

The Role of Competency in Curbing Youth Unemployment: Competency-based Curriculum Approach

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Abstract

Educational reforms have been changing as each nation strives to improve its citizens through the implementation of a curriculum that provides acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes that will promote standard performance on the job. East Africa nations for a long time have implemented content-based curriculum which was criticized in preparing graduates who do not satisfy the employability trends, job market demands, and 21st-century skills on outsourcing skillful human power resource. Currently, many Africa nations have adopted a Competency-based curriculum as an education system to drive solutions to the attainment of the populace with the desired competency for job market performance. CBC emphasizes the achievement of competence among learners. This paper discussion has dwelled on aspects of CBC, the concept of competency, the role of the teacher in CBC to develop competency, and the importance of competency in the job market. The clear conclusion attests that education should emphasize the development of competence among graduates to curb unemployment in the Africa Nations.

Keywords: Competency-based curriculum, Competency, Unemployment, Education, Curbing and Employability skills

Introduction

The revolutionary development in the world economy and technological advancement demands the education graduates be equipped with competencies that highly fit the labor market. Changes in the world require graduates cohort who are highly viable at job performance. Many employers have indicated dissatisfaction with education graduates' abilities to perform the required task at the job field. For example, in the USA, 10% of business organizations, employers agree that students have the right skills to do well in the job environment. These scenario has been attributed to the kind of education offered. Therefore the educational curriculum is changing its face to accommodate, meet, and develop employable education outputs. More education reforms need to strive to adopt broad educational approaches that shall provide an opportunity for education involvement and improvement. Education reform adopted should be organized to super pass the future expectation, which will be able to overcome the test of time. The reform must need to transform, unfold, and empower the learners' capabilities, interests, attitudes, skills, and values. The entire curriculum context needs to be eyed on the future function ability of learners. Studies indicate the importance of a curriculum that emphasis competency as its departure point. The curriculum that seems to gain favor in Africa countries is the Competency-based curriculum (CBC), which tends to position the learner at the center of the learning.

Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC)

Curriculum innovation endeavors to distill the learning processes and get the best practices incorporated in the actual pedagogical activities to enhance the implementation and attainment of the desired educational goal. CBC, for instance, screens the importance of learners to attain competence in all learning processes in which learners become the major center of the curriculum. This enables the attainment of learning outcomes by all learners as it develops the best potential of every individual. CBC emphasizes having explicit, measurable objectives basing on the learner-centered outcome-based approach to the holistic teaching and learning process. Where the whole pedagogical processes are anchored around the learner as the teacher assumes the role of a coach, facilitator, or mentor. The learner decides on the pace of progression of the learning where they are made the learning monopoly in the learning process. Learners can determine their self-driven learning. This is the student agency as it majorly emphasizes how much a learner knows, can do, and demonstrate mastery. The learners are allowed to repeatedly perform a competency practice until he/she demonstrates mastery. The aim is to allow learners to connect inherent knowledge with the learned competency with the present context and their future profession. In cases of noticed difficulties among particular learners, the teacher gives individualized support. The competence is aimed at solving the current real-life problems with the actual job task in mind. The curriculum uses criterion-referenced assessment approaches whereby assessment is of learning (meaningful) while teachers are to provide continuous feedback to learners on their weaknesses and strengths. Basing on this feedback, the teacher has to plan the subsequent lesson. CBC provides flexibility in teaching and learning time and styles; this makes it able to accommodate both slow and fast learners. In CBC methodologies such as; cooperative learning, brainstorming webs, thinking process mapping, ICT and multimedia are utilized (Sturgis and Casey 2018)

As Kouwenhoven (2009) observed that CBC is prescriptive and skilled oriented, the whole curriculum rotates on learners' needs and ability to acquire competency. In CBC, focus on innovation,

problem-solving, self-reflection and self-assessment play a fundamental role. CBC, therefore, needs effective implementation to ensure equity in high outcome for all learners, promotes equality in practices, and cultivates the unique gift of every individual.

