

Challenges Preventing Parents from Effectively Involving Themselves in the Implementation of CBC in Rwanda's Lower Primary (Grades 1-3)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges that prevent parents from effective involvement in CBC implementation in lower primary grades. This study was founded on J. E. a. Epstein Theory of parental involvement which tackles parental involvement in six facets. This study adopted descriptive research design where qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analysed. We collected data from 3 schools of Karongi District where 45 parents having children in the three schools; 45 lower primary grade learners; 9 lower primary grade teachers; 3 head teachers and 1 district education official were selected as a sample. This sample was calculated from the total population of 1053 Parents, 1065 children, 31 teachers and 3 head teachers using the Systematic Random Sampling technique. To collect the Primary data, the questionnaires were administered to parents and learners while teachers, head teachers and a district education official were interviewed. The secondary data were collected from existing literature in relation to the current study. The collected data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The results were organized in an Excel spreadsheet to be analyzed by SPSS package version 28.0. In this context, descriptive statistics have been applied where means, percentages, and frequencies were calculated. Findings revealed that the main factor that prevents parents from effective involvement in CBC implementation is a lack of knowledge of CBC and awareness about where and how to give their hands in supporting their children. This calls for the Ministry of Education not only to train teachers in CBC but also parents as they are key partners in implementing CBC.

Keywords: Attitudes, Competence-Based Curriculum, Lower Primary Grades, Parents' Involvement

I. INTRODUCTION

Since 2015, Rwanda's education system has adopted a new curriculum known as the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) to improve the teaching and learning outcomes. Ngendahayo and Askill-Williams (2016). This aims at increasing students' prospects of getting the competencies necessary for a befitting citizen of the 21st century (Ngabonziza, 2020). The rationale behind shifting from a knowledge-based to a competence-based curriculum was first the appreciation of the skills, attitudes, and values in education rather than only knowledge, (Kizito et al., 2019). Secondly, the rationale was in line with achieving the mission of the Rwandan Ministry of Education "to transform the Rwandan citizen into skilled human capital for socio-economic development of the country by ensuring equitable access to quality education focusing on combating illiteracy, promotion of science and technology, critical thinking and positive values" (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011a). This shows how the government of Rwanda expect much from the implementation of CBC in Rwanda.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Competence-Based Curriculum implementation has been successful in many countries including African countries. According to Robert et al. (2021 a), Kenya succeeded in implementing the Competence-Based Curriculum in 2017 in grade four of primary school. Today the same success is expected in Rwanda. However, since the start of the implementation of CBC in Rwanda, the Ministry of Education trained teachers and school leaders in implementing CBC (Nsengimana, 2021). Parents were not trained or consulted as one of the backbones of education. (Omariba, 2022) argued that the successful implementation of CBC is determined by parents. This is because the destination of any curriculum is the classroom involving students, teachers, administrators and the community. The implementation phase takes place as the learner acquires the planned or intended experiences in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are aimed at enabling the same learner to function fruitfully in a society (Garwe & Thondhlana, 2019).

In addition, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no research was conducted about parents' involvement in the implementation of the Competence-Based Curriculum in Rwanda- the curriculum that the Rwandan education system adopted in 2015. Even though there are different interventions aiming at improving parental participation in different ways, there is no specific mandate and standardized ways and mechanisms to ensure parents' active participation in the Competence Based Curriculum implementation in Rwandan schools. As a consequence, the implementation process is viewed as a challenge in some instances. Olibie (2014) claims that implementation of CBC is greatly challenged by lack of cooperation from parents who argue that basic education is free in public school so anything that demanded money made them react against the curriculum."

Based on these facts, some questions would ring into the researchers' mind: Are parents fully involved in the implementation of CBC in Rwanda? Do parents know about the newly adopted Competence Based Curriculum? What could be the challenges that may hinder parent's involvement in CBC in Rwanda? How could the challenges be addressed to help parents get fully involved in the CBC implementation process? The study seeks to fill the gaps pertaining to the challenges hampering parental involvement in Competence Based Curriculum implementation in Rwanda.

1.2 Research objectives

To examine the challenges that prevent parents from effective involvement in Competence-Based Curriculum implementation in lower primary grades.

