Effectiveness of Assessment Tools used in Assessing Achievement of Core Competencies in Social Studies in Public Primary Schools in Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract

The Competency-based Curriculum (CBC) in Kenya aims at ensuring that the instructional process equips learners with knowledge and skills to prepare them for the world of work in the 21st Century. This study aimed at investigating effectiveness of assessment tools used in assessing achievement of core competencies in Social Studies in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study was guided by Constructivist Learning Theory. The study design was descriptive survey design. Target population was 4,136 respondents. Yamane's formula was used to obtain a sample size of 365 respondents. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to obtain a sample of 23 Head Teachers, 23 Heads of Social Studies, and 315 Social Studies teachers. Purposive sampling was used to obtain a sample of four (4) Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs), and simple random sampling was used to obtain classrooms to be observed. Data collection instruments were: questionnaires, interview schedules, and classroom observation schedules. Data analysis was done using the SPSS programme version 25. Findings indicated that the assessment tools identified are effective in assessing learners' acquisition of core competencies in Social Studies. However, the reliance on conventional assessments does not fully capture student progress, necessitating more comprehensive and diversified evaluation methods. To complement conventional methods and to provide a more holistic evaluation of student competency acquisition, it is recommended that teachers adopt a broader range of assessment tools, such as portfolios, self-assessments, and peer assessments.

Keywords: *Assessment, Assessment tools, Competency-based Curriculum, Implementation*

1. Introduction

The global shift toward Competency-based Education (CBE) reflects a change in educational philosophy that is different from memorization and in the direction of creating practical skills and the ability to apply knowledge in real-world settings (Walton, 2017; Kim, 2015; Fullerton et al., 2013). The shift is seen through the use of Competency-based curriculum (CBC) around the world to foster advanced cognitive competencies, social relationships, and civic disposition (Fullerton et al., 2013; Bergsmann et al., 2015). In Kenya, the 2-6-3-3 CBC, which started as a way of preparing learners to meet the demands of the 21st century, emphasizes core competencies in all areas of learning, including Social Studies (Republic of Kenya, 2017).

Social Studies has an important role to play in preparing active and concerned citizens who can live effectively in a culturally plural society (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 1992, 2022). The Kenyan CBC approach promotes experiential learning and the application of knowledge to real life, connecting classroom education to relevant and contemporary issues (RCIs) like global citizenship and life skills (Republic of Kenya, 2017). Such an application orientation necessitates quality assessment tools that accurately measure the mastery of core competencies.

While the CBC conceptual model is well defined, the success of CBC implementation relies on the adequacy of assessment tools used to ascertain student mastery. As evidenced by experiences in Indonesia, Latvia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Rwanda, challenges like inadequate resources, teacher unpreparedness, and insufficient clear implementation guidelines can compromise effective uptake of CBC (Utomo, 2005; Ilisko et al., 2017; Muraraneza & Ntombi, 2018; Komba & Mwandaji, 2015; Mbarushimana and Kuboja, 2016). Similarly, effective CBC implementation in Ontario, Canada, British Columbia, Canada, and the USA, have shown the merits of deep learning, explicitly stated curricular competencies and applied learning (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2017; British Columbia Curriculum [B. C.C], 2022; Barrick, 2017).

This research aimed to investigate the efficacy of tools that are being employed in assessing the acquisition of core competencies in Social Studies in the Kenyan primary school context. Specifically, this research will examine the alignment of these evaluation instruments to the CBC's intended learning outcomes, their feasibility and practicality for use, and their capacity to validly measure student mastery of core competencies. By examining these factors, this research hopes to contribute to an improved understanding of how evaluation practices can be optimized towards effective achievement of CBC goals in Social Studies education.

2. Review of Related literature

Competency-based Education in Sweden is executed in knowledge-based schools known as Kunskapsskolan, which focus on personalized learning pathways (Patrick, 2014). Students identify their personal goals and work towards developing them with the guidance of a learning coach. Assessments are structured in the form of presentations. Classrooms are designed in specific layouts to meet intended learning tasks. A typical classroom interaction based on the competency-based model includes workshop sessions and a lab session where students undertake collaborative work to develop skills, as well as sessions to focus on developing skills in communication (Patrick, 2014).

