

An Introspective on Zambia's Competence Based Curriculum: Stakeholder's Perspectives

Moses Chisala

Research Scholar, MOE-HQ-Directorate of Curriculum Development, Zambia.

doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.04256>

Published March 09, 2025

Citation: Chisala M. (2025) An Introspective on Zambia's Competence Based Curriculum: Stakeholder's Perspectives, *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies* 6(2),40-55

Abstract: *The study introspected stakeholder's perspectives on Zambia's competence-based curriculum. This study was guided by an interpretive paradigm, employing qualitative interpretive phenomenology study design. Data was collected using observation and semi-structured interview guide with twenty participants who included teachers, school administrators, policymakers, and curriculum developers which was analysed thematically. The study revealed that Competence-Based Curriculum carries a liberal and inclusive approach, alignment with socio-economic needs, bridging the skill gap and enhanced career pathways to meet diverse learners. On the other hand, the study revealed that the new curriculum framework may face implementation challenges, such as inadequate resources, insufficient teacher training, and resistance to change, which will hinder its effectiveness. To address the projected implementation pitfalls of Zambia's Competence-Based Curriculum, stakeholders must ensure adequate teacher training, resource allocation, continuous monitoring, and inclusive policy adjustments based on practical challenges and feedback. Therefore, transitioning to a Competence-Based Curriculum is a strategic move for Zambia, aiming to produce skilled, adaptable, and responsible citizens ready to contribute to national development and succeed in the global arena. Based on these findings, the study recommends that fully realize the CBC, Zambia must invest in capacity building, infrastructure development, and continuous stakeholder engagement.*

Keywords: *Competence-Based Curriculum, liberal and inclusive approach, Stakeholder's Perspectives.*

INTRODUCTION

Education systems worldwide have undergone significant transformations to meet the demands of 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. In this context, Zambia introduced the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) to address the challenges posed by the traditional content-based education system, which often focused on rote memorization rather than practical application of knowledge. The CBC, implemented in 2025, emphasizes learner-centered approaches, hands-on activities, and problem-solving skills to better prepare learners for the socio-economic realities of the modern world (GRZ, 2023).

The competence-based approach aligns with Zambia's commitment to achieving the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4, which advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education that promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. Additionally, the CBC is intended to support Zambia's Vision 2030 by fostering a skilled and entrepreneurial workforce capable of contributing to national development. Despite its ambitious goals, the implementation of the CBC has encountered numerous challenges. According to UNESCO (2017), for competence-based approaches to succeed, countries must ensure that their education systems are supported by adequately trained teachers, sufficient resources, and effective policy frameworks. However, in Zambia, concerns have been raised even before its initial implementation about inadequate teacher preparation, limited teaching and learning resources, and the lack of proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Moreover, there is limited empirical evidence capturing stakeholders' perspectives on the curriculum's impact on educational quality and learner outcomes. The perspectives of key stakeholders' teachers, school administrators, learners, parents, and policymakers remain underexplored, leaving gaps in understanding the curriculum's impact on educational outcomes and learner preparedness for real-world demands. Understanding stakeholder perspectives is crucial, as their experiences and insights directly influence the success of any educational reform. This study, therefore, seeks to provide an in-depth examination of the Competence-Based Curriculum in Zambia by analyzing the viewpoints of various stakeholders' perspectives to explore successes, challenges, and areas needing improvement in the implementation of Zambia's competence-based curriculum.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study employed a qualitative research design to explore stakeholder perspectives on Zambia's Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of twenty stakeholders, including teachers, school administrators, policymakers, and curriculum developers. The participants were selected to ensure representation from urban, peri-urban, and rural areas, capturing diverse experiences and insights. Observational data were also gathered during trailing to document classroom practices and the availability of teaching resources related to CBC implementation. This approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of the challenges, successes, and perceptions surrounding the curriculum. The study utilized various materials, including interview guides, observation checklists, and policy documents, such as the Zambian National Education Curriculum Framework. Audio recordings and field notes were used during data collection to ensure accuracy and detail. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, where emerging themes were identified, categorized, and interpreted in the context of CBC implementation. This method provided a comprehensive view of stakeholders' experiences, highlighting areas for improvement and actionable recommendations.