1.3 Research Question

What are the challenges that prevent parental involvement in the implementation of Competence-Based Curriculum in lower primary grades?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study takes roots from Epstein (2011), model of Parental Involvement in which parental involvement is explained based on six factors: (1) parenting, (2) communicating, (3) volunteering, (4) learning at home, (5) decision making, and (6) collaborating. Parenting is the first factor which includes the basic responsibilities of families, such as providing housing, health care, nutrition, clothing, and safety, as well as creating home conditions that support children's learning. Parenting also implied that parents were warm and responsive to their children, communicated with them, and supported their development. Results for children included good and improved attendance, awareness of the importance of school, and develop respect for parents (Epstein, 2011). Communication between schools and families is the second factor. This type of involvement concerns the basic responsibilities of schools, including establishing two-way communication between family and school. Williams et al. (2002) note that communication between schools and parents remained a positive step in the right direction about curriculum implementation outcomes. Volunteering is the third approach to parental involvement. Volunteers usually refer to persons who devote their spare time to working on a routine basis without financial compensation, usually under the direction of a school employee, in support of educational activities and school operations.

Williams et al. (2002) clarified, however, that parental engagement in PTA or other types of decision-making organizations involving parents, teachers, and perhaps students and other community members, was not volunteering. Learning at home is the fourth step. This type of involvement suggested that parents should be involved in curriculum-related activities occurring at home (e.g., assisting with homework, discussing books with their children, or brainstorming ideas for class activities). Parents who were involved at this level often advocated for the children's best interests. These parents often participated in PTA, advisory councils, and/ or School General Assembly Committees (SGAC), which constituted the fifth step, *decision making*, in Epstein's model. The fifth approach is decision making which includes parents as key stakeholders in making decisions that will impact student learning and hence the success of the curriculum at large. The sixth approach collaborating with the community was the type of involvement that relied on understanding that helping the community was the best investment (Epstein, 2011). Through collaborations, different types of community organizations contribute to schools, students, and families (Epstein, 2011), believes that parent involvement is essential whereas (Education Scotland, 2019) contends that as a model of good practice, parental engagement requires active collaboration with parents and should be proactive rather than reactive. (Olibie, 2014b) concluded that an increasing number of the general features of parental engagement strategies proposed by (Epstein, 2012) are supported by evidence derived from high-quality research.

We selected this theory for its effectiveness and comprehensiveness in bridging the gap between parental involvement and challenges they face during the implementation of CBC through its six factors and considering Rwandan context (Rosendal & Ngabonziza, 2023). So, all the factors in Epstein's theory of parental involvement influence parental involvement which is embedded as the basis and origin of the current study for they show different pivotal corners through which parent should pass directly or indirectly to participate in the implementation of any curricula activities.

2.2 Empirical Review

Parental involvement is considered the backbone of a well-rounded curriculum implementation and quality education at large. Patrikakou (2008), argues that it is the responsibility of the parent to extend education activities from the classroom to the home setting, noting that such an extension creates a positive familiarity for the child to the educational experiences and competencies they are exposed to in CBC. The partnership between parents and educators creates a supportive environment that fosters a love for learning different skills and values, strengthens educational foundations, and empowers students to reach their full potential. This means the foundations of all skills, attitudes and values needed for children to succeed in today's and future lives are mainly fostered by the level at which parents are actively involved in their learning (Deysolong, 2023).

While Vahedi and Nikdel (2011) supported that, children whose parents showed less or no interest in their homework were found to perform poorly academically. Deysolong (2023), further highlights that parents serve as the first educators in a child's life, and their involvement in education extends their support into the classroom. By staying informed about their child's curriculum, assignments, and progress, parents can provide valuable academic assistance at home. They can assist with homework, engage in discussions about school topics, and reinforce learning objectives. This active participation helps students consolidate their understanding, reinforce key concepts, and bridge any gaps in competence development." It means that, in lieu of competence-based implementation schools should not be considered as the sole foundation and source of knowledge, skills and values that a child needs to grow up cognitively based on CBC. In order to optimize students' performance at school, families and parents cannot work in isolation, too. Parents need schools, as schools need parents in the process (McKimm & Barrow, 2009).