The Concept of Competency

UN general secretary from 1997-2006 defines competency as a combination of skills, attributes, and behaviors that directly relate to successful performance on the job. This can imply that a competent person should have the ability to intergrade knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be resourceful as an individual to enhance him/her perform a task. Mbarushimana & Kuboja (2016) define competency as the capacity to accomplish up to the standard the key occupational task that characterizes a profession. The ability of performance will depend upon the level of knowledge, how skillful one is on attitude towards the task.

Venkataiah, S (2000) defines teaching competency as any single knowledge, skill, or professional expertise that a teacher possesses and the possession of which is believed to be relevant to the successful practice of teaching. Teachers' competency ought to be developed to facilitate the appropriate role in enhancing students' attainment of competence. Teachers play a vital role in implementing CBC hence need competency in incorporating competence into the learning context.

In Australia, competency is defined as the specification of knowledge, skills, and application of these aspects to the standard of performance expected in the workplace. Common competence identified and incorporated in the different curriculum includes but is not limited to: communication and collaboration, critical thinking and creativity, problem-solving, self-efficacy, digital learning, learning how to learn.

According to Kouwenhoven, the way to conceptualize the relation between education and the world of work is through CBC. The CBC emphasizes the attainment of competence; hence it can be inferred that to conceptualize between the education and the world of work is through competency. The education should specify competencies in the curriculum to enhance the education products to be work-ready

and be acceptable by the industry. In line with what learners know and can do, the aim is to emphasize previous learning and performance. Competency is learned, enhanced, expanded to support empirical performance. Competency is attributes possessed by individuals underlying successful professional performance. Competencies prepare students to be lifelong learners. Competency in modern society should encompass the digital advancement and needs of the current technological prowess students. Hence, competence need revision to involve future requirements in society (Kouwenhoven (2009)

Competence is a complex combination of knowledge, skills, understanding, values, attitudes, and desire that lead to effective embodied human action in the world in a particular domain. One's achievement at work, in personal relationships or civil society, is not based simply on the accumulation of knowledge stored as data, but as a combination of this knowledge with skills, values, attitudes, desires and motivation and its application in a particular human setting at a particular point in a trajectory in time. Competence implies a sense of agency, action, and value' Hoskins and Deakins cited in CEDEFOP (2016).

Getting smart(2018) observed that many professional development and requirements in the USA, such as medicine, law, engineering have competency-based entrance requirements that involve tests and authentic assessment of mastery of competence. This depicts employers are moving towards employable skills as opposed to knowledge content.

Role of a Teacher in CBC

Quality of education has been an issue due to the continuous changes in diversification and expansion of both teacher's and students' needs. Competency and professional skills are vital aspects of teachers' characteristics. Perez and Clem (2017) identified that the teachers in CBC evaluation ought to reculturize their students by ensuring that not only knowledge is assessed but the availability of real practical simulative context where competencies evaluate actions. It is, therefore, the teachers' job to design situations that are as real as possible, situations that the students might encounter in their

future professional lives so that they may learn the appropriate actions applicable in those situations

Teachers' role in CBC has to change to facilitate the appropriate learning environment that can enhance learners to attain the competencies. Teachers need to have creativity, innovativeness, collaborative and communicative skills. Teachers ought to provide learners with the opportunity to realize and develop full potential. Kouwenhoven (2009) puts that CBC aims to make learners more competent through the acquisition of competencies and the development of already held competencies. The role of the teachers is that of a cognitive guide where the teacher uses a demonstration to make competencies visible to learners. The teachers use scaffolding to bring out the competency in learners. Teachers encourage students to engage in active inquiry in the learning environment. The quality of education is judged by learners' performance at the point of how much the graduates can do other than how much they know. Teachers are the coach to the learning environment of the students. The teacher should do most of the guiding, allowing learners to explore the learning materials. This role may be challenging to most teachers for they are acquainted with the content-based learning approaches.