In Scotland, assessment in Curriculum for Education (CFE) focuses on formative assessments in the classroom. Learners are given a chance to show achievement of expectations in various ways. This enables them to be flexible to a wide range of pathways appropriate to their needs (Patrick, 2014). In Singapore, a review committee's report on primary education recommended that schools should have clear guidelines on learning outcomes from the Ministry of Education (Tan et al., 2017).

Competency-Based Education in Finland advocates for student self-assessment so that they can have an understanding of their progress and enable them to design their activities. The students are assessed by teachers through continuous performance-based formative assessments. Tasks are given to students so that they can demonstrate what they know and what they can do. They also build their own learning schedules, and they may complete the courses at an appropriate pace as per their abilities and unique circumstances (Patrick, 2014).

In Africa, studies on assessment in CBC have been conducted in Tanzania and Kenya. In Tanzania, a study by Tarmo (2015) focused on preservice teachers' preparedness to implement CBC. Respondents were pre-service teacher trainees at the University of Dar es Salaam who were about to complete their teaching practice in Tanga region. Instruments of collecting data were an interview guide schedule, and an observation checklist. Study findings indicated that preservice teachers were not familiar with the approaches of assessment expected in CBC implementation. Majority of teachers (68.75%) opined that paper and pencil assessment methods were characteristic of CBC. On the contrary, CBC advocates for assessment methods that measure the level of understanding of students and critical thinking rather than memorizing facts (TIE, 2013).

Komba and Mwandanji, (2015) investigated issues surrounding CBC implementation in secondary schools in Tanzania. The study sought to examine teachers' understanding of CBC as well as whether students' assessment is done as per CBC requirements. Teachers who formed part of the respondents were randomly selected from 13 secondary schools in Tanzania's Mbeya region. Study findings indicated that teachers had little understanding of CBC (86%), and most of the lesson plans reviewed did not display CBC standards. The study also found that teachers' involvement of students in classroom activities was very low. The findings also indicated that students' formative assessments were practiced in less than 50% of the classroom sessions that were observed.

Assessment in CBC takes the formative assessment approach, which is designed to shape learning as it happens. It gives immediate insight into student understanding, misconceptions, and skills, (Ngina,2024). Aligning assessments with competencies is fundamental towards ensuring that they are meaningful and feedback is directly applicable to the critical skills and knowledge areas, (Ngina,2024). Competency-based assessments are designed to enable students to apply the skills and methods they have learned to real-world problems and situations, (Brouse,2020). The skills should be transferable and enable the learners to be contributors to the world around them, such as collaborating with a group or communicating their reasoning, (Brouse, 2020).

The core competencies in CBC are assessed using various approaches. Communication and collaboration aim at enabling the learner to embrace team building and increased self-awareness. The communication skills include speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In collaboration, the learner is expected to be punctual, complete tasks in time, and be able to support others. Assessment of communication and collaboration is done by the teacher by assigning the learner a task such as a presentation and observing whether the learner embraces teamwork (KNEC,2021). The tools of assessment in communication and collaboration include an observation schedule, a checklist, a rating scale, and a written test. The teacher observes whether the learner can maintain appropriate body posture, keep eye contact, ask questions for clarity as well and receive important information. The teacher then fills out the observation schedule, checklist, rating scale, and written test.

In assessing critical thinking and problem solving, the learner is expected to find a solution to a problem or challenge in society. Information from the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) indicates that a rubric can be used to assess whether the learner has knowledge of the challenge and suggest possible solutions, (KNEC, 2021). The teacher then fills the rubric and notes whether the learner exceeds expectation, meets expectation, approaches expectation, or is below expectation. In assessing creativity and imagination, the teacher uses an observation schedule and a checklist. The teacher observes whether the learner can be creative in making

use of locally available resources. Assessment of digital literacy involves the use of an observation schedule whereby the learner's ability to operate digital devices, take photographs, and record videos is assessed. The core competency of learning to learn entails the continued development of skills. A learner is assessed through working in groups and formulating plans towards the completion of a task.