Although parental involvement is of a paramount role to learners and the curriculum implementation process, research have pointed out that there are many challenges impeding effective parental involvement which also causes poor yields in the curriculum implementation process. According to Hornby and Lafaele (2011), parents' beliefs about various issues can act as first barriers to effective parental involvement. This is the case when parents do not believe in modern education and have no interest in supporting their children to learn. Parents' life context such as poverty and been themselves illiterate is another barrier to parental involvement for (Hornby & Lafaele (2011) further. According to (Smith et al., 2011), communication and language is another barrier to parental involvement. Parents' educational level is significantly associated with students' academic achievement because parents with higher educational levels can contribute to children's education by being more involved in their schoolwork at home (Boonk et al., 2018).

Parents may also not be able to provide learning opportunities at home because of their low socioeconomic status as stated by (Watson et al., 2012). Parents often reported they could not get involved in school because school activities were conducted during inconvenient times, or the parents needed more time to help around the house (Patrikakou et al., 2003). Different findings from studies also suggest that parents from ethnic and/or linguistic minority groups may not have the confidence or skills to guide their children or may be viewed by teachers and schools as having less ability and effectiveness to contribute to their children's education (Goodall, 2018). This was also found to be the case for parents of migrant or refugee children (D'Addio, 2019).

While most parents feel that they can assist their children with school-related work during the primary years; many feel less capable of helping their children when it comes to curriculum implementation. Another reason for parents not being involved is the fact that school leaders sometimes fail to create strong connections between children's families and schools or an environment where parents do not feel welcomed in schools especially low-income earners (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017a). This situation is made worse by the fact that some parents are unable to read and write and they can only communicate in their mother tongue, which makes it difficult for them to assist their children with their homework (Lemmer, 2007). Furthermore, the way through which teachers and parents interact can deter parental involvement. Teachers use a top-down model and direction style with their students this can unwittingly extend into their interactions with parents while being accustomed to isolation within the classroom and this causes them to overlook opportunities to gain support from parents (Mpolomoka, 2019).

In addition, parents might distance themselves from a difficult child or might distance themselves from discussing with teachers who perceived their failures in providing school materials or discussing their children's disciplinary cases at school (Silva & Sandström, 2018). (Axford et al., 2019), asserted that a wide range of comments

were made by schools on this issue, including that teachers do not have enough time to focus on parents, sometimes feels like an afterthought. Teachers do not have the training to deal with parents and therefore are not confident. Teachers find it hard to have an insight into a family life that is not their own. Medium of communication may be considered another barrier that impedes parental involvement as stressed (Ozmen et al., 2016).

However, there some existing barriers over which schools have little control and these have become of great interest of educational decision makers (Savacool, 2011). For example, (et al., 2015), found that many parents suffer from low self-esteem and others did not experience success in school themselves. Parents who did not experience success in schools may view it negatively (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017b). Parents may be intimidated by the language of instruction, the curriculum itself, and the staff; consequently, they avoid communication with the school (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017c).

Having all these challenges on parental involvement in mind from different studies, the researchers found it important to conduct the current study with the main purpose to investigate the challenges that prevent parents from effective involvement in CBC implementation in lower primary grades: A study in selected primary schools of Karongi District, Rwanda.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Data Collection

The study design is descriptive in nature where a mixed method approach was used and both qualitative and quantitative research data are analyzed (Dawadi et al., 2021). The mixed method approach was used to establish the nature of existing situations and current conditions and also analyzing such situations and conditions depending on the qualitative and quantitative data obtained. It enabled the researchers to collect data from primary school teachers, parents with children in public primary schools and school leaders to identify their perceptions of the challenges that prevent parents' effective involvement in the implementation of CBC.

The study was meant to study challenges that prevent parents from effective involvement in competence-based curriculum implementation. The population of the study was selected through Systematic Random Sampling techniques (N/n) from 3 schools, whereby N stands for the number of total target population from which the sample was drawn. n on the other hand stands for the number of people needed (sample size) as the sample population as suggested (Rahi, 2017). The target population was composed of 1053 Parents, 1065 children, 31 teachers and 3 head teachers. The Systematic Random Sampling (N/n) technique was used to get a sample of 45 parents, 45 lower primary grade children, 9 teachers in Karongi District. Therefore, the total population of the research after sampling was 103.

