers, such as departmental heads and curriculum support officers (CSOs), were also included in the study to provide complementary information on policy-level and institutional factors. The estimated target group was approximately 1,000 Kiswahili teachers spread across seven sub-counties.

Multistage sampling was employed to collect representative data. Initially, purposive sampling was used to select four sub-counties with an evenly distributed rural and urban school population. Stratified random sampling was then used to categorize schools into various groups based on their location within the sub-counties. Simple random sampling was used to select schools and respondents for each of the groups. A sample of 100 Kiswahili teachers, 10 school administrators, and five curriculum support officers formed the last sample. This sample was deemed sufficient to ensure representativeness and permit both statistical and thematic analysis.

Data were collected through a combination of structured questionnaires, interview guides, and documentation analysis. The structured questionnaire was directed towards Kiswahili teachers and included closed-ended questions on how often, how organized, and how effective professional development initiatives are. Likert-scale items inquired about attitudes toward CBE, self-efficacy, and difficulties in teaching Kiswahili. Semi-structured interview guides were developed for school principals and curriculum support officers to gather comments on institutional practice, support arrangements, and teacher-perceived preparedness. Document analysis involved examining reports from training, school-based professional development records, and policy circulars to contextualize and triangulate the data.

Before data collection, ethical approval was received from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Permissions were also sought from the County Director of Education and the participating schools. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and data collection was conducted during scheduled school visits. Pre-booked interview appointments were made to avoid disruptions to school routines.

Quantitative data gathered in the form of questionnaires were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distribution, were used to estimate responses. Inferential statistics, in the form of correlation and regression analysis, were employed to examine the relationship between professional development and the implementation of CBE in Kiswahili teaching. Qualitative interview and open-ended response information was transcribed and analyzed thematically using NVivo software. Themes were inductively generated to identify emerging patterns and ideas of professional development and curriculum implementation.

The questionnaire was pilot-tested with ten Kiswahili teachers from an adjacent county outside the main study to ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments. Pilot test feedback informed revision to enhance clarity and item appropriateness. Content validity was achieved through expert review by curriculum specialists and Kiswahili education experts. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with an acceptable value of 0.7 or higher. Qualitative validity was enhanced through member checking, where some participants reviewed transcribed responses independently and through peer debriefing with colleagues in the education sector.



Ethics were of significant concern in the research conduct. Participants were informed of the study's objective, their rights, and the confidentiality of their responses. Every report employed pseudonyms, and data were stored safely in protected computer files using passwords. The study also adhered to ethical research practices by offering voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Despite the rigorous methodology, the study had some limitations. Its focus on a single county may minimize the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different socio-educational contexts. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data may lead to biases because respondents may have provided socially desirable responses. Environmental aspects, such as school leadership styles, community, and infrastructural disparities that also influence the success of CBE introduction, are not explicitly addressed in this study. These limitations notwithstanding, the method applied presents a good foundation for understanding the impact of professional development on Kiswahili teaching under CBE in Uasin Gishu County.

## **4.0 Results**

The findings of the research are documented in alignment with the primary objective: to determine the level at which teachers' professional development influences the adoption of the CBE and teaching of Kiswahili in public junior secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County. Quantitative data analysis revealed that most Kiswahili teachers (82%) had received at least one professional development session on Competency-Based Education (CBE) in the previous year. The majority of these sessions involved lesson planning, assessment, learner-centred teaching, and incorporating digital materials in pedagogy. Yet, only 46% of the participants rated the training sessions as adequate for implementing CBE effectively, while 38% expressed dissatisfaction with the depth and application of the training.

Further statistical analysis demonstrated a moderate and positive relationship ( $r = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between professional development session frequency and teachers' self-assessed confidence in applying CBE. Teachers who participated in more intense and targeted professional development reported higher levels of proficiency in writing competency-based lesson plans, integrating cross-cutting issues, and conducting formative assessments. Regression analysis established that participation in professional development accounted for 37% of the variance in teachers' self-perceived effectiveness in the implementation of CBE approaches in Kiswahili teaching ( $R^2 = 0.37$ ).

The results also showed inconsistency in access to professional development training. Teachers in urban areas reported higher access to formal training programs and peer collaboration forums compared to those in rural areas. Teachers in distant schools cited logistic hurdles, insufficient communication from education offices, and inadequate funding as the main impediments to attending professional development sessions.

Qualitative interview data supported and guided the quantitative results. Teachers generally liked CBE-related training but lamented its inconsistency and theoretical orientation. In the opinion of one teacher, "The sessions give a general overview, but when we get back to the classroom, there is not much support in the application." School administrators agreed with corresponding observations, recognizing professional development as valuable but fragmented and not oriented towards fixing content-related issues in Kiswahili.