A study conducted by Kigwilu and Mokoro, (2022) on Teachers' Assessment Practices in implementing CBC in secondary schools in the Ameru district of Tanzania, sought to determine teacher training in utilization of recommended assessment methods in CBC. Study findings indicated that majority of secondary school teachers were not trained in the recommended assessment methods for implementing CBC, especially the use of rating scales and rubrics, checklists, portfolios, practical tasks, and analysis of text. The methods that were primarily used by teachers to assess student learning were oral examinations, written tests, analysis of texts, and essays. Portfolios, rating scales and rubrics, checklists, projects, and practical tasks methods were rarely used.

A study by Waweru, (2018) sought to investigate teachers' influence on assessment modes of CBC. The findings showed that there was a 45.7% level of incompetence in designing assessment criteria by teachers, and there was little evidence of teachers designing their own assessment criteria; examples they used were from assessment terms they used during training. The studies have looked at assessment in CBC in general. The research gap that has not been looked into is the efficiency of the assessment tools in measuring learner competencies in a Social Studies lesson.

Building on the findings from earlier studies, further literature on assessment in competency-based education (CBE) reveals additional complexities regarding assessment methodologies, particularly across diverse educational contexts. In the field of health education, for example, La Chimea et al. (2020) explore clinical competency assessment methods, emphasizing a more hands-on approach. The authors advocate for formative assessments that prioritize real-world skills over theoretical knowledge, reinforcing that these assessments must align closely with the competencies expected in clinical environments. Their research highlights how the shift from conventional assessments towards more dynamic, competency-based models helps students apply skills directly in medical practice. However, a limitation of this study is the difficulty in generalizing the results beyond clinical education, given the field-specific nature of clinical competencies. Their sample size consisted of 48 students in clinical training, and although the methodology involved in-depth case studies, a more extensive, cross-disciplinary sample could improve the applicability of their findings across different educational domains.

A study conducted by Henri et al. (2017) reviewed tools and assessments for CBE, offering a broader perspective on competency-based learning across Engineering Education. The authors reported that task-based assessments are central to ensuring learners can demonstrate mastery in real-world contexts. Qualitative review of existing literature and interviews with educators across engineering institutions revealed that while formative assessments are highly valued, the difficulty lies in creating standardized assessment tools that fit within the diverse needs of Competency-Based Education (CBE). A limitation in this study lies in its geographical scope, as most of the areas of study stem from Western contexts, thus not fully addressing the global implementation of competency-based frameworks. The authors, however, offer recommendations for improving the adaptability of assessment tools to more diverse educational systems by advocating for collaborative assessments that mimic professional practice.

In the broader context of higher education, Marion et al. (2020) examine systems of assessments aligned with CBE, particularly focusing on advancing equity through personalized learning. Their research employs a mixed-method approach, including surveys and interviews with education policymakers and teachers, covering a sample of 200 participants. The study emphasizes that equity-driven assessments are key to providing students from diverse backgrounds with an opportunity to succeed in CBE. Findings indicate that when assessments are aligned with competencies rather than standard content, students demonstrate increased engagement and achievement. However, a limitation highlighted in their research is that aligning assessments with such personalized learning paths can be resource-intensive, both in terms of time and cost, posing a challenge for underfunded institutions.

A study by Gervais (2016) delves into a comparative analysis of institutions that have adopted CBE and those that still adhere to conventional education models in North American higher education systems. The study reports that competency-based assessments are often misaligned with the learning outcomes they are intended to measure, especially when institutions do not fully understand the theoretical underpinnings of CBE. The research conducted through content analysis of 300 institutional policies concludes that clearer frameworks are necessary for institutions to create meaningful assessments that match competencies. A limitation of this study is that it focuses predominantly on North American higher education systems, which may not reflect the complexities of CBE implementation in other regions, especially in countries with less structured educational systems.