Before conducting data collection, the first author researcher got permission to conduct research with ethical clearance number 21503314. Additionally, the research participants were given the consent forms to read and sign for participation agreement and they were assured that they may withdraw from the research anytime they want without effect. The researchers avoided ethical issues such as plagiarism, any kind of discrimination and harm to any research participants as he used anonymous respondents.

Likert scale questionnaires, interview protocols and documentary analysis form have been used for data collection in this study. Data collection tools included 5 points Likert scale questionnaires and rating scale questionnaires administered to parents and their children while semi-structured interview questions were administered to teachers, head teachers and DEO. The Likert scales comprised of the following responses: 1 = strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=neutral, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree. All questions to be answered were elaborated based on the research objectives. Finally, the data obtained from interview were qualitatively analyzed and presented in the form of sentences to support quantitative findings.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Challenges that Impede Parental Involvement in the Implementation of Competency Based Curriculum

The findings drawn from the parent's questionnaire have revealed that the majority of parents (49.30%) stated that the lack of training on CBC is the first challenge that prevents them from being involved effectively in CBC implementation. These findings corroborate with the study done by Robert et al. (2021) that argued that the inadequate training of parents impacts the implementation of CBC. This implies that without training of parents, CBC goals cannot be fully achieved as their learning at home is disconnected with the school practices. The gap between home and school leads to contradictions as parents in Rwanda studied under Knowledge Based Curriculum and cannot enforce CBC, they do not know which it affects in literacy education and learning in general (Niyibizi et al., 2018) The second challenge identified in this study is parents 'busy schedules. The 22.50% of parents said that they are too busy with work and

household responsibilities to participate actively in their children’s education. This situation is becoming too much as life is getting expensive in 21st century and parents work far from their homes. In the same context, Baker et al., (2016) researched the effect of conflicting schedules of parents on children ‘support. Their findings align with the findings of this study showing that working hours prevent parents in supporting their children’s learning and can affect effectiveness of CBC.

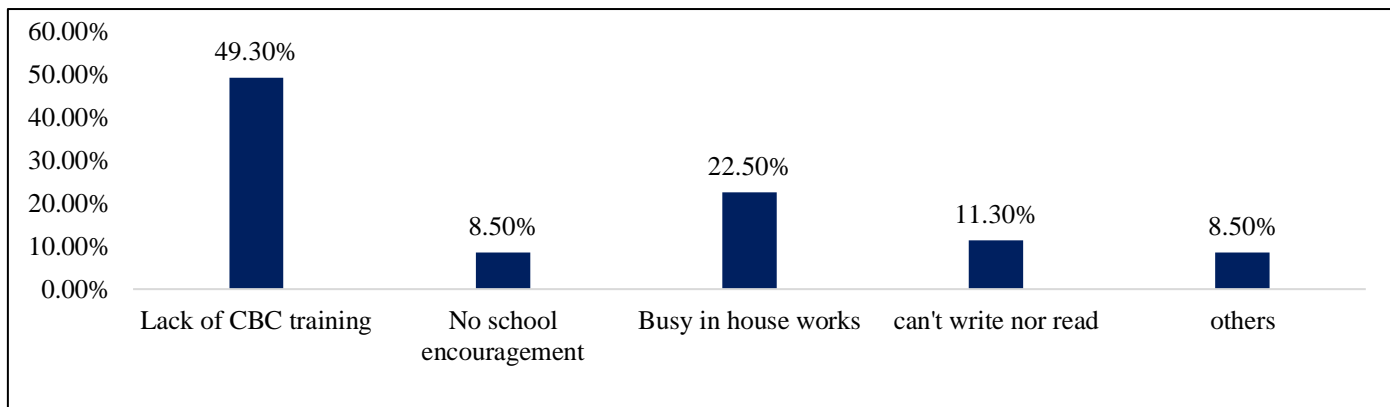


Figure 1
Challenges that Impede Parental Involvement in the Implementation of Competency-Based Curriculum

4.2 Parents’ Suggestions about their Involvement in CBC Implementation

Parents were also asked what they think should be done for them to get fully involved in their child’s education and in the implementation of the competency-based curriculum, as shown in the below figure, 66% of the parent respondents said that there should be regular trainings of parents on CBC. This is emphasized in the study done by Mwarari et al. (2020) who suggested that it is very necessary that parents comprehend aspects of their involvement to better able be fully engaged in the Competence based Curriculum. 20% said that schools should include parents in decision making. This was supported Đurišić & Bunijevac (2017), explaining that parents participate in school decision making when they become part of school governance committees or join organizations, such as the parent/ teachers’ association. That 11% of the parents suggested that there should be an improved collaboration between schools and parents.

