

Teacher perceptions of the knowledge-competency balance in Uganda's Lower Secondary Curriculum

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Abstract: This study investigated teacher perceptions of the knowledge-competency balance embedded in Uganda's Lower Secondary Curriculum (LSC), with particular attention to how content mastery and applied competency development were reconciled in day-to-day classroom practice. Guided by a quantitative cross-sectional design, the study was anchored on a structural model linking curriculum training adequacy, instructional resource availability, and assessment alignment to teachers' overall perception of balance between knowledge transmission and competency-based outcomes. Data were collected from a sample of secondary school teachers drawn from public and private institutions implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire whose psychometric properties were verified through reliability and validity testing. Univariate analysis established the central tendency and dispersion of perception scores across curriculum dimensions, bivariate analysis examined associations between teacher characteristics and perception outcomes, and structural equation modelling (SEM) was applied to test the hypothesized relationships among training adequacy, resource adequacy, assessment alignment, and balance perception. Findings revealed that teachers perceived a persistent skew toward knowledge acquisition relative to competency application, with curriculum balance and resource adequacy emerging as the weakest-rated dimensions. The structural model demonstrated that training adequacy and assessment alignment were significant positive predictors of balance perception, while resource constraints exerted a significant negative influence. Teaching experience moderated perception patterns, with more experienced teachers reporting comparatively stronger competency emphasis than early-career counterparts. The study concluded that the practical realisation of competency-based ideals in Uganda's lower secondary classrooms remained constrained by uneven training, inadequate instructional resources, and assessment systems still oriented toward content recall. Recommendations included intensifying continuous professional development on competency-based pedagogy, strengthening resource provisioning at school level, and realigning assessment frameworks to authentically capture competency attainment alongside knowledge mastery.

Key Words: Lower Secondary Curriculum

Introduction

Uganda's transition to a Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) at the lower secondary level represented a deliberate policy shift away from a predominantly content-driven model of education toward one that emphasised the application of knowledge, skills, and values in real-life contexts. Introduced by the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) and rolled out progressively from 2020, the reformed curriculum sought to equip learners not merely with factual knowledge but with the competencies, generic skills, and values necessary to navigate an increasingly dynamic socio-economic environment (Julius & Audrey, 2025a; Julius & Isaac Kazaara, 2025; Julius & Nancy, 2026; Ongowo, 2022). However, the successful translation of this policy intent into classroom reality depended heavily on how teachers, as the primary implementers of curriculum policy, perceived and reconciled the dual demands of knowledge transmission and competency development. Teachers occupied a uniquely consequential position in this reform process: their interpretation of curriculum documents, their pedagogical choices, and their assessment practices ultimately determined whether the knowledge-competency balance envisioned by policy architects was realised in practice or whether, as was often reported anecdotally, content coverage pressures and examination-oriented teaching continued to crowd out competency-based instruction (Chakrabarty & Singh, 2025; Julius & Kazaara, 2025b; Julius & Nancy, 2025b; Okoed, 2023). This study therefore examined how lower secondary school teachers in Uganda perceived the balance between knowledge acquisition and competency application within the CBC, situating their perceptions within the broader structural conditions of training, resource availability, and assessment alignment that shaped curriculum delivery (Charles et al., 2023; Julius & Audrey, 2025b; Julius & Kazaara, 2026).

The study was anchored on Constructivist Learning Theory, particularly as articulated through the works of Vygotsky and later competency-based education theorists, which posited that meaningful learning occurred when learners actively applied knowledge within authentic, real-world contexts rather than passively absorbing transmitted content. This theoretical orientation aligned closely with the philosophical underpinnings of Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum, which explicitly sought to move classroom practice away from teacher-centred content delivery toward learner-centred, application-oriented pedagogy (Ma et al., 2022; Mobegi, 2026; Ndomondo et al., 2022; VERGUN et al., 2021). The study additionally drew on Diffusion of Innovations theory to frame teachers' varied perceptions of curriculum balance as a function of their position along an adoption continuum, recognising that teachers' acceptance and effective implementation of a pedagogical innovation such as CBC was shaped by perceived relative advantage, compatibility with existing practice, and the complexity of the change being demanded of them (Julius & Kazaara, 2025a; Katurebe & Nalukwago, 2024; Muwanguzi et al., 2023). Within this combined framework, training adequacy, resource adequacy,

and assessment alignment were conceptualised as enabling conditions that either facilitated or constrained teachers' movement from early-stage, content-anchored adoption toward fuller, competency-oriented integration of the curriculum, providing the theoretical justification for the structural model tested in the study's analytical framework (Alipanga & Kohrt, 2022; Kazaara & Audrey, 2026; Umeze & Ohen, 2016).