On the involvement of learners and learner-centered aspects of CBC, the program may provide learning activities in varied modes, including written materials, video lectures, hands-on activities, demonstrations, and games. These would cater to the different students learning needs and styles. The major input is the forum given to learners through an authentic task that enables learners to learn on their own. The competency will give an ability expatriate to graduate to work within borders of the desired task.

Competency as a Means to Curb Unemployment

Youth unemployment in African countries stands at a very alarming rate. According to ILO (2016) for instance, South Africa is 54.4%, Namibia 43.8%, Mozambique 41.7%, Kenya 20%, Ghana 11.5%, Congo 10.8%, Nigeria 8.5%, and Tanzania 5.4%. This scenario, among other factors, is escalated by the lack of employability skills from graduates. It was found that 19% of employers found it difficult to fill specific positions because of a lack of

competency on potential individuals. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, as cited in Carla and Vander (2018), employers are looking for certain particular skills in an employee. This includes; ability to work in a team, the ability to make decisions and solve problems, the ability to plan to organize and prioritize work, and the ability to communicate with people verbally. Learners emphasize these aspects of competency-based education through competence to be demonstrated mastery.

OECD (2013) pointed out that countries like Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, Luxembourg employed the use of proper arrangements between education and the work world, for instance, use of work-study. This was to facilitate the smooth transition into employment. Additionally, they raised their graduates from vocational education training programs (VET) to 32% in 2008-2011. The VET provided the competencies which were essential for employment. The report endorsed that vocational education offers better prospects for employability.

The quality of education due to shifts in the perception of knowledge and societal trends makes the aspect of competency vital in the quality of graduates. World Bank stresses the importance of learners' outcome performance, which is learner-centered and driven by learners' needs and characteristics. Teachers' and learners' competencies, therefore, should be reviewed and redefined in the Education System. NCERT (1998) asserts that teachers' competency can determine students learning outcomes in this context to enable the attainment of competence. Chaudana (2018) explains that it is through competency-based education that education products can be linked to the job market. The emphasis is on the ability of graduates to interpret information, communicate effectively, think critically and creatively, and collaborate with others to solve challenges in situations/work.

Cedefop describe the importance of institutions and processes in engaging employers in curriculum design and validation of qualifications. In European Union countries, the participation of the employer's stakeholders has been increased where process involves consultation, negotiation & documentation.

Competence, as explained by the UK working group on vocational qualification, puts that it is the ability to do a particular activity to a prescribed standard. This indicates the high ability to perform tasks to a high level of excellence. Perez and Clem (2017) argue that competence is the individual ability to deal with professional problems as they appear in the context.

The competent individual masters' specific specialized knowledge in appropriate scope and depth where applicability and practical experience are gained. The transformation of inter-disciplinary intertwined knowledge produces the creativity, flexible, and adaptable skill that suits the performance of the tasks. The competency is structured on several levels: cognitive, skill, and effective. The cognitive involves the knowledge of content on the area of specialization. Skill will involve the operational ability to apply the learned facts to practice. The affective will involve the attitudes, emotions, motivations, and willingness to take the task. The competency manifestation needs to be at the level that personality is tuned to the ability to diagnose prerequisites development necessities and handle the demanding social situations.

Conclusion

Implementation of a competency-based curriculum is a complex phenomenon that requires teachers to develop competency in teaching and enhance learners to attain competence. The degree of attainment of competence among learners may differ, but the CBC gives the platform to be nurtured at every level of learning. The curriculum policymakers and developers should give clarity in approaches that are achievable in enhancing the learners to be competent. The competent graduates will fit well into the changing society where the emphasis is on competence performance. CBC being a successful reform in developed states to enhance economic development, the African nations should improve on its implementation to enhance the acquisition of competence among learners to promote efficient job performance.

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