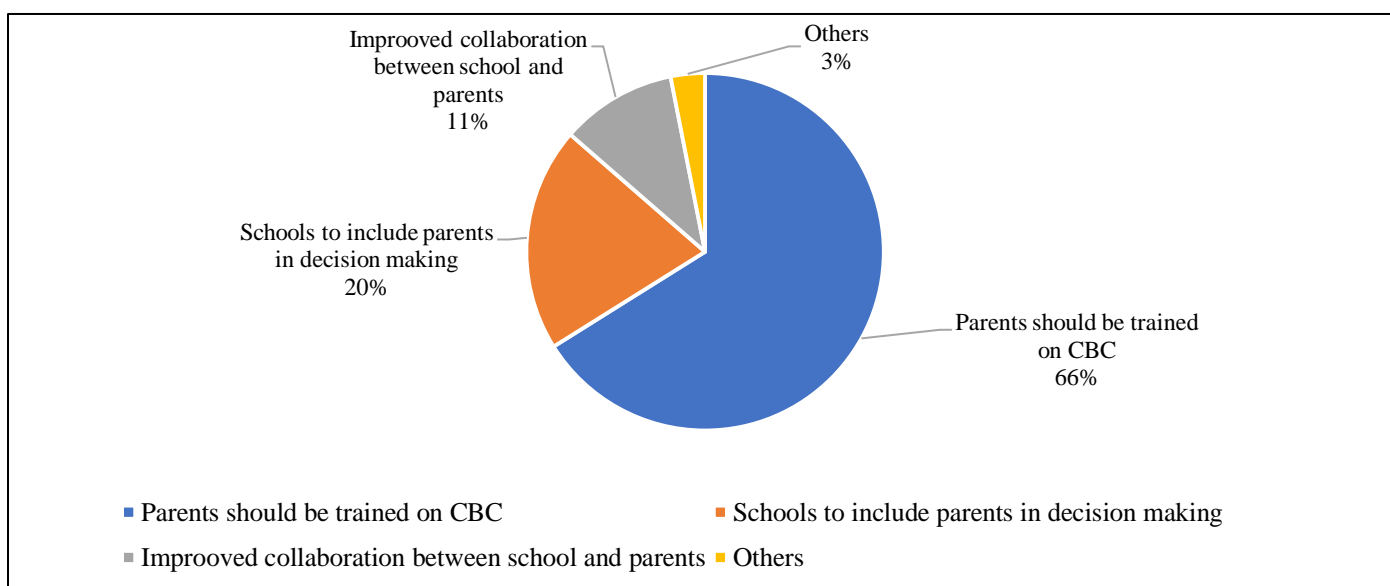


Figure 2
Parents’ Suggestions for Fully Involvement in Child’s Education and the Implementation of the Competency Based Curriculum

4.3 Parents’ Knowledge and Training on Competence-Based Curriculum

The focus was also made on the parents’ knowledge and training on Competence Based Curriculum implementation whereby the questionnaire items: “Do you know what Competence Based Curriculum is? Did you get any training about Competence Based Curriculum?” were emphasized.