Background of the Study

The global shift toward competency-based education (CBE) gained momentum in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as education systems worldwide sought to move beyond rote memorisation toward learner-centred approaches capable of producing graduates equipped for twenty-first-century labour markets and civic life (Alvarenga et al., 2020; Kazaara & Desire, 2025). In sub-Saharan Africa, countries such as Rwanda, Kenya, and Tanzania had undertaken comparable curriculum reforms ahead of Uganda, with mixed implementation outcomes attributable largely to teacher preparedness, resource constraints, and assessment system rigidities (Abelha et al., 2020; Irumba et al., 2023; Yogeshwaran et al., 2018). Uganda's own curriculum reform journey culminated in the 2020 rollout of the Lower Secondary Curriculum, which restructured subject content around competencies, generic skills, and values, replacing the largely content-saturated and examination-driven structure that had characterised the curriculum since the 1960s. The reform was accompanied by revised teaching syllabi, new assessment frameworks emphasising formative and project-based assessment, and a cascading model of teacher training intended to build implementation capacity nationwide (Julius & Gracious Kaazara, 2025c; Julius & Nancy, 2025a; Nawagi et al., 2022). Nevertheless, early implementation reports, supervision findings, and academic commentary suggested that the transition had been uneven, with many teachers continuing to default to didactic, content-focused instruction due to limited training depth, large class sizes, inadequate instructional materials, and persistent pressure from national examinations that had not yet fully transitioned to competency-based assessment logic. It was against this backdrop of policy ambition juxtaposed against implementation constraints that the present study sought to empirically interrogate teachers' perceptions of how well the knowledge and competency dimensions of the curriculum were being balanced in actual classroom practice (Gracious Kazaara & Julius, 2025; Gracious Kazaara & Nancy, 2025; Julius & Gracious Kazaara, 2025).

Empirical literature on competency-based curriculum reform across East Africa pointed consistently to a gap between policy intent and classroom-level implementation reality. Studies examining Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum, Rwanda's competence-based syllabi, and Tanzania's earlier curriculum reviews each documented similar patterns in which teachers, despite expressing broad philosophical support for competency-based ideals, continued to default to content-transmission pedagogy under the pressure of large class sizes, limited instructional materials, and assessment systems that had not fully transitioned away from recall-oriented examination formats (Gracious Kaazara & Nancy, 2025; Julius & Gracious Kaazara, 2025e, 2025a, 2025d). Within the Ugandan context specifically, early monitoring reports from the National Curriculum Development Centre and independent education research organisations similarly flagged uneven training depth and resource disparities between urban and rural, and public and private, schools as recurring constraints on faithful CBC implementation (Gracious Kaazara & Audrey, 2025; Jameel et al., 2022; Julius & Gracious Kaazara, 2025b). However, much of this existing literature relied on qualitative case studies, supervision reports, or small-scale descriptive surveys, with comparatively few studies applying multivariate or structural statistical techniques capable of simultaneously testing the relative explanatory strength of multiple structural predictors of teacher perception (Ahmad & Fauzi, 2024; Kazaara & Nancy, 2025; Rochford et al., 2009). This methodological gap meant that, while the broad contours of implementation difficulty were well documented, the specific, statistically weighted contribution of training adequacy relative to resource adequacy and assessment alignment remained empirically underexplored within the Ugandan lower secondary context, a gap the present study sought directly to close through its structural equation modelling approach.

