

A Competency-Based Curriculum Approach for Household Sustainability and Growth in Manafwa District

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the potential contributions of Uganda's competency-based curriculum (CBC) to household sustainability and economic growth in Manafwa District, where 75% of households depend on subsistence agriculture and only 42% complete secondary education. Employing a mixed-methods design with purposive sampling of 50 participants, including teachers, administrators, students, and church leaders, the research addresses three questions: CBC elements aligned with local economic needs, church-led capitalization of CBC-derived skills, and policy recommendations for income generation. Findings indicate that CBC's three competency

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domains, technical skills (financial literacy, agricultural techniques), character development (leadership, resilience), and meta-learning capacities (growth mindset), directly apply to Manafwa's agricultural economy. The Church of Uganda, operating 37% of district schools and reaching 65% of households, can leverage this network through agricultural innovation centers, entrepreneurship incubation programs, skills-based cooperatives, and integrated spiritual-economic development initiatives. Evidence from existing programs shows household income increases of 28% from church-led coffee processing initiatives and 80% startup profitability within six months through CBC-aligned mentorship. Prioritized policy recommendations include localized teacher capacity building emphasizing coffee value chain analysis, formal church-government partnership frameworks, competency assessment reform measuring practical economic applications, targeted resource allocation to female-headed households (38% of households), and church advocacy establishing a CBC Economic Impact Observatory. An 18-month pilot project in three parishes is proposed to document baseline indicators, implement CBC-aligned skills development, provide enterprise mentorship, and measure quantifiable economic improvements. The research concludes that CBC offers substantial potential for household economic transformation when intentionally implemented with economic outcomes in mind, with the Church of Uganda strategically positioned as the catalyst for translating educational competencies into tangible household improvements.

Keywords: *Competency-Based Curriculum, Household Sustainability, Economic Growth, Church of Uganda, Manafwa District, Agricultural Innovation.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is the cornerstone of progress and personal growth. In Manafwa District, where approximately 75% of households depend on subsistence agriculture and only 42% of residents complete secondary education (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2021), there is a critical need

for educational approaches that directly enhance economic outcomes. The competency-based curriculum (CBC) introduced by Uganda's Ministry of Education & Sports and the National Curriculum Development Council (NCDC) represents a potential catalyst for transforming learning into tangible household economic benefits.

This "competency based curriculum" shifts education from knowledge accumulation toward practical skill development. Unlike traditional education models, CBC emphasizes actionable competencies including technical skills (creativity, communication, critical thinking), character development (ethics, leadership, resilience), and meta-learning capacities (meta-cognition, growth mindset). In Manafwa's context, these competencies provide a foundation for entrepreneurship, agricultural innovation, and sustainable household enterprises (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2022).

Purpose of the study

This study examines the economic potential presented by the CBC implementation and how the Church of Uganda and associated institutions can leverage these competencies to increase household incomes and institutional sustainability within Manafwa District

Research questions

1. What specific elements of the lower secondary school competency-based curriculum (CBC) align with Manafwa's economic needs?
2. How can the church and its institutions within Manafwa District capitalize on CBC-derived skills to foster income-generating activities such as agricultural value addition, small-scale manufacturing, and service enterprises?
3. What targeted policy recommendations and implementation strategies can facilitate household income growth and economic sustainability in Manafwa's unique socioeconomic context?

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach with emphasis on qualitative data collection from both primary and secondary sources. Data collection instruments include semi-structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews with stakeholders across Manafwa District.

A purposive sampling strategy selected 50 participants representing key stakeholder groups: CBC-implementing teachers (15), school administrators (10), district education officers (5), secondary students (10), and church leaders engaged in community development (10). From each parish within Manafwa district, 5 participants were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across demographic and geographic variables, following methodological approaches recommended by Wambui and Njoroge (2021).

Data analysis employed thematic coding techniques using NVivo software to identify patterns related to economic applications of CBC competencies. Quantitative economic indicators were analyzed using descriptive statistics to establish baseline household economic conditions. Triangulation of multiple data sources enhanced validity and reliability of findings.

What is a competency based curriculum (CBC)?

A competency-based curriculum represents an educational approach emphasizing the development of specific, measurable skills rather than mere knowledge accumulation. In Manafwa's context, where practical livelihood skills directly impact household sustainability, this distinction is particularly significant. Muwanguzi (2024) defines CBC as an approach that "equips learners with necessary skills and abilities to perform tasks effectively in real-life situations, emphasizing application over theoretical knowledge."

The CBC implemented in Uganda's lower secondary schools encompasses three primary competency domains:

1. **Technical skills:** Including financial literacy, digital competence, agricultural techniques, and creative problem-solving applicable to Manafwa's predominantly agricultural economy (National Curriculum Development Council, 2020).
2. **Character development:** Fostering leadership, ethical decision-making, and resilience important qualities for entrepreneurial success in resource-constrained environments (Eriya, 2024).
3. **Meta-learning capacities:** Developing growth mindset and self-directed learning that enable continuous adaptation to changing economic conditions (Kemboi & Maina, 2021)

For example, a CBC agriculture module in Manafwa schools includes project-based learning where students develop small-scale vegetable gardens using sustainable farming techniques, calculate profit margins, and develop marketing strategies directly applicable skills for household economic improvement (National Curriculum Development Council, 2020).

