

Implementing Competence-Based Education in Large Professional Courses for Teacher Trainers in Ugandan Universities

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ABSTRACT

This scholarly investigation examines the integration of competency-based education into substantial professional courses for teacher trainers at universities in Uganda. It is contended that, despite Uganda's efforts to integrate competency-based education into significant professional courses for teacher trainers at its academic institutions, a considerable gap remains between its design and implementation. The inquiry was conducted using a qualitative research methodology, which encompassed a comprehensive assessment of secondary sources. The principal conclusion drawn was that, although competency-based education is available within major professional courses for teacher

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trainers at Ugandan universities, its implementation has not been executed effectively, thereby adversely impacting the quality assurance competencies of the educators. It is recommended that, by accentuating personal self-actualization alongside pedagogical responsibilities, the competency-oriented approach has the potential to substantially enhance the caliber of professional education, while concurrently aligning with global educational standards and effectively addressing local educational requirements.

Key Words: *Competence-Based Education, Curriculum Review, Teacher Trainers, Professional Development*

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of competency-based education (CBE) within significant professional programs for teacher educators in Ugandan universities presents unique challenges and opportunities. While Uganda has embraced CBE, the effective realisation of this pedagogical framework requires the resolution of issues about teacher preparation, allocation of resources, and engagement of stakeholders (Bwembya *et al*, 2025). This educational paradigm equips aspiring lecturers with the essential skills and knowledge necessary to meet the evolving demands of the educational environment. The CBE seeks to reconcile the gap between theoretical understanding and effective teaching practices by emphasising practical competencies and real-world relevance. On a global scale, competency-based education (CBE) within teacher training programs is increasingly recognized as a pivotal strategy for preparing educators to address the requirements of modern educational settings (Catacutan, 2023).

This instructional approach prioritises the development of specific competencies, encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are essential for competent teaching. When executing CBE in extensive professional programs for teacher educators at international institutions, factors such as curriculum development, pedagogical expertise, and digital literacy are of paramount importance (Njiru & Odundo, 2024; Ogada, 2025). Competency-based curriculum frameworks are vital for

teacher education as they align educational outcomes with the competencies demanded by the labour market. This approach promotes professional advancement and underpins sustainable educational policies (Piri, 2021). The curriculum must be constructed to facilitate both personal and professional development, incorporating cultural and ethical values alongside traditional educational subjects (Stukalenko *et al.* 2016).

In the realm of higher education, educators are expected to possess a broad spectrum of pedagogical competencies, which include personal, research, and instructional skills. Such proficiencies are crucial for delivering high-quality education and adapting to diverse classroom dynamics (Moriera *et al.*, 2022). Students tend to prioritise personal skills and attributes, while educators focus on curriculum design and instructional effectiveness. In light of the rapid technological advancements, digital competence emerges as a fundamental component of teacher education. Establishing standards for digital literacy is essential to guide training programs and ensure that educators are adequately prepared to seamlessly incorporate technology into their teaching methodologies (Basantes-Andrade *et al.*, 2022). Training programs should be customised to meet the specific needs of university faculty, equipping them with the resources and knowledge necessary to improve their digital skills (Rhoney *et al.*, 2024). Although the incorporation of CBE into teacher training programs offers notable advantages, it simultaneously introduces challenges (Nombo, 2022).

These challenges include the necessity for comprehensive frameworks that encompass the diverse competencies needed across various educational contexts, as well as the integration of digital tools in ways that augment rather than complicate the teaching process. Furthermore, it is imperative to achieve a balance between the emphasis on performance-based models and the acknowledgement of situational and cultural diversity within educational environments (Moriera *et al.*, 2022; Basantes-Andrade *et al.*, 2022).

In Uganda, the Ministry of Education has initiated reforms targeted at the integration of Competence-Based Education (CBE) into teacher training programs and various educational sectors (Kyobe & Rugumayo, 2005). As delineated by Kyobe and Rugumayo (2005), the

Uganda Vocational Qualification Framework (UVQF) was instituted to guide the formulation of occupational profiles and standards, which are crucial for the effective implementation of CBE. By aligning educational curricula with the competencies essential for efficacy in the classroom, CBE significantly enhances the relevance of teacher preparation (Kikomeko *et al*, 2019). It facilitates the development of practical skills and encourages active learning, both of which are vital for the delivery of effective instruction (Ndeezi *et al*, 2024). Notwithstanding its merits, the transition to CBE is fraught with challenges, including inadequate training for educators and institutional barriers that impede effective implementation (Ezati *et al*, 2014). To effectively tailor training programs to the pedagogical competencies required by university faculty, thorough needs assessments are essential.