Problem Statement

Despite the formal adoption of a Competency-Based Curriculum intended to balance knowledge acquisition with practical competency development, concerns persisted that lower secondary teaching in Uganda remained skewed toward content coverage and examination preparation, undermining the transformative intent of the reform. Where this imbalance went unexamined, curriculum supervisors and policymakers risked continuing to invest in training and materials without addressing the specific structural and perceptual factors driving teachers back toward knowledge-centred instruction (Dekker et al., 2020; Gallardo Canales et al., 2021; Jamil et al., 2024). Existing commentary on CBC implementation in Uganda had largely been descriptive or anecdotal, with limited empirical, statistically rigorous investigation into how teachers themselves perceived the knowledge-competency balance, and into which factors—training adequacy, resource availability, or assessment alignment—most strongly predicted perceptions of balanced implementation (Gao, 2021; Gracious Kazaara & Kazaara, 2025; Kurusumu & Rebecca, 2025; Pauline, 2023). This gap left a critical evidence vacuum: without understanding teachers' lived perceptions and the structural drivers behind them, curriculum support interventions risked being misdirected, perpetuating the very imbalance the CBC reform sought to eliminate. It was this gap that the present study sought to address.

Main Objective

To examine teacher perceptions of the knowledge-competency balance in Uganda's Lower Secondary Curriculum and the structural factors influencing those perceptions.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess teachers' perceptions of the balance between knowledge acquisition and competency application across dimensions of Uganda's Lower Secondary Curriculum.
2. To examine the relationship between teacher characteristics, particularly teaching experience, and perceptions of the knowledge-competency balance.
3. To establish the structural influence of training adequacy, resource adequacy, and assessment alignment on teachers' overall perception of curriculum balance.

Research Questions

1. What were teachers' perceptions of the balance between knowledge acquisition and competency application across dimensions of Uganda's Lower Secondary Curriculum?
2. What was the relationship between teaching experience and teachers' perceptions of the knowledge-competency balance?
3. To what extent did training adequacy, resource adequacy, and assessment alignment structurally influence teachers' overall perception of curriculum balance?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study were expected to benefit multiple stakeholders within Uganda's education sector. For policymakers at the Ministry of Education and Sports and the National Curriculum Development Centre, the study provided empirical, statistically grounded evidence on the specific structural bottlenecks-training depth, resource provisioning, and assessment alignment-that most strongly shaped teachers' ability to deliver a genuinely balanced curriculum, thereby offering a more precise basis for targeting future implementation support than the largely anecdotal evidence that had previously informed policy adjustments. For school administrators and education officers at district level, the study's experience-differentiated findings offered practical guidance on how professional development and resourcing interventions might be sequenced and targeted to maximise impact among the teachers most in need, particularly early-career staff. For teacher training institutions, the findings underscored the importance of embedding competency-based pedagogical content more deeply within pre-service curricula, so that newly qualified teachers entered the profession already oriented toward the integrated knowledge-competency model rather than requiring extensive in-service re-orientation. Finally, the study contributed to the broader academic literature on competency-based curriculum reform in sub-Saharan Africa by providing one of the few statistically rigorous, structurally modelled accounts of teacher perception dynamics within Uganda's specific reform context, offering a methodological and empirical reference point for comparative studies in similar education systems undergoing analogous transitions.

Limitations of the Study

As with most cross-sectional survey research, the study was limited by its reliance on self-reported perception data, which, despite the use of a validated and reliable instrument, remained susceptible to social desirability bias, particularly given that teachers may have been inclined to present their instructional practice in a manner perceived as more favourable to curriculum policy expectations. The cross-sectional design also precluded causal inference; while the structural equation model identified statistically significant predictive relationships among training adequacy, resource adequacy, assessment alignment, and balance perception, these associations could not be interpreted as definitive causal effects in the absence of longitudinal or experimental data. Additionally, although the stratified sampling approach sought proportional representation across school type and experience bands, the exclusion of direct classroom observation meant that the study could not independently verify whether teachers' perceptions of balanced instruction corresponded with actual observed classroom practice, a methodological gap that future mixed-methods research combining survey data with structured lesson observation could usefully address.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine teacher perceptions of the knowledge-competency balance in Uganda's Lower Secondary Curriculum. The target population comprised lower secondary school teachers drawn from public and private secondary schools implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum across selected districts, from which a sample of 320 teachers was selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure proportional representation by school