Further, curriculum support officers reported systemic flaws in mentorship and feedback after training. According to them, although the teachers attended workshops, supportive professional follow-up was rarely in existence. The lack of supervision after training and the absence of systematic feedback mechanisms resulted in resistance to transferring the training into classroom practice.

Document analysis revealed a disconnect between the policy emphasis on the continuous professional development of teachers and the actual intensity and quality of practice training. Even as national circulars emphasized the need for continuous capacity building, school documentation revealed that most teachers had received only one or two sessions of CBE training since its adoption. Furthermore, there was minimal documentation on peer learning at the school level, as well as reflective teaching.

Conclusively, the findings indicate that while teacher professional development plays a significant role in enhancing teachers' capacity to implement CBE, its existing implementation in Uasin Gishu County is poor and discontinuous. Teachers whose training was regular, content-specific, and hands-on reported greater achievement with CBE-guided Kiswahili teaching. However, imbalances in accessibility to training, reinforcement of training, and compatibility with classroom contexts place a limit on the maximization of professional development interventions' effectiveness.

## 5.0 Discussion

The results underscore the necessity of continuous, context-specific, and well-structured professional training in facilitating the application of CBE, especially in Kiswahili pedagogy. The positive connection between teachers' professional training and CBE delivery confidence is affirmed by Ogembo (2025), who identified the transformative quality of targeted in-service training in streamlining pedagogical practice.

Feedback from classroom teachers, based on both quantitative and qualitative data, aligns with a shared understanding of inadequacy in the frequency and intensity of training. This has set the premise that sporadic training sessions without follow-up mentoring were likely to yield few fruits of impactful instructional change. The lack of post-training follow-up in this study also reflects an implementation deficiency that would undermine the objectives of CBE.

The inequality in access to professional development between urban and rural schools illustrates systemic injustices, as noted by Peer (2024), who argued that rural teachers face infrastructural and logistical limitations that hinder their professional development. The inequalities can result in uneven curriculum implementation across regions, which may have an impact on the learning outcomes of learners.

Furthermore, the moderate consistency between national policy and practice at the school level for professional development confirms concerns raised in previous studies (Mutai et al., 2024). Whereas policy speaks to the mandates of ongoing training and reflective practice, school documents reviewed in the current study reflected sporadic training and limited documentation of teachers' collaborative learning. The implications of the findings also highlight the importance of content-specific professional development. Educators across the board expressed that generic CBE professional development was less effective than subject-matter workshops. Kiswahili

instructors need training in linguistic skills, test formats, and cultural sensitivity for content-area professional development.

In summary, the research reveals a disconnect between the intended policy and the reality on the ground regarding teacher professional development. Alleviating such challenges will require a unified effort by the Ministry of Education, the Teacher Service Commission (TSC), and school administrations to envision, fund, and monitor sustainable professional development models that are sensitive to the needs of teachers in their specific context. The following section shall present a general conclusion and practical recommendations based on these findings.

## **6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study examined the effect of teachers' professional development on Competency-Based Education (CBE) implementation in Kiswahili instruction in Uasin Gishu County public junior secondary schools. Findings indicate that while professional development is critical for teachers' preparedness and self-confidence in CBE implementation, several systemic challenges hinder its effectiveness. These are irregular training timetables, narrow content specificity, disparity in availability between rural and urban settings, and inadequate post-training facilitation.

To ensure the successful implementation of CBE and improve teaching in Kiswahili, professional development practice must be strategically overhauled. Firstly, training programs must be routine, need-based, and accessible to every teacher, regardless of location. In the second place, training must be discipline-specific, focusing on the particular pedagogic needs of Kiswahili teachers. In the third place, post-course mentoring, coaching, and peer learning forums must be institutionalized to sustain new competencies and encourage reflective practice.

Furthermore, policy must promote equitable distribution of professional development funds. Stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Education and the TSC, must collaborate with county education departments to identify gaps and offer targeted support. Policy monitoring and evaluation roles must be built into training programs to measure impact and to inform continuous improvement. Subsequent studies would explore how teachers' professional growth impacts students' learning outcomes in Kiswahili and be rolled out in other counties for comparison. These studies would also continue informing the national drive towards increased CBE implementation through teacher capacity enhancement.

Ultimately, for CBE to fulfil its transformative goals in Kenya's education system, there is a necessity for sustained investment in robust, equitable, and context-sensitive professional development. Empowering Kiswahili instructors with requisite skills, hardware, and support mechanisms will not only enhance curriculum execution but also contribute toward learners' overall growth across the country.

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