While CBE provides a comprehensive framework for enhancing teacher preparation in Uganda, systemic challenges that may hinder its effective implementation require systematic attention. Attaining the desired educational outcomes will necessitate a judicious balance between institutional support and the enhancement of competencies. It is crucial to recognise that the incorporation of Competence-Based Education (CBE) within extensive professional courses for teacher trainers at Ugandan universities is increasingly acknowledged as a method to improve educational outcomes and align training with industry demands. This literature review synthesizes findings from various studies that emphasize the significance, challenges, and frameworks relevant to the implementation of CBE in teacher training initiatives.

The CBE framework is instrumental in enhancing the competencies of professionals, particularly in the health and education sectors, to meet the demands of the 21st century (Katoue, 2020). It underscores the importance of practical skills and real-world applications, which are essential for promoting effective teaching and learning across diverse contexts (Piri *et al.*, 2024). The Ministry of Education in Uganda has embarked on reforms aimed at integrating CBE into vocational training by establishing the Uganda Vocational Qualification Framework (UVQF), which guides curriculum

development and assessment methodologies (Kyobe & Rugumayo, 2005). Empirical research indicates that frameworks such as EQUIP have been effectively incorporated into university curricula, thereby demonstrating the feasibility of CBE in pre-service education (Topcu, 2023). Despite the potential benefits, challenges such as inadequate training for educators and the lack of standardised assessment frameworks persist (Zigama, 2025).

Recommendations advocate for the enhancement of faculty training in CBE methodologies in conjunction with the development of robust assessment tools to ensure effective implementation (Piri et al., 2024). While the transition towards CBE in teacher training presents considerable promise, it is imperative to address the existing barriers to ensure that these educational reforms result in substantial improvements in teaching quality and professional preparedness. This study posits that while Uganda has sought to adopt competence-based education in big professional courses for teacher trainers at Ugandan institutions, there remains a mismatch between its design and implementation. It is against this context that this study aimed to evaluate the implementation of competence-based education in large professional courses for teacher trainers at Ugandan universities.

METHODOLOGY

The study's research approach was qualitative, which involved reviewing and interpreting secondary data. Secondary sources for the information included textbooks, journal articles, and reports from both physical and online data sources, including Google Scholar. Data collaboration was done to ensure authenticity and dependability. Exclusion criteria were achieved through ensuring the study adopted a qualitative research methodology only. Exclusion was achieved by ensuring that only newly published secondary literature was considered. Beyond collaboration, data reliability (dependability) and validity (credibility) required more than basic triangulation, involving a rigorous, transparent, and reflexive process designed to build trustworthiness.

The researcher maintained a detailed, step-by-step record of all research decisions, from the initial research design to the final data analysis. Self-awareness and disclosure of the researchers' own biases, preconceptions, and influence on the research process were ensured. Colleagues and experts not directly involved in the study were engaged to review the analysis and challenge assumptions. Data analysis involved content analysis, which is a procedure for organising unstructured data into groups or subjects using trustworthy deduction and interpretation. To identify patterns, thematic analysis entailed six essential steps: familiarisation (reading data), creating initial codes, looking for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. This methodical approach ensured rigour and clarity by moving from deep data immersion to finding, honing, and presenting significant patterns (themes) that addressed the research issue. This allowed the researcher to identify areas of resemblance and distinction, establishing a foundation for the examination.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Benefits of competence-based education

The implementation of competence-based education (CBE) in comprehensive professional courses for teacher trainers at Ugandan universities is an intricate endeavor aimed at enhancing the caliber and applicability of teacher education. This strategy focuses on giving aspiring teachers the knowledge and abilities they need to fulfill the demands of contemporary classrooms. Studies that emphasize CBE's overall advantages, feasibility, and prospective benefits and problems lend support to its incorporation into teacher training programs in Uganda. Makerere University's implementation of the EQUIP competency-based approach shows that standardizing competency levels and filling up curriculum gaps are feasible. This method places a strong emphasis on developing practical abilities, which is essential for teacher candidates (Ndeezi et al., 2024).