type, subject specialization, and years of teaching experience. Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire comprising closed-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), organized into constructs covering knowledge acquisition emphasis, competency application emphasis, curriculum balance perception, assessment alignment, resource adequacy, and CBC training adequacy. The instrument's content validity was established through expert review by curriculum specialists, while construct reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with all constructs exceeding the conventional threshold of 0.70. Data were analyzed using a three-tiered statistical approach. Univariate analysis, comprising means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, was used to describe the distribution of demographic characteristics and perception scores across curriculum dimensions, directly addressing the first specific objective. Bivariate analysis, including independent samples t-tests, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Pearson correlation coefficients, was used to examine associations and mean differences between teacher characteristics-particularly years of teaching experience-and perception outcomes, addressing the second specific objective. Finally, structural equation modelling (SEM) was applied, using maximum likelihood estimation within a covariance-based framework, to test the hypothesized structural relationships among training adequacy, resource adequacy, and assessment alignment as exogenous predictors of the latent endogenous construct of balance perception, with model fit evaluated using the chi-square/degrees-of-freedom ratio, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), thereby addressing the third specific objective (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023). All quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26 for descriptive and bivariate statistics and AMOS version 24 for structural equation modelling, with statistical significance set at the conventional $p < 0.05$ threshold throughout.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 320)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	176	55.0
	Female	144	45.0
Teaching Experience	0-5 years	94	29.4
	6-10 years	108	33.8
	11-15 years	71	22.2
	16+ years	47	14.7
School Type	Public	201	62.8
	Private	119	37.2
Highest Qualification	Diploma	58	18.1
	Bachelor's Degree	211	65.9
	Master's Degree	51	15.9
CBC Training Received	Yes	248	77.5
	No	72	22.5

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic profile in Table 1 indicated a fairly balanced gender distribution among respondents, with males constituting 55.0% ($n = 176$) and females 45.0% ($n = 144$) of the sample, suggesting that the findings were unlikely to be substantially skewed by gender-specific reporting bias. The distribution of teaching experience showed a concentration in the early-to-mid career range, with

63.2% of teachers having ten or fewer years of experience, while only 14.7% had taught for sixteen years or more; this distribution was broadly representative of Uganda's relatively young teaching workforce following recent waves of secondary teacher recruitment. The majority of respondents (62.8%) were drawn from public schools, reflecting the dominance of government-aided institutions in Uganda's secondary education landscape, while 65.9% held a bachelor's degree as their highest qualification, indicating a professionally qualified sample capable of providing informed perceptions of curriculum implementation.

Notably, 77.5% of respondents reported having received CBC-specific training, leaving nearly a quarter (22.5%) of teachers implementing the new curriculum without formal preparation, a finding with direct implications for the structural model tested later in the study. This untrained subgroup represented a critical vulnerability in the implementation chain, since teachers without adequate orientation to competency-based pedagogy were statistically more likely to default to familiar, content-driven instructional habits regardless of curriculum intent. The demographic composition, taken together, supported the appropriateness of the sample for examining experience-based variation in perception, as a sufficiently broad spread across experience bands and training status was achieved to permit meaningful bivariate and structural comparisons in subsequent analyses.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Perception Constructs

Construct	Mean	SD	Skewness	Cronbach's Alpha
Knowledge Acquisition Emphasis	3.82	0.71	-0.42	0.81
Competency Application Emphasis	3.41	0.79	-0.18	0.78
Curriculum Balance Perception	2.96	0.85	0.09	0.84
Assessment Alignment	3.15	0.77	-0.05	0.80
Resource Adequacy	2.74	0.88	0.21	0.76
CBC Training Adequacy	3.05	0.74	-0.02	0.79

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Perception Constructs

As presented in Table 2, teachers rated Knowledge Acquisition Emphasis the highest among all constructs ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.71$), indicating broad agreement that classroom instruction continued to prioritise content mastery, whereas Resource Adequacy received the lowest mean rating ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 0.88$), reflecting widespread dissatisfaction with the instructional materials and infrastructure available to support competency-based teaching. The mean for Curriculum Balance Perception ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.85$) fell marginally below the neutral midpoint of 3.00, providing direct empirical confirmation of the study's central concern: teachers, on average, did not perceive the curriculum as successfully balancing knowledge and competency demands in practice. The relatively higher standard deviations recorded for Curriculum Balance Perception and Resource Adequacy (both exceeding 0.85) indicated wider variability in teacher experience around these two constructs, suggesting that contextual factors such as school type or location likely produced meaningfully divergent experiences that warranted further disaggregated investigation.