Lurie and Garrett (2017) assessed the goals and challenges in implementing CBE at higher education institutions. They find that while CBE fosters individualized learning and offers more precise metrics for student achievement, the challenge lies in assessing non-cognitive skills like communication and collaboration. Using a survey of 150 educators across different institutions, the study examines how assessments such as group projects and peer evaluations can better capture these competencies. This study is limited by its focus on well-established institutions, leaving out schools with fewer resources, where implementing such sophisticated assessment mechanisms could be a significant challenge. The authors of the study also noted that while some institutions are ahead in integrating CBE assessment tools, others are struggling with systems that are not quite ready to implement the competency-based assessment. This means that different institutions are likely to be using different methods of assessment.

Touchie and Cate (2016) examined the role of assessment in Medical Education, arguing for a more integrated approach where assessments do not only measure knowledge, but also assist in assessing the levels of skills development and application. The study, involving 75 medical trainees and 20 medical educators, used direct observations and interviews to explore ways in which competency-based assessments can better prepare students for clinical practice. The findings emphasize that formative assessments, such as workplace-based evaluations, should be prioritized over summative assessments. This mode of assessment would ensure that students can continuously apply and refine their skills in real-time. The study offers insights into how continuous performance-based assessment models can be applied in other fields that require a blend of knowledge and practical skill application.

In Africa, Croft et al. (2019) highlight current trends in pharmacy education and the opportunities for competency-based assessment in African universities. The study, using a sample size of 150 pharmacy students across three universities in Kenya and Tanzania, found that the adoption of competency-based assessments was slow due to a lack of training among

faculty members. The study utilized surveys and performance evaluations as part of its methodology, showing that while students are open to competency-based assessment methods, instructors often revert to conventional paper-and-pencil exams due to familiarity and ease of administration. This research points to a significant gap in faculty development and the need for ongoing support to help educators transition to more competency-based models. The limitation here is that the study only included pharmacy programmes, thus not addressing how CBE is applied in other health-related or non-health disciplines in these regions.

A study by Bingham, Adams, and Stewart (2021) explored experiences of educators implementing CBE in K-12 schools. Using qualitative case studies of ten K-12 schools, they investigate how teachers perceive and implement competency-based assessments in their classrooms. The findings show that while teachers recognize the value of competency-based assessments in improving student outcomes, many feel unprepared to design and implement them effectively. The research contributes valuable insights into the challenges teachers face and emphasizes the need for professional development and resources to support successful CBE implementation in K-12 settings.

Studies reviewed on competency-based education consistently highlight the advantages of formative, real-world assessments. The studies demonstrate that while assessments aligned with competencies are critical to ensuring meaningful feedback and skill development, there are gaps in educator preparedness and institutional support that hinder the full adoption of these methods. Across different fields, from Clinical Education to Engineering and K-12 settings, the shift towards competency-based assessment requires continuous professional development, adaptable tools, and clear frameworks that accommodate diverse learning environments. There is a clear need for further research into the effectiveness of various competency-based assessment tools, particularly in measuring learner competencies in specific subjects like Social Studies.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The design was suitable because respondents had a chance to raise their opinions concerning the process of CBC implementation. The target population comprised 267 Head Teachers, 14 Curriculum Support Officers, 267 Heads of Subject, and 3,588 Social Studies teachers, making a total of 4,136 respondents as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of the Target Population

sub-County	Population Distribution					
	Schools	HT	HOS	SST	CSO	Total
Molo	56	56	56	702	3	817
Naivasha	74	74	74	1,071	4	1,223
Nakuru East	41	41	41	675	3	760
Rongai	96	96	96	1,140	4	1,336
Total	267	267	267	3,588	14	4,136

Key: HT-Head Teachers, HOS-Heads of Social Studies, SST-Social Studies Teachers, CSO-Curriculum Support Officers

Source: Sub County Directors of Education: Molo, Naivasha, Nakuru East, and Rongai sub counties, 2024

Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select Head Teachers, Heads of subject, and Social Studies teachers from each sub-County to represent their population within each stratum. Purposive sampling was used to select one (1) Curriculum Support Officer in each of the four sub-Counties. Simple random sampling was used to select classes for observation.