FINDINGS

Stakeholder's perspectives on Zambia's Competence Based Curriculum

The research question for the study was aimed at establishing why Zambia Needs a Competence-Based Curriculum. The participants were asked how they perceive the effectiveness of Zambia's Competence-Based Curriculum for a developing country like Zambia. The study revealed that a CBC carries a liberal and inclusive approach, alignment with socio-economic needs, bridging the skill gap and enhanced career pathways to meet diverse learners.

Liberal and Inclusive Approach

From the findings a CBC embodies a liberal and inclusive educational philosophy, aiming to equip learners with practical skills, critical thinking abilities, and adaptable knowledge applicable to real-world contexts. In support of this view, Participant-PM2 said that:

“One of the standout features of the new curriculum is its liberal and inclusive approach. Gone are the days when certain subjects were deemed more important than others. The new curriculum recognizes that every subject has value and that students should be free to pursue their interests without being forced into rigid moulds. This approach promotes diversity and creativity, allowing students to explore their strengths and passions”.

Contributing on the same, participant-T4 said:

“Why we need CBC it emphasizes on learner-centered methodologies, encouraging students to actively engage in their education through exploration, inquiry, and problem-solving. This paradigm shift moves away from rote memorization, focusing instead on developing competencies that enable learners to navigate complex situations and contribute meaningfully to society. By promoting critical thinking and adaptability, CBC prepares students to meet the dynamic demands of the modern world.

Additionally, participant-SA1 said: “I support this change because the new curriculum framework aims to provide high-quality, inclusive education to all Zambians, which can lead to better learning outcomes and improved academic performance”.

Yet participant-T3 said:

“Another significant change brought about by the new curriculum is the reduction in the number of O-Levels required for college entry. Previously, students were required to have at least five O-Levels, including mathematics and science, to gain admission to college. This requirement often proved to be a barrier for students who excelled in other subjects but struggled with mathematics and science. The new curriculum has done away with this requirement, allowing students to pursue their interests without being held back by arbitrary barriers”.

Also, participant -CD5 had this to say:

“The new curriculum is a game changer for education in Zambia. Its liberal and inclusive approach, reduced number of O-Levels, focus on individual strengths, and emphasis on subject specialization all contribute to a more flexible and student-centered learning experience. As the country continues to roll out this innovative curriculum, we can expect to see a more diverse and talented group of students emerging, equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in an increasingly complex and competitive world”.

Additionally, Participant-CD2 said:

“One thing everyone should know is that CBC is achieved by designing curricula that accommodate diverse learning needs and cultural contexts. This involves integrating various subjects and skills, such as technology, agriculture, home economics, and social sciences, to provide multiple pathways for learners to pursue their interests and career goals. The Zambian CBC has introduced clear and progressive career pathways from early education stages, allowing students to identify and nurture their interests, thereby enhancing employability and addressing skills gaps in the labour market”.

Another participant-PM1 had this to say:

“For some of us, the new curriculum is a dream come true. No longer learners will they be forced to struggle with subjects that they are not interested in or talented in. Instead, they will be free to pursue their passions and develop their strengths. This is particularly good news for students who have historically been marginalized or excluded from education due to their lack of proficiency in mathematics and science. Not only that CBC frameworks has incorporated continuous assessment methods that recognize individual progress and competencies, rather than relying solely on standardized testing. This approach acknowledges the unique strengths and learning paces of each student, fostering an environment where all learners can succeed”.

Also, participant-CD1 said:

“I have read the new curriculum, the beauty about it emphasis on subject specialization. The liberal and inclusive nature of a Competence-Based Curriculum ensures that education systems are responsive to the needs of all learners, preparing them to thrive in diverse and evolving societal landscapes”.

Alignment with Socio-Economic Needs

From the findings it was noted that a CBC emphasizes practical skills and knowledge application, preparing students to meet the demands of the modern workforce. By focusing on competencies relevant to various industries, education becomes a catalyst for economic development and societal progress. This approach ensures that graduates are not only knowledgeable but also capable of contributing effectively to Zambia's socio-economic growth. In support, participant-CD3 had this to say:

“Implementing a CBC in Zambia is essential for aligning education with the nation's socio-economic needs. The CBC emphasizes the development of practical skills, knowledge application, and positive attitudes, enabling learners to effectively contribute to various sectors of the economy. This approach ensures that education serves as a catalyst for individual growth, societal advancement, and industrial innovation. By focusing on competencies relevant to the workforce, the CBC prepares students to meet the demands of modern industries, thereby fostering economic development and societal progress”.