The Ndeezi *et al.* (2024) study emphasized the necessity of a longer training period for teachers to gain confidence in implementing the EQUIP approach, the critical role-play plays in enhancing learning experiences, and the significance of feedback in encouraging participants' self-assurance and skill development. These results imply that, despite their concentration on clinical psychology, comparable approaches can be useful for introducing competence-based education in extensive professional courses for teacher trainers in Ugandan universities. Human Nutrition and Dietetics training is an example of how Competence-Based Education (CBE) improves professional competence and is in line with teacher education needs (Kikomeko *et al.*, 2019) (Kikomeko *et al.*, *n.d.*). The emphasis is on creating and verifying skills that meet the unique requirements of Uganda's educational systems (Kikomeko *et al.*, 2019; Kikomeko *et al.*, *n.d.*).

The study emphasized the necessity of identifying and validating the competences necessary for efficient performance within the nation's health systems and argued for the use of competency-based education (CBE) in the training of Human Nutrition and Dietetics (HN/HND) professionals in Uganda. It emphasized that the lack of these skills could hinder the advancement of HN/HND education, leading to inefficient spending and subpar training results. In order to improve the efficacy of training programs in Uganda's health sector that calls for a change towards Competency Based Education which may have an impact on other professional courses.

The adoption of CBE in Uganda's vocational education highlights challenges, such as the need to create standards, evaluation instruments, and occupational profiles. These issues are pertinent to teacher preparation programs, which need comparable frameworks to guarantee successful execution (Kyobe & Rugumayo, 2005). The study also covers the Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda's initiative to implement Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) in order to reform business, technical, and vocational education and training. This includes the creation of the Uganda Vocational Qualification Framework (UVQF) with input from a number of stakeholders.

Conversely, the application of competence-based education in extensive professional courses for teacher trainers in Ugandan institutions was not expressly covered by the study. Nonetheless, it describes how Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) is being implemented in Ugandan vocational education, with a focus on developing occupational profiles, standards, and curricula. Along with highlighting issues, it also lists advantages for sectors including water and sanitation, indicating the need for more research on the use of CBET in higher education settings.

A personality-driven educational process is a part of the shift to a competence-based approach in education, which can be challenging for institutions and teachers alike. It can be challenging to integrate the extensive collection of knowledge, abilities, and cultural values required by this approach into the current curriculum (Stukalenko *et al.*, 2016). By including the knowledge, abilities, and moral principles necessary for professional development, competence-based education enhances the personality culture of aspiring teachers, according to Stukalenko *et al.* (2016).

This method can maximize the potential of teacher trainers at Ugandan universities by fostering a personality-oriented educational process. The competency approach, which emphasizes pedagogical responsibilities and human self-actualization, can significantly improve professional education quality while also aligning with international educational paradigms and successfully meeting regional educational needs. The study continues by examining the development of a new educational paradigm in the twenty-first century, with a focus on the necessity of cultivating the personality cultures of aspiring teachers. This includes all of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and moral and cultural values needed to create a person who is capable and professionally mature.

Therefore, the embodiment of knowledge, skills, and education that promotes social integration and personal self-actualization can be characterized as competence (Halatsyn, 2022; Dang, 2024). For that reason, a personality-oriented educational process that maximizes the teacher's personality potential in addressing pedagogical challenges is the definition of professional training for aspiring teachers. Although

there is promise in the application of CBE in Ugandan teacher preparation programs, it is crucial to consider the broader educational environment.

The creation of strong frameworks and educational institutions' dedication to embracing new pedagogical paradigms are essential to the success of CBE. Furthermore, to make sure that CBE successfully satisfies Uganda's changing teacher education demands, continuous study and assessment are required. The adoption of learner-centered pedagogy was greatly aided by the support of college-based mentors, as evidenced by related studies like Kisalama's (2019) finding that more than 90% of teacher-trainers were satisfied with the quantity and caliber of pedagogical mentorship they received during the intervention. Furthermore, 83% of respondents concurred that the mentoring and supervision they received had benefited their classroom instruction (Kisalama & Kibedi, 2019).

One important element in improving teacher-trainers' reflective skills was the incorporation of video into the mentorship process. The overall quality of their instruction was enhanced by the participants' reported gains in self-assurance in the classroom and ease accepting peer criticism. Additionally, mentors reported that video recordings made it easier to have evidence-based conversations and assess how well mentees were applying learner-centered strategies.