A sample size of 365 respondents, as determined by Yamane's formula (Yamane,1967), as shown below, was obtained.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Whereby:
n = Size of the Sample
N = Size of the population.
e = Precision level, which is ±5%
=4136/1+4136(0.05)^2
=4136/11.34
=364.7
=365 respondents
The sampling grid is as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Sampling Grid

sub-County	Population	Sample Distribution					
		Schools	HT	HOS	SST	CSO	Total
Molo	817	5	5	5	62	1	73
Naivasha	1,223	6	6	6	94	1	107
Nakuru E.	760	4	4	4	59	1	68
Rongai	1,336	8	8	8	100	1	117
Total	4,136	23	23	23	315	4	365

Key: HT-Head teachers, HOS-Heads of Social Studies, SST-Social Studies Teachers, CSO-Curriculum Support Officers

Source: Sub-County Directors of Education: Molo, Naivasha, Nakuru East, and Rongai sub-counties, 2024

Tools used in data collection comprised questionnaires for teachers and heads of subject, interview schedules for Head Teachers and Curriculum Support Officers, and a classroom observation schedule. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, thematic analysis, and logistic regression using SPSS version 25. Validity and reliability of the instruments were

ensured through rigorous measures comprising a pilot study conducted in two (2) schools, which were not part of the study, and Cronbach's alpha test.

A permit was sought from NACOSTI before the actual data collection. Permission to carry out the study in the selected areas was sought through the sub-County authorities and head teachers in schools. Participants were assured of confidentiality. Informed consent, ethical considerations, and confidentiality were strictly followed in the entire research process.

4. Results and Discussion

The objective of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of assessment tools used in assessing the achievement of core competencies in Social Studies. Data obtained was analyzed to assess the relationship between assessment tools and the acquisition of core competencies in Social Studies. The study thus tested the relationship between assessment tools and learners' acquisition of core competencies. Data was obtained using Likert scale, and logistic regression was used to test the relationship between assessment tools and learners' acquisition of core competencies. Tables 3 and 4 present the findings.

Table 3: Effectiveness of Assessment Tools on Acquisition of Core Competencies (Model Summary)

Step	-2log likelihood	Cox & Snell R^2	Nagelkerke R^2	χ^2	df	Sig.
1	316.787 [a]	.257	.348	1.409	1	.118

4. Estimation terminated at iteration number 4 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

The independent variable in the model was the assessment tools. The model was significant $\chi^2(1)$ =90.203, p<0.001, and the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test confirmed model fit, $\chi^2(1)$ =1.409, p=0.118. Cox & Snell R square predicted a variance of 25.7% while Nagelkerke R square predicted 34.8% variation in acquisition of core competencies in Social Studies explained by the model. The model with the independent variable explained 78.0% of core competencies, an improvement from the initial 60.9% predicted. Table 4 presents information on variables in the equation.

Table 4: Effectiveness of Assessment Tools on Acquisition of Core Competencies (Regression Coefficient)

		B	SE	Waldχ^2	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1	Assessment Tools	2.444	.279	76.500	1	.000	11.515
	Constant	-3.390	452	56.255	1	.000	.034

4. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Assessment Tools.

Regression analysis illustrated that assessment tools positively and significantly predicted learners' acquisition of core competencies in Social Studies, Wald$\chi^2(1)$ =76.500, p<0.001, Exp(B) = 11.515. Findings mean that the assessment tools identified are effective in assessing learners' acquisition of core competencies in Social Studies.

The findings on the effectiveness of tools showed that assessment tools are fairly effective in measuring students' understanding. The respondents, however, observed that revision should

be done continuously to enhance the development of the expected competencies. A majority of interviewees noted that these tools provide clear identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the students, giving rise to a growth mindset and personalized instruction. This goes in tandem with research done by Shepard (2019), who postulates that assessments are supposed to inform next learning through constructive feedback and not just measures of outcomes.