Contributing on the same another participant-SA4 had this to say:

“The good part of the CBC framework, it produces self-motivated, lifelong learners who are confident and productive. It seeks to develop holistic, independent individuals equipped with the values, skills, and knowledge necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing world. This holistic development is crucial for personal growth and for meeting the socio-economic challenges of the nation”.

Another participant-PM2 said:

“Why the adoption of the CBC in the education system is welcome, it because it embraces integrating technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial skills alongside traditional academics, the CBC produces well-rounded graduates ready to contribute meaningfully to Zambia’s socio-economic development. This approach ensures that learners are equipped with the necessary competencies to navigate various career paths, thereby enhancing employability and addressing skills gaps in the labour market”.

Bridging the Skill Gap

From the findings the participants indicated that by focusing on practical skills and real-world applications, a CBC effectively bridges the gap between education and the demands of the workforce. In support participant indicated that-CD1: “Promotes higher-order thinking skills by encouraging students to analyse, evaluate, and create”.

Contributing on the same Participant-CD3 said

“The new curriculum places a strong emphasis on identifying and developing individual strengths. Rather than forcing students to conform to a one-size-fits-all approach, the curriculum recognizes that each student has unique talents and abilities. By focusing on these strengths, students are more likely to excel and develop a sense of purpose and direction”.

This was evident from participant-SA1 had this to say: "The CBC emphasizes what learners can do with the knowledge they acquire. It ensures education contributes to national development by producing skilled and innovative citizens."

Yet from the interview, participant-P2 said: “The CBC method aims to create a more effective and meaningful learning experience by centering education around competencies and practical skills, preparing students for future challenges in their personal and professional lives”.

In support, participant-T4 said:

“The new curriculum's focus on individual strengths is also expected to reduce malpractice and leakages. When students are forced to pursue subjects that they are not interested in or talented in, they may be more likely to engage in malpractice or seek shortcuts. By allowing students to pursue their passions, the new curriculum promotes a more authentic and meaningful learning experience”.

In support of this finding, Participant-PM5 said that: “The curriculum focuses on developing 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication, it prepares students for the challenges and opportunities of the future”.

Participant-CD4 has this to say: “The new curriculum follows a competence-based approach to learning, focusing on developing students' skills and competencies, which can lead to more effective learning and better preparation for the workforce”.

Also, participant-SA3 during interview said:

"Our learners need to leave school with skills they can actually use in real life. The CBC is important because it focuses on practical knowledge, not just theory. The current system leaves most children without job-ready skills. If this curriculum can help them create opportunities for themselves, it will be very beneficial to our country."

In contribution, one participant-SA2 stated that: "Zambia cannot develop if we continue producing graduates who are not equipped to address the needs of the labour market. This curriculum is a step in the right direction for creating a skilled workforce."

These findings were evidenced in the following verbal account given by one participant-T5 during interviews who observed that: "We need lessons that prepare us for real-life challenges. Learning how to solve problems and apply what we are taught will help us become more independent."

Similar sentiments were expressed by another participant-T4 during the interviews who noted: “The curriculum has been designed to align with global trends, ensuring that Zambian students are competitive globally and prepared for the challenges of the 21st century”.

In support of the above findings, another participant-CD1 during interviews lamented that:

“The CBC method of teaching is an educational approach that focuses on equipping students with specific competencies and skills rather than merely covering content. It prepares students for real-world challenges by focusing on essential skills. Increases student motivation and engagement through interactive and relevant learning experiences”.

Enhanced Career Pathways

From the findings it was acknowledged that the introduction of clear and progressive career pathways from early education stages allows students to identify and nurture their interests. By integrating technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial skills alongside traditional academics, the CBC prepares students for various professions, enhancing employability and addressing skills gaps in the labour market. This alignment with career-focused learning ensures that education is directly linked to real-world opportunities. In conformity with the above findings, one participant-PM4 during interviews reported that:

“The curriculum introduces clear and progressive career pathways starting from early education stages. These pathways emphasize orientation in technology, agriculture, home economics, and social sciences, providing learners with a solid foundation to acquire vocational, life, and academic skills essential for earning a living. This strategic alignment of education with career-focused learning enhances employability and addresses skills gaps in the labour market, directly contributing to Zambia's socio-economic development”.