The significance of instructors possessing the ability to analyze, design, develop, and assess competency-based instructional offerings was highlighted in a related study by Elazier (2019), which identified a set of instructor competencies necessary for faculty professional development to transition to competency-based instructional programming. The study emphasized the necessity for educators to build dynamic, active learning experiences that foster students' acquisition of knowledge and skills in place of traditional, static information-based training. In order to move away from traditional, passive knowledge-based instruction and toward more dynamic and active learning experiences, it emphasized the significance of creating and refining a competency-based instructor training model that enables instructors to analyze, design, develop, and assess competency-based instructional offerings.

Challenges of competency based education

The implementation of competency-based programs faces a number of obstacles, according to a study by Eklund (2018). These include a lack of development resources, high expectations for students, confusion brought on by the amount of paperwork related to competencies, and the requirement for ongoing competency activity revisions. These challenges highlighted how difficult it is to carry out such undertakings successfully. According to the study, comments indicated that students preferred the autonomy provided by the competency-based curriculum over more conventional methods, and their sentiments toward it was generally positive.

However, students expressed concerns about the excessive workload and requested more engaging activities, highlighting the need for further program development and longer-term operation to increase efficacy (Eklund, 2018). According to Atuhura (2024), a lack of instructional materials, time constraints, and large class sizes are the main reasons why secondary school English teachers in Uganda face significant challenges when implementing the 2020 English language competency-based curriculum. Effective teaching and learning in low-income educational environments are hampered by these barriers.

Additionally, the results indicate that the challenges faced by ESL teachers are exacerbated by inadequate planning and support from stakeholders, as well as a mismatch between local culture and learning styles. This demonstrates that the challenges of implementing a competence-based curriculum are widespread in many educational settings across Sub-Saharan Africa and the global south, not only in Uganda. This illustrates how these challenges are common to the majority of ESL classrooms in the global south, bringing to light the same problems that educators face while creating and executing competence-based curricula in Sub-Saharan Africa and the rest of the global south.

Cross-sector insights

In a comparable parallel study, Mukasa (2020) found that technical teachers and instructors in Uganda are better educated by instructional techniques that encourage experiential and constructive learning. These tactics enhance the overall competency of educators in the field by fusing knowledge with a scientific foundation with real-world abilities and values.

According to the study, these teaching techniques help instructors better assess the learning requirements of their students, plan and oversee learning activities, and create an atmosphere where students can freely experiment, explore, and seek solutions—all of which contribute to the improvement of Technical and Vocational Education in Uganda. This is in line with results from a study conducted at Makerere University by Ezati (2014), which discovered that participating academics' teaching experience varied. Most had between 11 and 15 years of experience, especially from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, while a smaller percentage had more than 20 years of experience, mostly from the Faculty of Law. This suggests that the training was especially helpful for the teaching staff, who were mostly in their early to mid-career stages. Of the 101 academics who took part in the study, 29.7% were female and 70.3% were male.

This suggests that there is a large gender gap among the academic staff, with roughly twice as many male academics as females. Day (2016) argues in the chapter on Competence-based Education and Teacher Professional Development that although competence is a basic quality of teachers, professional development should not only concentrate on it because teaching involves a complex fusion of cognitive and emotional skills, knowledge, attributes, and values that go beyond clearly defined competencies. In contrast to being restricted to externally determined criteria of competence, this highlights the significance of professional development systems that enable teachers to participate in deeper learning, such as comprehending and utilizing robust data systems and awareness of external requirements.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The research endeavored to explore the impediments associated with the incorporation of competency-based education (CBE) into substantial professional curricula for teacher educators within universities in Uganda. It underscored that, despite the theoretical accessibility of CBE, its practical implementation remains insufficient, thereby compromising the essential skills required for quality assurance. To further investigate this matter, the researcher utilized qualitative methodology, which included an exhaustive review of secondary literature.

The primary challenges encompass the requisite for extensive knowledge, skills, and cultural values, in addition to inadequate financial resources and a deficiency of support from relevant stakeholders. The findings suggest that a more profound alignment with international educational standards and local necessities is crucial for the advancement of professional education quality.

The research asserts that competency-based education (CBE) possesses the potential to enhance the quality of professional education within Uganda's teacher training programs. It is proposed that there is a need to establish capacity-building programs to support the implementation of CBE. Digital literacy training is also vital for the successful implementation of the program. Mentoring models are vital in supporting competence-based education by providing personalised guidance, fostering self-directed learning, and bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

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Availability of data and material for data transparency:

The Google Scholar repository, [<https://scholar.google.com/>], contains the datasets created and/or analysed during the current study. This

published article [and its additional information files] contain all data produced or analysed during this investigation.

Declaration: I certify that the data in this paper has not been offered for publication anywhere.

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