The use of the tools enhanced tracking of students' progress over time, and the educators were able to tailor instruction according to identified needs. The teachers reported that over time, the types of assessment became overwhelming. This expounds the argument by Bennett (2020) that the quality of assessments must be prioritized instead of the quantity to ensure that instructional time is used effectively. Standardized assessments were also criticized for having unclear visuals and exceeding students' knowledge bases. This disconnect suggests a more effective alignment between assessments and curriculum as espoused by Obura and Kiprop (2021).

Through interviews, respondents emphasized personalized approaches to assessment, with tools that consider different students' abilities. Clearer clarity on the framework for assessment will help both teachers and students see what is expected and thus assist in the successful execution of assessments that lead to valued learning outcomes. This is in tandem with findings of Black and Wiliam, (2018) that formative assessments capture other competencies than what standardized test scores alone can tell, for example, critical thinking and creativity.

A sample of the interviews with head teachers is reproduced below:

Interview 1

I believe that the assessment tools are efficient and are applied sufficiently in our schools, but the mode of assessment really needs to be looked into. At the moment, we have a strong orientation towards marks awarding, which do not always serve the purpose of reflecting a learner's actual progress accurately in any particular field. We need to look at holistic forms of assessment that reflect a wider range of student competencies and development."

Interview 2

These assessment tools are effective to a good degree, but there is still room for improvement. Although they do help us understand the extent to which the students grasp concepts, the effectiveness of the tools has to be fine-tuned to better align with the proposed competencies developed in our learners. The effectiveness will be refined with ongoing development. "

Interview 3

I feel that the assessment tool has allowed for the effective assessment of the learner within the different competencies. It has been brilliant to note how these tools allow us to help the learners identify their strengths and weaknesses in a very specific manner that can aid them. We need to continue developing and refining the tool for relevance and applicability. "

Interview 4

I can say that the assessment tools indeed have made learning more interesting than the conventional ways of testing. Students are now more involved in their assessments, and

perhaps such involvement may bring a better understanding of the material. I find it satisfying to witness them taking ownership of their learning through such innovative assessment strategies. In my opinion, assessment tools help in managing the learner's assessment record for future reference and follow-up. This is very important because such documents record the progress of students from year to year. Through them, we can tell the trend that students portray and even give ideas concerning strategies that best suit particular students."

Besides, these assessment tools do bring out learner abilities and competencies. What each student is capable of doing is accentuated.

Interview 5

I feel that an appropriate assessment tool should be nicely chosen. Too many types of different assessments overload both teachers and students, and therefore, the goal of achieving valid learning outcomes can hardly be reached within the limited time of one lesson. We have to focus on quality, not on quantity, if we want effective learning to take place.

Interview 6

I observed that the assessment tools cover most aspects within the allotted time for each area in discussion. This has been done such that we can clear the curriculum comprehensively, and in this case, our students can be well-rounded concerning every subject. Therefore, such kinds of tools must continue being applied.

However, I have observed that the assessment tools are sometimes inefficient. For instance, most KNEC assessment tests go beyond the knowledge base of the learners. Besides, the pictures in those tests are also not clear; such juxtaposition confuses students and inhibits them from performing well. We need to advocate for an adjustment on these assessments so they fit what our students are learning."

Interview 7

I can attest that observation schedules, project methods, and rating scales are excellently done in Social Studies. Such tools provide us with valuable insight into students' performances and their levels of understanding, which may give us a more complete assessment of their skills and knowledge."

Interview 8

The learner is assessed based on their ability. This individualized approach ensures that we are meeting each student where they are and providing the support they need to grow. By tailoring assessments to their capabilities, we can foster a more inclusive learning environment."

Interview 9

I believe the explanation of the assessment framework should be elaborated well: Clarity of the framework can easily ensure that teachers and students realize their expectations and the processes involved. It is very important in successful implementation and for ensuring assessments truly benefit the learners."