Supporting the findings above, one participant-PM1 during interviews highlighted that:

“This type of education provides learners with a solid foundation to acquire vocational, life, and academic skills essential for earning a living. The curriculum also places a strong emphasis on Information and Communication Technology (ICT), entrepreneurship, critical thinking, problem-solving, and critical analysis. The transitioning to a Competence-Based Curriculum is a strategic move for Zambia, aiming to produce skilled, adaptable, and responsible citizens ready to contribute to national development and succeed in the global arena”.

Projected Implementation Pitfalls of Zambia's Competence-Based Curriculum

On the other side the participants were asked if there are projected implementation pitfalls of Zambia's CBC. From the findings the new curriculum framework may face implementation challenges, such as inadequate resources, insufficient teacher training, and resistance to change, which will hinder its effectiveness.

Inadequate Teacher Training

From the finding Inadequate teacher training is a significant challenge in implementing Zambia's CBC, as many teachers lack proper orientation and understanding of competency-based approaches, hindering effective curriculum delivery. The above views were reflected in a response from one participant-T2 during interviews who asserted that: "Most of us are not trained on how to teach in a competence-based system”.

Additionally, another participant-T5 during interview advanced that: “The new curriculum may require teachers to take on additional responsibilities, such as developing new lesson plans and assessing student competencies, which can increase their workload and lead to burnout”.

Limited Resources and Infrastructure

From the findings limited resources and inadequate infrastructure were cited to pose significant challenges to the effective implementation of Zambia's CBC, as many schools lack essential facilities like laboratories, libraries, and ICT equipment necessary for practical, hands-on learning experiences. Contributing on the same findings above, one participant-T3 had this to say: "We need workshops and ongoing support, or we will just go back to the old ways of teaching."

Adding to the same discussion, another participant-SA3 during interviews reported that: "The lack of proper infrastructure, especially in rural schools, will make it hard to implement this curriculum. We don't even have enough textbooks, let alone resources for practical activities." Contributing on the same, participant-T4 confirmed that: "The new curriculum may exacerbate existing inequities in the education system, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, who may not have access to the same resources and opportunities as their peers".

Resistance to Change

Another theme from the findings was resistance to change among teachers and administrators indicated poses a significant challenge to the effective implementation of Zambia's CBC, as many stakeholders are reluctant to adopt new teaching methodologies and assessment practices. These findings were supported by participant-PM4 during interviews who noted that: "This new curriculum is good, but it seems complicated. If parents don't understand it, how can we support our children at home?"

In support of this, one participant-CD5 during interviews, noted that: "The new curriculum may face resistance from stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and students, who may be uncomfortable with the changes and unsure about how to implement them effectively".

Adding to the same discussion, another participant-SA2 expressed additional feelings by observing that: "The major challenge is resistance to change. Many teachers and even parents are comfortable with the traditional system and may not fully embrace the new curriculum."

Assessment and Evaluation Challenges

Further, the findings indicated that assessment and evaluation challenges pose significant obstacles to the effective implementation of Zambia's CBC. This was confirmed by one teacher participant-T2 who reported that supported these findings: "The competence-based approach may present challenges for assessment, as it requires a more nuanced and complex evaluation of student learning, which can be time-consuming and resource-intensive".

One other participant-PM1 added that: "The assessments required for a competence-based curriculum are difficult to standardize. Without clear guidelines and proper tools, there will be inconsistencies in how learners are evaluated."

These findings were also supported by views of another participant-PM3 who stated that:

"The successful implementation of CBC in Zambia is likely to be hindered by challenges related to assessment and evaluation, primarily due to teachers' reliance on traditional assessment methods and a lack of understanding of

competency-based approaches. Addressing these issues through targeted training and support is crucial for the curriculum's effective adoption and the development of students' practical competencies”.

In line with findings, one participant-CD5 during interviews said that:

“While the 2023 Zambian new curriculum framework has the potential to improve the quality of education, align with global trends, and prepare students for the future, it also faces implementation challenges, increased workload for teachers, potential for inequity, assessment challenges, and resistance to change. These findings reflect the concerns about teacher readiness, resource availability, stakeholder resistance, and challenges in assessment, all of which could hinder the successful implementation of the competence-based curriculum in Zambia”.

From the findings Zambia’s CBC is a progressive approach to education but express concerns about its effective implementation, citing challenges such as inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and the need for continuous assessment and curriculum refinement.