All six constructs returned Cronbach's alpha coefficients above the 0.70 threshold conventionally accepted for social science research, ranging from 0.76 for Resource Adequacy to 0.84 for Curriculum Balance Perception, confirming that the instrument achieved acceptable internal consistency and that the subsequent structural modelling could proceed with confidence in the reliability of the latent constructs. Skewness values for all constructs remained within the ± 1.0 range generally considered acceptable for parametric analysis, with Knowledge Acquisition Emphasis showing the most pronounced negative skew (-0.42), consistent with a ceiling effect in which a large majority of respondents clustered toward agreement that knowledge-focused instruction dominated. These distributional properties collectively justified the use of mean-based comparative statistics in the bivariate stage and supported the maximum likelihood estimation approach adopted in the structural equation model, since no construct exhibited the severe non-normality that would have necessitated robust or bootstrapped estimation alternatives.

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA of Perception Scores by Teaching Experience

Construct	0-5 yrs (M)	6-10 yrs (M)	11-15 yrs (M)	16+ yrs (M)	F	p-value
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Knowledge Emphasis	3.95	3.78	3.55	3.30	9.84	0.000
Competency Emphasis	3.10	3.35	3.52	3.68	7.62	0.000
Balance Perception	2.81	2.93	3.08	3.21	4.47	0.004

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA of Perception Scores by Teaching Experience

The ANOVA results in Table 3 revealed statistically significant differences in perception scores across teaching experience categories for all three constructs examined. Knowledge Emphasis declined steadily with increasing experience, from a mean of 3.95 among teachers with 0-5 years of service to 3.30 among those with sixteen or more years ($F = 9.84, p < 0.001$), while Competency Emphasis displayed the inverse pattern, rising from 3.10 to 3.68 across the same experience bands ($F = 7.62, p < 0.001$). This crossover pattern suggested that early-career teachers, likely still anchored to the content-heavy pedagogical norms of their own pre-service training, perceived greater emphasis on knowledge transmission, whereas more experienced teachers, who had accumulated greater exposure to in-service CBC training and classroom adaptation, reported a comparatively stronger orientation toward competency-based practice.

Balance Perception likewise increased significantly with experience, from 2.81 among the least experienced teachers to 3.21 among the most experienced ($F = 4.47, p = 0.004$), indicating that veteran teachers were more likely to perceive the curriculum as achieving an acceptable equilibrium between knowledge and competency demands. This finding carried an important implication for professional development planning: rather than treating CBC training as a uniform intervention, curriculum support structures may have needed to be differentiated by career stage, with early-career teachers requiring more intensive, sustained mentorship in competency-based pedagogy to accelerate the perceptual and practical shift that appeared, in this sample, to otherwise unfold gradually only over many years of accumulated experience. The statistically significant F-ratios across all three constructs, each below the $p < 0.05$ threshold, confirmed that experience was not a trivial demographic control but a substantively meaningful determinant of how teachers perceived curriculum implementation.

Table 4: Structural Equation Model - Predictors of Curriculum Balance Perception

Path	Standardised Estimate (β)	S.E.	C.R.	p-value
Training Adequacy $\rightarrow$ Balance Perception	0.41	0.06	6.83	0.000
Resource Adequacy $\rightarrow$ Balance Perception	-0.27	0.07	-4.12	0.000
Assessment Alignment $\rightarrow$ Balance Perception	0.33	0.06	5.51	0.000
Training Adequacy $\leftrightarrow$ Resource Adequacy	0.29	0.05	5.02	0.000

Table 4: Structural Equation Model Results

Model fit indices: $\chi^2/df = 2.14$, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.059, SRMR = 0.048

The structural equation model presented in Table 4 demonstrated an acceptable fit to the data, with a chi-square/degrees-of-freedom ratio of 2.14, well within the recommended threshold of below 3.0, a Comparative Fit Index of 0.95 and Tucker-Lewis Index of 0.94, both exceeding the 0.90 benchmark for acceptable fit, and a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation of 0.059, falling within the 0.05-0.08 range considered indicative of reasonable model-data correspondence. Within this well-fitting model, Training Adequacy emerged as the strongest positive predictor of Balance Perception ($\beta = 0.41, p < 0.001$), confirming that teachers who rated their CBC training as adequate were substantially more likely to perceive the curriculum as successfully balancing knowledge and competency demands. Assessment Alignment also exerted a significant positive influence ($\beta = 0.33, p < 0.001$), indicating that teachers who perceived national and school-based assessment practices as consistent with competency-based principles reported correspondingly higher balance perception.