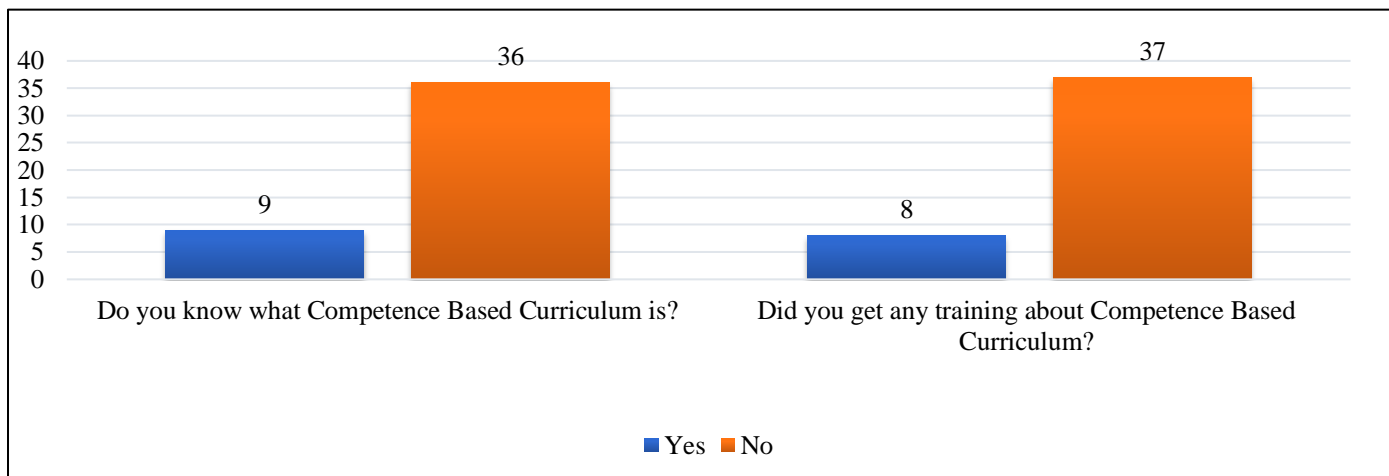


Figure 3
Parents’ Knowledge and Training on Competence-Based Curriculum

Figure 3 above shows parent’s view about the knowledge and training related to competence-based curriculum by parents that they have. The majority of parents (36 parents out of 45) overtly said that they do not know what competence-based curriculum is. This has a strong connection with the study done by Tabaro et al. (2020) who stressed that some parents may lack the knowledge or confidence about how to appropriately help their children at home. while 9 parents said they heard about it.

Also 37 out of 45 parents said that they did not get any training on Competence-Based Curriculum. This was further argued by (Tabaro et al., 2020a) that most of the parents lack knowledge about how the school system works and its concept of parental involvement. (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017d) and the inability to speak English Language by parents’ literacy and numeracy where English is a medium of instruction like in Rwanda was viewed as real root of the inability of the majority to give hands towards effective implementation of Competence Based Curriculum. Only 8 parents who, at the same time, were time teachers said they got inadequate training about CBC.

4.4 Parent’s Capability to help their Children Doing Homework

Parents were also asked if they have capabilities to help their children doing homework at home, as shown in figure 4 below.

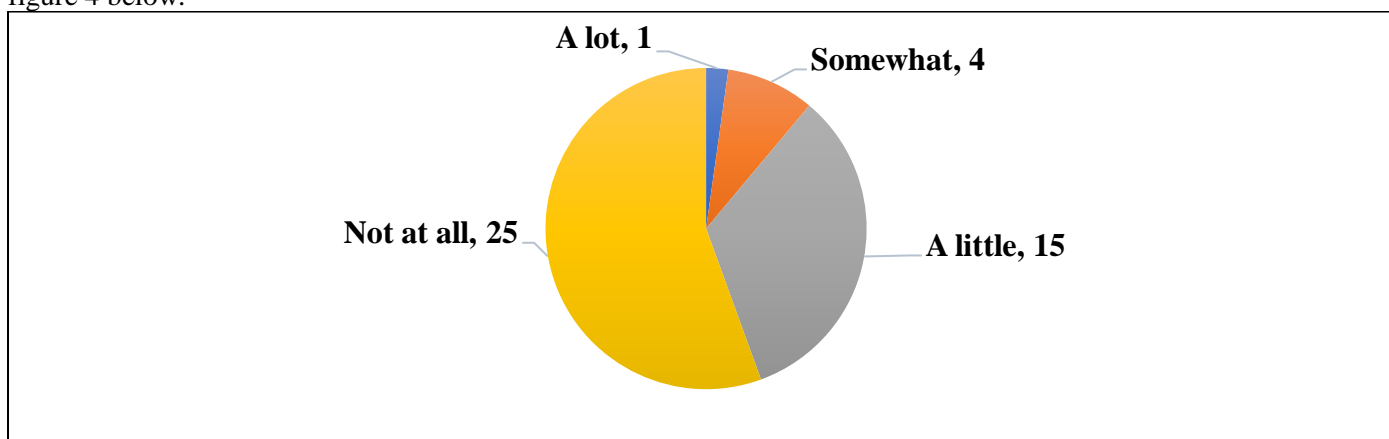


Figure 4
Parent’s Capability to help their Child Doing Homework

Most of the parents (25 parents) said that they do not have capabilities to help children doing homework at home. while 15 parents said that they have little capabilities. Only 1 parent said that she/he has a lot of capabilities to help children doing homework at home.