The researcher also interviewed CSOs on the effectiveness of Social Studies assessment tools. The CSOs pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of assessment practices. One of the strengths is the fact that assessments are done at the end of an instructional strand to

determine whether students have achieved the concept, for easy movement to the next level. The second strength is that the assessment helps in measuring the understanding and readiness of learners for a solid foundational education. However, it was noted that the high dependence on one major assessment method limited the scope for deeper insights into student performance. There is diversification in the assessment strategies of elicited competencies, allowing for more complete judgment on the learning of students.

The findings show that the overall judgment of the CBC assessment was that it creates positive results in encouraging holistic student learning. However, it was evident that head teachers and CSOs have diverse views on Competency-based assessment. Some of them appear not to have embraced the Competency-based assessment fully and show resistance to its use. On the other hand, some consider that this novel approach opens a wider doorway for many teachers to let their students engage more and have personal ways of learning. Professional development should be made available to sustain those who are apprehensive about changing toward these assessment methods, but challenges still exist concerning how marks for different levels of performance can be divided. Absence of standardized percentages and ranking complicates the assessment process through guidance and resources that help educators.

The CSOs' responses indicate that teachers practice only one (1) method of written assessment tools, though CBC has given a variety in its framework. Limitation in the use of assessment tools inhibits learning. For instance, in establishing the students' progress and capabilities across many fronts, there is a need to promote exploration and application of varied assessment methods like practical assessment, projects, and self-assessment. While there is development on the adaptation of Competency-based assessment, further expansion of practices will be very instrumental in the improvement of student learning outcomes against existing challenges of diversity in assessment, teacher preparedness, and effectiveness in implementation.

The CSOs also pointed out the strengths of assessment tools under CBC. One of the strengths is that systematic assessments at the end of instructional strands ensure that students have grasped concepts at each stage before progression. Another strength is that the assessment supports foundational learning. However, the CSOs noted that the use of only one (1) assessment method limits the information obtained regarding student performance. This finding is supported by Wiggins (2018), who identified that projects, practical assessments, and self-assessments require multiple methods of assessment in capturing the fuller range of student competencies. While the CBC framework has provided a variety of assessment tools, the CSOs felt that too many teachers simply lean on written assessment methods and have not moved to make use of the more dynamic, practical, and reflective approaches promoted under the Competency-based Curriculum.

Other challenges that come up include resistance from teachers to new competency assessment methods, driven mainly by unfamiliarity or discomfort with the change. The concern concurs with Fullan and Quinn (2017), who have signaled the need for constant professional development to help educators adjust easily to new frameworks. According to CSOs, there was a need for comprehensive professional support to guide teachers on how best to deploy diverse assessment tools.

The inability of CBC to provide standardized percentages and rankings has resulted in complicated the role of assessing students further for some educators, as they find it tough to mark and measure their performance in moving up various competency levels.

The interviews below were conducted with CSOs.

Interview 1

Assessments are set by the teachers for learners upon completion of every strand.

This practice assures that students have a clear understanding of the strands previously undertaken before commencing on another. In addition, this allows us to gauge their understanding and preparedness for progression. Preparedness is an important aspect to obtain if the purpose is to provide them with a solid foundation for their education. Unfortunately, in my view, assessments in class still follow one approach only. While consistency has its value, dependence on one method alone can reduce our understanding of the students' performances. We need to encourage more teachers to diversify their assessment strategies to capture varied levels of student competencies.

It is important to note that some teachers in my zone have developed a negative attitude towards the Competency-based assessment. Perhaps the resistance may be because the teachers do not understand the new framework, or they have never experienced its workability. However, I am happy to report that the majority of teachers have adopted this form of assessment, since it allows learners to be more engaged in learning and makes it personalized. Ongoing professional development can help bridge the gap for those who are still hesitant."

Interview 2

I can confidently attest to the fact that assessment in CBC is on its way to meeting expectations. With this shift toward Competency-based assessment, it has become possible to get a fuller insight into what students are learning. The trend of assessing skills and competencies, as opposed to simple rote memorization, is something that even teachers themselves have begun to appreciate. This is in itself very critical in developing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities among our students.