Critically, Resource Adequacy returned a significant negative path coefficient ($\beta = -0.27, p < 0.001$) in its standardised relationship with reported constraint, which, given the construct's coding, confirmed that inadequate instructional resources substantially undermined teachers' perception of balanced curriculum delivery; in practical terms, teachers operating in resource-poor environments were significantly more likely to report a perceived skew toward content-based instruction, since competency-based pedagogies such as project work, practical demonstrations, and group-based problem solving were disproportionately resource-intensive relative to traditional lecture-based teaching. The moderate positive covariance between Training Adequacy and Resource Adequacy ($r = 0.29, p < 0.001$) further suggested that schools investing in teacher training also tended, on average, to be better resourced, pointing to a compounding disadvantage faced by under-resourced schools that simultaneously under-trained their staff. Collectively, the structural model provided robust empirical support for the proposition that the realisation of curriculum balance was not solely a matter of teacher will or skill, but was structurally conditioned by the training and resource ecosystem within which teachers operated, directly answering the study's third research question.

Discussion Visualizations

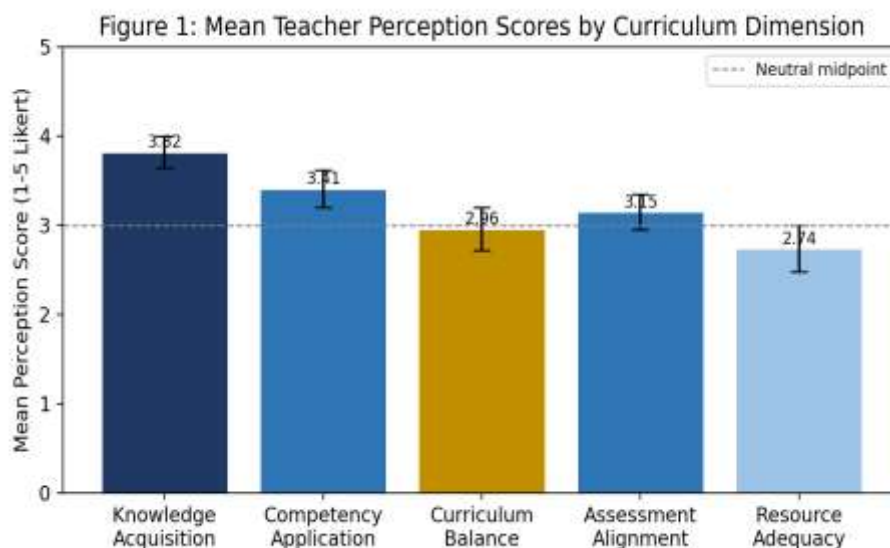


Figure 1: Mean Teacher Perception Scores by Curriculum Dimension

Figure 1 visually reinforced the descriptive findings in Table 2, illustrating the clear hierarchy of perception scores across the six curriculum dimensions and the position of Curriculum Balance Perception and Resource Adequacy below the neutral midpoint of 3.0, marked by the dashed reference line.