In line with parent’s capability and ability to implement the Competence Based Curriculum, a good number of teachers who were involved in this research witnessed that based on experience, the majority of parents do not support the implementation of the Competence-Based Curriculum just because of lack of knowledge on it. Again, in the interview conducted with the District Education Officer, he supported this by saying:

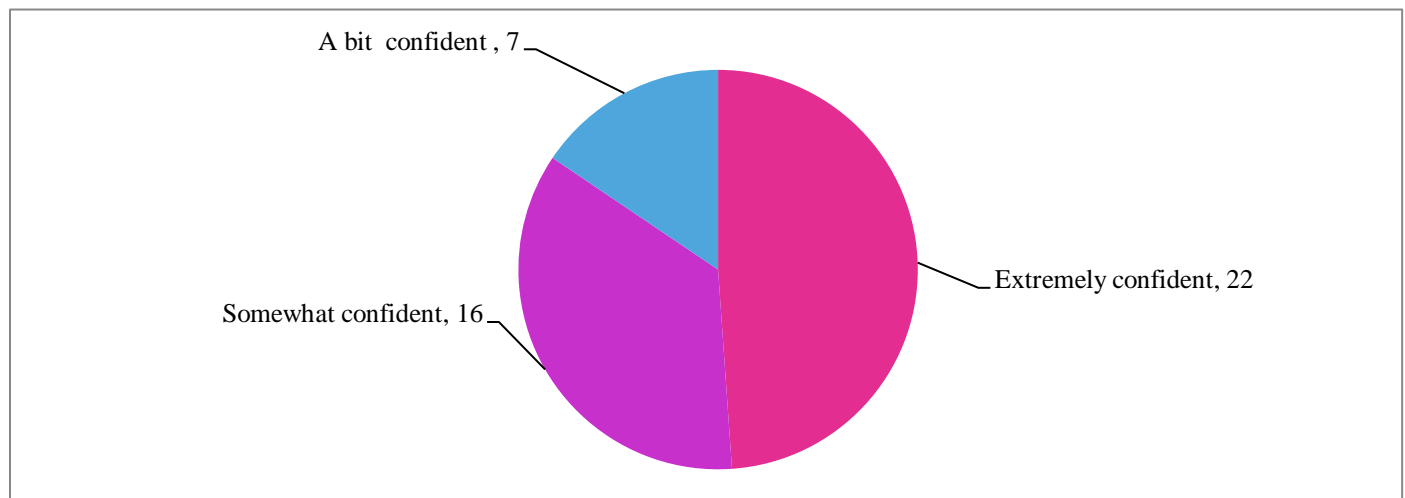
“Yes, the rate of participation is very low because the majority of parents do not have knowledge about the CBC itself and its implementation. Again, some parents cannot read nor understand English language that Rwanda Education Board has recently introduced as Language of Instruction. This places challenges to parent’s participations in the implementation of CBC.”

4.5 Parent's Level of Confidence to Work with the School to Meet the Child's Learning needs

The figure 5 below shows the parent’s level of confidence in making the school meet their child’s learning needs. The majority of parents (22 parents) said that they were confident to make school meeting their children’s learning needs, while 16 parents were somewhat confident, and 7 parents were a bit confident.