DISCUSSION

Stakeholder’s perspectives on Zambia’s Competence Based Curriculum

The CBC in Zambia is an educational framework designed to equip learners with practical skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for real-life problem-solving and lifelong learning. Unlike traditional knowledge-based curricula, which emphasize rote memorization, the CBC in Zambia focuses on developing learners’ competencies through interactive, learner-centered teaching and assessment methods. From the findings a CBC embodies a liberal and inclusive educational philosophy, aiming to equip learners with practical skills, critical thinking abilities, and adaptable knowledge applicable to real-world contexts. These results were in line with Moonga & Phiri (2021), who revealed that the new curriculum recognizes that every subject has value and that students should be free to pursue their interests without being forced into rigid moulds. This approach promotes diversity and creativity, allowing students to explore their strengths and passions. This paradigm shift moves away from rote memorization, focusing instead on developing competencies that enable learners to navigate complex situations and contribute meaningfully to society. By promoting critical thinking and adaptability, CBC prepares students to meet the dynamic demands of the modern world.

Another significant change brought about by the new curriculum is the reduction in number of O-Levels required for college entry. The learners would not be forced to struggle with subjects that they are not interested in or talented in. Instead, they will be free to pursue their passions and develop their strengths. Previously, students were required to have at least five O-Levels, including mathematics and science, to gain admission to college. This requirement often proved to be a barrier for students who excelled in other subjects but struggled with mathematics and science. The new curriculum has done away with this requirement, allowing students to pursue their interests without being held back by arbitrary barriers.

Further, CBC achieves designing curricula that accommodate diverse learning needs and cultural contexts. The new curriculum, the beauty about its emphasis on subject specialization. This involves integrating various subjects and skills, such as technology, agriculture, home economics, and social sciences, to provide multiple pathways for learners to pursue their interests and career goals. The Zambian CBC has introduced clear and progressive career pathways from early education stages, allowing students to identify and nurture their interests, thereby enhancing employability and addressing skills gaps in the labour market. This resonates with Chanda, M. (2020), who indicated that the traditional content-based curriculum often emphasizes rote memorization, which limits learners' ability to apply knowledge in real-world contexts. A CBC promotes learner-centered teaching methods, allowing students to actively engage with the material and develop problem-solving skills. For instance, learners can work on projects, participate in simulations, and collaborate in groups, thereby fostering holistic learning. Moonga and Phiri (2021) argue that "Learner-centered approaches in a competence-based curriculum empower students to become independent thinkers and lifelong learners.

A CBC is essential for fostering inclusive education in Zambia. It accommodates diverse learners, including those with special needs, by focusing on their individual abilities and potential. This approach ensures that all students, regardless of their background or abilities, can succeed in their learning journey. These findings resonate with the study by the Ministry of Education (2022), which highlighted that inclusive education under a competence-based framework ensures no child is left behind, as it tailors learning to the needs of all learners.

Further, from the findings it was noted that a CBC emphasizes practical skills and knowledge application, preparing students to meet the demands of the modern workforce. By focusing on competencies relevant to various industries, education becomes a catalyst for economic development and societal progress. This approach ensures that graduates are not only knowledgeable but also capable of contributing effectively to Zambia's socio-economic growth. The CBC emphasizes the development of practical skills, knowledge application, and positive attitudes, enabling learners to effectively contribute to various sectors of the economy. This approach ensures that education serves as a catalyst for individual growth, societal advancement, and industrial innovation. By focusing on competencies relevant to the workforce, the CBC prepares students to meet the demands of modern industries, thereby fostering economic development and societal progress. The good part of the CBC framework, it produces self-motivated, lifelong learners who are confident and productive. The findings are supported by Mungai (2019) who indicated this approach ensures that learners are equipped with the necessary competencies to navigate various career paths, thereby enhancing employability and addressing skills gaps in the labour market. A CBC emphasizes practical skills and knowledge application, preparing students to meet the demands of the modern workforce. By focusing on competencies relevant to various industries, education becomes a catalyst for economic development and societal progress. This approach ensures that graduates are not only knowledgeable but also capable of contributing effectively to Zambia's socio-economic growth.