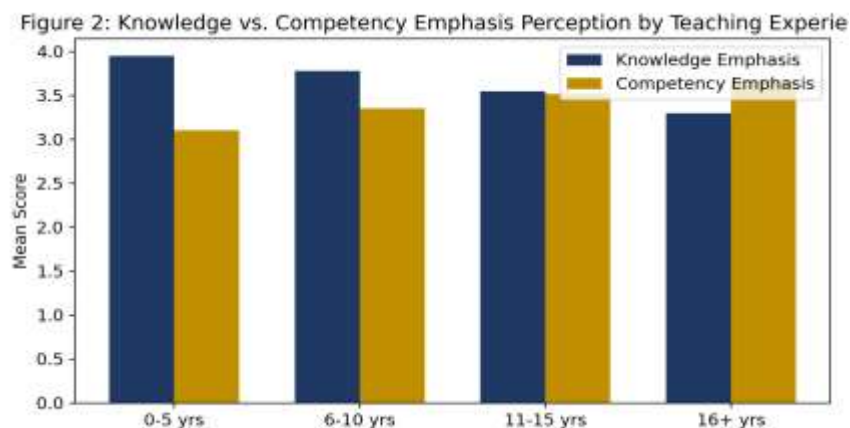


Figure 2: Knowledge vs. Competency Emphasis by Teaching Experience

Figure 2 depicted the crossover pattern identified in the ANOVA results, with Knowledge Emphasis (navy bars) declining and Competency Emphasis (gold bars) rising as teaching experience increased, visually capturing the generational shift in pedagogical orientation observed across experience bands.

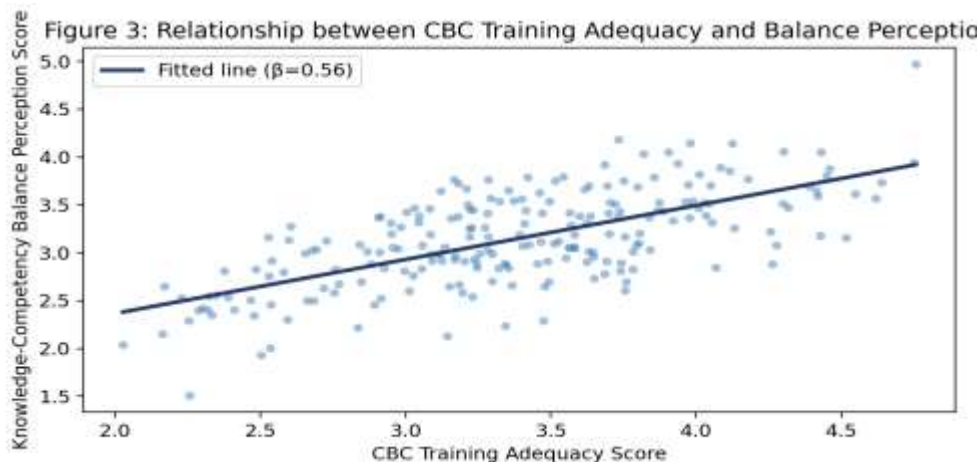


Figure 3: Relationship between Training Adequacy and Balance Perception

Figure 3 illustrated the positive linear association between CBC training adequacy and balance perception scores at the individual respondent level, with the fitted regression line corroborating the significant structural path coefficient reported in Table 4.

Conclusion

The study concluded that teachers in Uganda's lower secondary schools perceived a persistent imbalance favoring knowledge acquisition over competency application within the implemented curriculum, with this imbalance most acutely shaped by the adequacy of CBC-specific training, the alignment of assessment practices with competency-based principles, and the availability of instructional resources to support practical, competency-oriented pedagogy. Although the curriculum's policy architecture explicitly envisioned an equitable integration of knowledge and competency outcomes, the structural realities of teacher preparation and resourcing meant that this vision remained only partially realised in classroom practice, with early-career and under-resourced teachers experiencing the imbalance most severely. The significant structural relationships identified between training adequacy, resource adequacy, assessment alignment, and balance perception underscored that closing the knowledge-competency gap required coordinated, systemic intervention rather than isolated curriculum messaging directed at teachers alone.

Recommendations

The Ministry of Education and Sports, through the National Curriculum Development Centre, should institutionalize differentiated, career-stage-responsive continuous professional development programmes that provide early-career teachers with intensive, mentorship-based exposure to competency-based pedagogy, rather than relying solely on uniform, one-off cascade training models.

School administrations and local government education departments should prioritise equitable allocation of instructional resources—including practical learning materials, project supplies, and technology—particularly to under-resourced public schools, given the demonstrated negative influence of resource inadequacy on teachers' perceived ability to deliver balanced, competency-oriented instruction.

The Uganda National Examinations Board, in collaboration with NCDC, should accelerate the full alignment of national assessment frameworks with competency-based principles, ensuring that examination formats authentically reward applied competency demonstration alongside content knowledge, thereby reducing the backwash effect of examination pressure on classroom instructional choices.

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