Figure 5

Parent's Level of Confidence to Work with the School to meet the Child's Learning needs



4.6 Children’s Perception of Parental Engagements Highlighting Parental Challenges in CBC Implementation

The findings on perceptions of parental engagements reveal more challenges faced by parents while supporting to implement CBC as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Children's Views on Parental Engagements

Children's Views	Never	Once	Twice	Thrice	Four times	Every day
Children’s Views	n(%)	n(%)	n(%)	n(%)	n(%)	n(%)
How often does your parent ask you what you have learnt at school in a week?	13(28.9)	10(22.2)	12(26.7)	6(13.3)	3(6.7)	1(2.2)
How often does your parent check what you have learnt at school in a week?	19(42.2)	8(17.8)	8(17.8)	6(13.3)	3(6.7)	1(2.2)
How often does your parent ask you to do self-study at home in a week?	27(60.0)	6(13.3)	8(17.8)	2(4.4)	1(2.2)	1(2.2)
How often does your parent encourage you to do homework at home in a week?	6(13.3)	28(62.2)	4(8.9)	1(2.2)	3(6.7)	3(6.7)
How often does your parent ask what you are able to do in a week?	24(53.3)	8(17.8)	4(8.9)	6(13.3)	2(4.4)	1(2.2)

As presented in Table 1, the majority of the children (28.9%) said that parents never asked them about what they learnt at school in a week, while 22.2% said that they were asked what they learnt at school once in a week. Only 1 learner (2.2%) said she was asked by parents about what learnt from school every day. The majority of learners (42.2%) have also said that parents never checked what learners learnt from school; while 17.8% of students said that parents checked what they learnt at school once in a week. Only 1 learner (2.2%) said that parents checked daily what he/she learnt at school. Furthermore, majority of children (60%) have said that their parents are always busy with home activities and they never encourage them to do self-study at home even once in a week. This has a relationship with Urunana Rw'abarezi's (2018) reports which said that some parents are busy with other survival needs and do not have time to follow up their children's education.

Additionally, 17.8% of children said that their parents encourage them to do self-study twice in a week, while 1 child (2.2%) said that he is encouraged by parents to do self-study at home on a daily basis. In addition, the majority (62.2%) have said that parents encourage them to do homework at home once in a week, which is very minimal compared to (Tabaro et al. 2020b); while 13.3% of children said that their parents never encourage them to do homework at home. 6.7% of children said that they are encouraged daily by their parents to do homework at home. Most of the children's respondents (53.3%) said that their parents never ask them what they were able to do in a week, while 17.8% are asked by their parents what they were able to do in a week. Only 1 student (2.2%) said she was asked by parents daily what she was able to do in a week. Unexpected finding of this study mentioned that a smaller portion of parents (11.30%) reported that the inability to read and write is a barrier to involvement. Considering the previous study, Badrasawi et al. (2020) showed that parental involvement in their children education is challenged by parents' low literacy. Thus, parents with limited literacy may not help their children in doing homework and do not follow up on their children learning progress. However, it is possible that most of parents in this study do not find illiteracy as the first challenge because the previous challenges (lack of training to CBC and busy schedules) are more challenging for them. Another reason is that most parents who participated in this study are literate. We encourage more research for illiterate parents in the future. This is the same case for the last challenge identified by parents which is lack of encouragement from schools. Other parents reported that lack of encouragement from schools prevent them from getting involved with CBC implementation. This calls for schools to provide additional support to parents to encourage them to participate effectively in their children's education.

The findings revealed the critical need for targeted interventions to address the challenges of parental involvement in CBC implementation. The Ministry of Education can mitigate these challenges by organizing training for parents as they do for teachers. School leaders should be encouraged to develop strong collaboration between parents and schools. This will result into flexibility between school leaders and parents to get engaged in CBC implementation and lead to better learning outcomes not only in parenting but also in children's competence development.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study focused on identifying the challenges that prevent parents from an effective involvement in CBC implementation in public lower primary schools' levels. The study revealed that the main reason behind poor parental involvement in the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum in Rwanda is a lack of training and awareness on the Competence Based Curriculum and parent's responsibility as parents and key stakeholders in education. Again, parents are not fully engaged in decision making during school activities which may weigh down quality education.

5.2 Recommendations

As recommendation, the Ministry of Education should strengthen the collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and put in place different initiatives aimed at raising awareness of parental involvement in the implementation of CBC and performance objective measures related to it. Again, the Ministry of Education through the Rwanda Basic Education Board should organize regular training for parents to train them about the Competence-Based Curriculum, their parental responsibilities and how they can contribute on its implementation for their children cognitive development. Teachers on the other hand, should be trained on how to engage parents in the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum and how to collaborate as they collectively implement the CBC.

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