The CBC design allows learners to progress at individualized paces, emphasizing mastery of competencies rather than time spent in classrooms (Bhatt & Sharma, 2021). This flexibility is particularly valuable in Manafwa District, where seasonal agricultural demands often compete with educational schedules. As Mutisya (2019) notes, the CBC encourages a variety of teaching and learning approaches that engage learners more actively in the educational process, preparing them for practical application in real-world settings.

How the Church and Institutions within Manafwa District Capitalize On CBC for Sustainability and Household Growth

The Church of Uganda maintains significant influence in Manafwa District, operating 37% of schools and reaching approximately 65% of households through various ministries (Diocese of Mbale Annual Report, 2022). This extensive network provides an important platform for translating CBC competencies into household economic improvements through several specific strategies:

1. **Church-based agricultural innovation centers:** Churches can establish demonstration farms that apply CBC-derived agricultural competencies to local crops. For instance, St. Peter's Church in Bubutu Parish has implemented a youth-led coffee processing initiative that applies value-addition techniques taught in CBC science modules, increasing household income by 28% for participating families (Okiror & Otim, 2023).
2. **Entrepreneurship incubation programs:** Church institutions can create supportive environments for youth and women to develop CBC-acquired skills into viable businesses. The "Faithful Entrepreneurs" program at Christ Cathedral has mentored 35 small business startups since 2022, with 80% achieving profitability within six months by applying financial literacy and marketing skills from the CBC (Nambi & Otaala, 2022).
3. **Skills-based cooperative formation:** Churches can facilitate the formation of producer cooperatives organized around specific CBC competencies. The Manafwa Women's Crafts Cooperative, supported by three Anglican parishes, leverages artistic and mathematical skills from CBC to produce and market traditional crafts internationally via e-commerce platforms (Diocese of Mbale Annual Report, 2022).
4. **Integrated spiritual and economic development:** Rather than viewing spirituality and economic activities as competing priorities, churches can develop integrated programs where ethical business practices and community responsibility are framed as expressions of faith values. This approach addresses the historical reluctance of some church leaders to engage with economic initiatives (Nambi & Otaala, 2022).

Policy Recommendations and Strategies to Facilitate Income Generation & Growth

Based on Manafwa's specific context and the research findings, the following prioritized recommendations address barriers to CBC implementation for economic benefit:

1. **Localized teacher capacity building:** The Ministry of Education and NCDC should develop Manafwa-specific teacher training modules that emphasize CBC applications relevant to local economic opportunities (Kasozi, 2018). For example, training secondary school teachers to incorporate coffee production value chain analysis into mathematics and business studies to reflect the district's primary cash crop.
2. **Church-government partnership framework:** Establish formal collaboration mechanisms between the Church of Uganda and district education officials to align CBC implementation with community development initiatives (World Bank, 2022). This should include quarterly coordination meetings and joint monitoring of economic outcomes from educational initiatives.
3. **Competency assessment reform:** Develop assessment tools that measure practical economic applications of CBC competencies rather than theoretical knowledge alone (Mwiria, 2017). For rural Manafwa schools, this could include portfolio-based assessment of student-led agricultural projects or community business initiatives.
4. **Targeted resource allocation:** Government and development partners should prioritize CBC implementation resources to marginalized communities within Manafwa, particularly focusing on female-headed households (currently 38% of households) and youth groups in parishes with highest poverty incidence (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

5. **Church advocacy role:** Church leaders should actively advocate for CBC policies that enhance economic opportunities by documenting and communicating successful implementations (Nambi & Otaala, 2022). The Diocese of Mbale could establish a CBC Economic Impact Observatory to monitor household improvements resulting from curriculum implementation.

Implementation timeline:

1. Immediate term (0-6 months): Establish church-government coordination mechanisms and begin teacher training
2. Medium term (6-18 months): Implement assessment reforms and targeted resource allocation
3. Long term (18+ months): Develop sustainable advocacy structures and impact measurement systems

CONCLUSION AND CALL TO ACTION

This research demonstrates that the competency-based curriculum offers substantial potential for enhancing household economic sustainability in Manafwa District when intentionally implemented with economic outcomes in mind. The Church of Uganda, with its extensive institutional presence and community trust, occupies a strategic position to translate educational competencies into tangible household improvements (Nambi & Otaala, 2022).

We propose an immediate pilot project: "CBC Economic Transformation Initiative" in three Manafwa parishes (Bukhofu, Bumbo, and Bubutu) where church institutions, schools, and district officials would collaborate to implement integrated learning and economic activities based on the CBC framework (Okiror & Otim, 2023). This 18-month pilot would:

1. Document baseline household economic indicators for 150 participating families

2. Implement targeted CBC-aligned skills development in both school and community settings
3. Provide mentorship and startup resources for household enterprises
4. Measure quantifiable economic improvements and document implementation lessons

This pilot would generate evidence-based models for scaling CBC economic applications throughout Manafwa District and potentially other regions facing similar economic challenges. The time for theoretical discussion has passed Manafwa's households need practical applications of educational innovation that the CBC, properly implemented, can deliver (World Bank, 2022).

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