Furthermore, from the findings the participants indicated that by focusing on practical skills and real-world applications, a CBC effectively bridges the gap between education and the demands of the workforce. The new curriculum places a strong emphasis on identifying and developing individual strengths (E-School, Zambia, 2025). By focusing on these strengths, students are more likely to excel and develop a sense of purpose and direction. The CBC emphasizes what learners can do with the knowledge they acquire. It ensures education contributes to national development by producing skilled and innovative citizens. Zambia cannot develop if we continue producing graduates who are not equipped to address the needs of the labour market. This curriculum is a step in the right direction for creating a skilled workforce.

The CBC framework in Zambia aims to develop learners' analytical thinking, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and emotional intelligence. This holistic approach ensures that students are well-rounded individuals, equipped to navigate complex life situations and contribute positively to society. By fostering these competencies, the curriculum supports personal growth and civic responsibility. A CBC focuses on equipping learners with employable skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving, which employers increasingly demand. This approach ensures that graduates are better prepared to meet labour market expectations and reduce unemployment rates. The current study findings are in conformity with the works by Mungai (2019) who stated that CBC bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and the practical skills needed in the workplace.

Zambia's adoption of a CBC is crucial for aligning the education system with the country's development goals. The eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) emphasizes the need for human capital development to drive sustainable economic growth. A CBC ensures that learners acquire skills that directly contribute to sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and information technology, which are key to Zambia's economy. Similarly, Masaiti and Mwale (2020), indicated an education system that emphasizes practical skills and competence is essential for creating a workforce capable of addressing Zambia's developmental challenges. Therefore, in an increasingly globalized world, Zambia needs to prepare its learners to compete internationally. Adopting a CBC aligns Zambia's education system with global standards, ensuring that learners are competitive on an international scale. This approach reflects a shift from traditional content-based education to one that prioritizes the application of knowledge, critical thinking, and adaptability skills essential in a rapidly changing world. By embracing this model, Zambia positions its students to thrive in both local and global contexts. A CBC ensures that students develop 21st-century skills such as digital literacy, communication, and adaptability. These skills are essential for navigating global challenges and opportunities. In support Griffin and Care (2015), noted that a CBC equips learners with the skills required to thrive in a global knowledge economy. It further promotes lifelong learning by encouraging learners to continuously acquire, evaluate, and apply new knowledge and skills. This culture of innovation is vital for Zambia's socio-economic transformation, particularly in fostering entrepreneurship and self-reliance. As noted by Chanda (2020), competence-based education fosters a mindset of innovation and self-reliance, which are critical for addressing Zambia's developmental challenges.

Also, from the findings it was acknowledged that the introduction of clear and progressive career pathways from early education stages allows students to identify and nurture their interests. These findings were in line with the report of Mulenga & Kabombwe (2019), who indicated that by integrating technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial skills alongside traditional academics, the CBC prepares students for various professions, enhancing employability and addressing skills gaps in the labour market. This alignment with career-focused learning ensures that education is directly linked to real-world opportunities. The curriculum introduces clear and progressive career pathways starting from early education stages. These pathways emphasize orientation in technology, agriculture, home economics, and social sciences, providing learners with a solid foundation to acquire vocational, life, and academic skills essential for earning a living. This strategic alignment of education with career-focused learning enhances employability and addresses skills gaps in the labour market, directly contributing to Zambia's socio-economic development. The curriculum also places a strong emphasis on Information and Communication Technology (ICT), entrepreneurship, critical thinking, problem-solving, and critical analysis. The transitioning to a CBC is a strategic move for Zambia, aiming to produce skilled, adaptable, and responsible citizens ready to contribute to national development and succeed in the global arena. The introduction of clear and progressive career pathways from early education stages allows students to identify and nurture their interests. This finding is similar to the study by Chanda (2020), who revealed that integrating technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial skills alongside traditional academics, the CBC prepares students for various professions, enhancing employability and addressing skills gaps in the labour market. This alignment with career-focused learning ensures that education is directly linked to real-world opportunities.