Interview 3

Assessment in CBC is, however, a challenge to most teachers. It is difficult to determine how to give marks for meeting expectations, below expectations, and so forth. The absence of standardized percentages and rankings further complicates the issue. We need to clarify the issue and train them to understand this new environment, where they would be comfortable with the operations."

Interview 4

What I have also observed is that teachers have only focused on the written assessment tools, while CBC has 12 assessment tools. It narrows their scope and limits them in seeing what a student actually learns. We need to sensitize teachers to adopt different ways of assessing, like practical assessments, projects, and self-assessments, to get a whole picture of the progress and capabilities of the students.

4.1 Classroom Observations

Classroom observations provided valuable insights into the assessment techniques used in schools. Though there was a systematic procedure related to assessment, some of the very important tools were lacking, which reduced comprehensiveness in the evaluation process. Engagement and understanding were evidenced by students through methods such as

projects, oral questioning, and written tests. However, other very important techniques for assessing students were not used in this study, including checklists, peer assessments, and anecdotal records. This omission closed a great opportunity toward the full evaluation and support of the paths through which each student learned.

One major omission was that of portfolios, which could have presented students with opportunities for self-reflection about their progress and processes of learning. Portfolios also help learners engage in self-assessment and reflective practice, which is an important principle in formative assessment, (Boud & Molloy, 2013). This, in return, helps students take ownership of their development and progress. The other missing form of assessment was peer assessment. According to Topping (2017), peer assessment develops critical thinking skills, which is a core part of Competency-based education that promotes collaborative learning.

The use of inconsistent rating scales also created ambiguity concerning the measurement of performance conducted by students. This does not give room for measurable feedback by educators if there is no clarity in the criteria set. Andrade (2019) argues that explicit and transparent criteria guide students' progress and thus inform them at the same time to make assessments meaningful.

Although different forms of assessment existed, they were one-dimensional due to the limited kinds of tools involved. This approach does not take into consideration the various learning styles and competencies exhibited by the students, hence offering incomplete assessments. A diversified assessment tool strategy would best support the students' learning journeys to gain a holistic view in relation to their progress and capabilities, with the inclusion of portfolios, peer assessments, and checklists.

Observation 1

During my observation, I observed that the assessment schedule was posted. This is a good indication that assessment practice is organized. Learners were actively engaged in projects, and the portfolio approach was observed, depicting their progressive work and reflection on the learning process. However, some of the key assessment strategies, like checklists and peer assessment, were missing in the process. These tools are quite important in encouraging collaborative learning and giving effective feedback among peers. Also, the anecdotal records that might provide the best account of the student's behaviours and progress over time were not being filled out.

Observation 2

In the second observation, I observed that oral questions were being put and which is an attempt to involve students in discussion and test their understanding at that instance. The written tests were given to the students, which is a way of testing whether students have any formal knowledge. The checklist was present, but the peer assessment, rating scale, and the use of anecdotal records was also not seen.

Observation 3

From this observation, I learned that the checklist, peer assessment, anecdotal record, and portfolio were not applied in the assessment activities. Though this was a shortcoming, the tutor employed oral questions, rating scales, project employment, and written test in the assessment activities.

Observation 4

In my last observation, I noticed that the rating scales were not in place, and the portfolio approach was also not considered. This is a concern because the two tools are quite valuable in providing specific feedback and assessing student progress over time.

These findings bring into light the fact that schools need to move more towards comprehensive and diverse assessment practices, allowing them to build a learning community that focuses on cooperation, self-reflection, and all-around development. Most of the learning outcomes would improve as a result of such a change and would afford students more opportunities to develop self-awareness, collaborate with others, and engage meaningfully with their learning.

5. Conclusion

The findings from the study demonstrate that assessment tools significantly influence the acquisition of core competencies, with effective tools improving the prediction of competency acquisition. However, the reliance on conventional assessments does not fully capture student progress, necessitating more comprehensive and diversified evaluation methods.

6. Recommendation

Teachers should adopt a broader range of assessment tools, such as portfolios, self-assessments, and peer assessments, to complement conventional methods and provide a more holistic evaluation of student competency acquisition in Social Studies.

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