Projected Pitfalls Zambia is Likely to Face in Implementing a Competence-Based Curriculum

On the other side the participants were asked if there are projected implementation pitfalls of Zambia's CBC. From the findings the new curriculum framework may face implementation challenges, such as inadequate resources, insufficient teacher training, and resistance to change, which will hinder its effectiveness. From the finding Inadequate teacher training is a significant challenge in implementing Zambia's CBC, as many teachers lack proper orientation and understanding of competency-based approaches, hindering effective curriculum delivery. Most teachers are not trained on how to teach in a competence-based system. The new curriculum may require teachers to take on additional responsibilities, such as developing new lesson plans and assessing student competencies, which can increase their workload and lead to burnout. The study also indicated that Zambia may face in implementing a CBC such as lack of adequate teacher training and preparation. Many teachers are accustomed to traditional content-based teaching methods, and transitioning to a CBC requires them to adopt learner-centered approaches and integrate practical skills into their teaching. Without continuous professional development, teachers may struggle to deliver the curriculum effectively. This agrees with Mungai (2019), who indicated that the success of a competence-based curriculum heavily depends on the capacity of teachers to understand and implement its pedagogical demands. Further, the findings cited limited resources and inadequate infrastructure to pose significant challenges to the effective implementation of Zambia's Competence-Based Curriculum, as

many schools lack essential facilities like laboratories, libraries, and ICT equipment necessary for practical, hands-on learning experiences. There is lack of proper infrastructure, especially in rural schools, will make it hard to implement the curriculum. Schools don't have enough textbooks, let alone resources for practical activities. Contributing on the same, participant confirmed that the new curriculum may exacerbate existing inequities in the education system, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, who may not have access to the same resources and opportunities as their peers. Implementing a CBC demands significant investment in educational resources, such as modern teaching materials, digital tools, and practical equipment. Many schools in Zambia, particularly in rural areas, lack basic infrastructure such as laboratories, libraries, and internet access. This disparity could hinder the effective implementation of the CBC and widen the gap between urban and rural schools. These in line with Masaiti and Mwale (2020), who noted that resource constraints in developing countries remain a critical barrier to the successful rollout of competence-based education reforms.

Another theme from the findings was resistance to change among teachers and administrators indicated poses a significant challenge to the effective implementation of Zambia's CBC, as many stakeholders are reluctant to adopt new teaching methodologies and assessment practices. The new curriculum may face resistance from stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and students, who may be uncomfortable with the changes and unsure about how to implement them effectively. Many teachers and even parents are comfortable with the traditional system and may not fully embrace the new curriculum. The findings resonate with Mungai (2019) who revealed that resistance to change from key stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and policymakers, is serious potential pitfall. The shift from a content-based to a competence-based curriculum requires a change in mindset and attitudes. Teachers may resist the additional workload associated with new teaching methods, while parents might question the relevance of the curriculum, especially if its benefits are not immediately visible. This resonate with, Chanda (2020), who stated that resistance to change often arises when stakeholders are not adequately involved or informed about the goals and benefits of educational reforms.

Additionally, the findings indicated that assessment and evaluation challenges pose significant obstacles to the effective implementation of Zambia's CBC. The study confirmed -based approach may present challenges for assessment, as it requires a more nuanced and complex evaluation of student learning, which can be time-consuming and resource-intensive. The assessments required for a competence-based curriculum are difficult to standardize. Without clear guidelines and proper tools, there will be inconsistencies in how learners are evaluated. These primarily due to teachers' reliance on traditional assessment methods and a lack of understanding of competency-based approaches. Addressing these issues through targeted training and support is crucial for the curriculum's effective adoption and the development of students' practical competencies. The assessment methods required for a CBC differ significantly from those of traditional curricula. Instead of relying solely on standardized examinations, a CBC emphasizes continuous and formative assessments to evaluate learners' practical skills and competencies. However, Zambia may face challenges in developing and

implementing these assessment systems due to limited expertise and resources. The findings are in line with Griffin and Care (2015) who observed that competence-based education demands innovative assessment strategies, which can be difficult to standardize and implement in resource-constrained environments. On the other hand, one of the main challenges of implementing a competence-based curriculum is the need for a paradigm shift in teaching and learning. Traditional teaching methods focus on transmitting knowledge, whereas competence-based education requires a more student-centered approach, where learners are encouraged to take an active role in their learning (Biggs, 2014). This requires teachers to adopt new pedagogical approaches, which can be time-consuming and require significant professional development. Another challenge is the need for clear and concise learning outcomes. Competence-based education requires learners to demonstrate specific competencies, which must be clearly defined and assessed (Tuning, 2019). However, defining these learning outcomes can be a complex and time-consuming process, requiring significant input from stakeholders, including teachers, employers, and industry experts.

CONCLUSION

The introduction of the new curriculum in Zambia has been hailed as a revolutionary move, aimed at transforming the country's education system. This innovative approach has been designed to promote inclusivity, flexibility, and student-centered learning. The study on an introspective on Zambia's competence-based curriculum: stakeholder's perspectives highlights the transformative potential of the CBC in addressing the nation's educational and developmental challenges. Stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and parents, recognize the curriculum's promise in fostering practical skills, critical thinking, and global competitiveness among learners. However, the study also underscores significant challenges, such as inadequate teacher preparation, limited resources, and resistance to change, which may impede successful implementation. By addressing these challenges, the nation can position its education system to produce competent, innovative, and adaptable graduates who contribute meaningfully to national development. Therefore, transitioning to a CBC is a strategic move for Zambia, aiming to produce skilled, adaptable, and responsible citizens ready to contribute to national development and succeed in the global arena. To fully realize the CBC's benefits, Zambia must invest in capacity building, infrastructure development, and continuous stakeholder engagement.

Recommendations

- ❖ To ensure the successful implementation of the CBC, the government should invest in continuous professional development for teachers. Training programs should focus on equipping educators with learner-centered pedagogical skills, practical assessment methods, and strategies for integrating real-world applications into the classroom.
- ❖ The government and stakeholders should prioritize investment in educational infrastructure and resources, particularly in rural and underprivileged areas. This includes providing modern teaching aids, digital tools, laboratories, and libraries to ensure equitable access to quality education under the CBC framework.

- ❖ There is a need for robust engagement and communication strategies to involve all stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and community leaders, in the CBC's implementation process. Workshops, seminars, and community forums should be conducted to raise awareness about the curriculum's objectives and benefits, fostering acceptance and support.
- ❖ To align with the CBC's objectives, the Ministry of Education should design innovative assessment frameworks that go beyond standardized tests. These systems should include formative and competency-based evaluations that measure practical skills, critical thinking, and creativity. Training teachers on how to use these assessment methods effectively is equally critical.

Consent for participants

Informed consent was obtained from all participants in the research.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest, financial or otherwise.

About the Authors

Dr Moses Chisala is a Curriculum Specialist, Researcher and Consultant in Special/Inclusive Education. Currently is Senior Curriculum Specialist in charge of Special Education in the Directorate of Curriculum Development at the Ministry of Education-HQ. He holds a PhD in Education-Special Education, Master of Education Degree in Special education, Bachelor of Education in Special Education with Civic Education from the University of Zambia. In addition, he has a Certificate in Primary Education. His research interests include: special/inclusive education; child protection, curriculum for LSEND and ICT in special/inclusive education

REFERENCES

- Chanda, M. (2020). *Education for sustainable development: The role of competence-based curricula in Zambia*. Lusaka: ZED Publishers.
- E-School Zambia. (2025, January 10). *2023 Zambian education curriculum: Key changes and career-focused learning explained*. <https://eschoolzambia.com/2023-zambian-education-curriculum-key-changes-and-career-focused-learning-explained/>
- Griffin, P., & Care, E. (2015). *Assessment and teaching of 21st-century skills: Methods and approach*. Springer.
- GRZ (2023). (2023) Zambia education curriculum framework. Lusaka: ZEPH
- Masaiti, G., & Mwale, G. (2020). *Education reforms and skills development in Zambia*. International Journal of Educational Development, 50(2), 40-50.
- Ministry of Education. (2022). *Inclusive education policy framework*. Lusaka: Government of Zambia.
- Ministry of Education. (2024, June 12). *New curricula to be implemented in a phased manner*. <https://www.edu.gov.zm/?p=6801>

- Moonga, C., & Phiri, T. (2021). *Transforming education in Zambia through competence-based learning*. Lusaka: ZED Publishers.
- Mulenga, I. M., & Kabombwe, Y. M. (2019). Understanding a competency-based curriculum and education: The Zambian perspective. *Journal of Lexicography and Terminology*, 3(1). <https://education.unza.zm/index.php/jlt/article/view/107>
- Mungai, W. (2019). *Competence-based education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Opportunities and challenges*. Nairobi: Education Press.
- Tuning (2019). *Tuning methodology for the development of competence-based qualifications frameworks*. Bilbao: Tuning Academy.
- UNESCO. (2017). *Education for sustainable development goals: Learning objectives*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- Zambian Observer. (2024, July 7). *Cabinet approves the draft 2023 Zambia education curriculum framework*. <https://zambianobserver.com/cabinet-approves-the-draft-2023-Zambia-education-curriculum-framework/>