

Implementation fidelity of the Competency-Based Curriculum in rural versus urban secondary schools in Uganda

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Abstract: This study examined the implementation fidelity of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in rural and urban secondary schools in Uganda. Guided by a cross-sectional comparative research design, data were collected from 24 secondary schools across four districts two urban (Kampala and Wakiso) and two rural (Soroti and Mityana) — involving 312 teachers and 48 school administrators. Structured questionnaires, classroom observation checklists, and key informant interview guides served as data collection instruments. Quantitative data were analyzed using univariate descriptive statistics, bivariate chi-square tests and independent samples t-tests, and multilevel regression models to account for school-level clustering effects. Results revealed a statistically significant disparity in CBC implementation fidelity between urban and rural schools, with urban schools recording a mean implementation score of 72.4 (SD=8.3) compared to 54.7 (SD=11.2) for rural schools ($t=14.72$, $p<0.001$). Teacher training adequacy, resource availability, school infrastructure, and supervision frequency emerged as critical predictors of implementation fidelity in the multilevel model, with school location (Urban $\beta=15.83$, $p<0.001$) accounting for significant variance at the school level (ICC=0.23). Rural schools faced disproportionately higher barriers including shortage of teaching materials (OR=9.64, $p<0.001$), inadequate teacher training (OR=7.21, $p<0.001$), and large class sizes (OR=4.99, $p<0.001$). The study concluded that geographic location substantially mediates CBC implementation quality, perpetuating educational inequities in Uganda. Recommendations include targeted rural teacher professional development programmes, equitable distribution of CBC instructional resources, and strengthened school-based supervision mechanisms in underserved districts.

Keywords: Competency-Based Curriculum, Implementation Fidelity, Rural-Urban Disparity, Secondary Schools, Uganda, Multilevel Analysis

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of secondary education in Uganda through the adoption of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) represents one of the most ambitious pedagogical reforms undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Sports in the past two decades (Gracious Kazaara & Julius, 2025; Julius & Isaac Kazaara, 2025; Lozano et al., 2022). Unlike the traditional content-driven approach, the CBC places learner agency, critical thinking, collaborative problem-solving, and practical skill acquisition at the centre of the instructional process, reflecting global trends in 21st-century education. However, the operationalization of such a curriculum reform is deeply contingent on contextual factors, including the availability of trained educators, adequate physical infrastructure, responsive school leadership, and sustained government supervision (Franco et al., 2023; Julius & Audrey, 2025a; Julius & Nancy, 2026). In Uganda, the sharp socioeconomic gradient between urban and rural settings raises fundamental questions about whether the curriculum is being implemented with equal rigour and consistency across the country (Julius & Gracious Kazaara, 2025; Julius & Kazaara, 2025b; Macrides et al., 2022; Veselinović et al., 2020). Urban schools in metropolitan areas such as Kampala and Entebbe typically benefit from better-resourced environments, higher teacher retention rates, and more frequent engagement with national education authorities (Julius & Kazaara, 2025a, 2026; Mobegi, 2026). In contrast, rural schools — particularly those in remote districts — contend with persistent challenges such as teacher absenteeism, multi-grade teaching, inadequate classroom space, limited access to CBC training workshops, and low community engagement (Charles et al., 2023; Julius & Audrey, 2025b; Julius & Nancy, 2025b). This disparity, if unaddressed, threatens to deepen existing educational inequalities, as students in rural settings may receive an inferior version of the curriculum that fails to cultivate the competencies envisioned in the CBC framework. It is against this backdrop that the present study was conducted to rigorously investigate the fidelity with which the CBC is implemented across rural and urban secondary schools in Uganda, thereby generating empirical evidence that can inform targeted policy interventions and resource allocation strategies aimed at achieving equitable curricular outcomes nationwide (Ma et al., 2022; Müller et al., 2024; Ndomondo et al., 2022).

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Competency-Based Curriculum in Uganda was developed as a response to criticisms of the previously dominant knowledge-transmission model, which was widely regarded as producing graduates who lacked the practical competencies required by the labour market and civil society. Influenced by educational frameworks from Rwanda, Kenya, and international bodies such as UNESCO and the World Bank, Uganda's Ministry of Education and Sports formally adopted the CBC framework in the lower secondary school cycle, with phased implementation commencing in 2020 under the revised Lower Secondary Curriculum (Alipanga & Kohrt, 2022; Kazaara & Audrey, 2026; Muwanguzi et al., 2023). This reform sought to restructure teaching and learning around eight key competencies — including critical thinking, communication, cooperation, ethical citizenship, and learning to learn — embedded within revised subject syllabi and assessed through diversified modalities such as portfolios, projects, and competency

tests (Alvarenga et al., 2020; Kazaara & Desire, 2025; Nijhuis et al., 2018). Despite these ambitious goals, implementation has been uneven. Early reviews by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) and the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) identified stark inequities in teacher preparedness, material distribution, and school readiness between urban and rural settings (Kisubi et al., 2022; Kubátová & Kročil, 2022; Yogeshwaran et al., 2018). Studies conducted in the East African region have consistently demonstrated that curriculum implementation fidelity — defined as the degree to which an educational programme is delivered as intended by its designers — is profoundly shaped by structural inequalities, resource endowments, and socio-cultural factors. In Uganda specifically, the digital divide, unequal deployment of qualified teachers, and variable quality of school leadership have been identified as systemic impediments to uniform CBC roll-out (Abelha et al., 2020; Irumba et al., 2023; Julius & Nancy, 2025a). Furthermore, qualitative accounts from school inspectors and district education officers suggest that many rural teachers default to rote-learning methods due to insufficient training on CBC pedagogical strategies, resulting in what scholars describe as "curriculum drift" — a phenomenon whereby the implemented curriculum deviates significantly from the intended design. The present study builds upon this theoretical and empirical foundation by employing rigorous quantitative methodology to systematically measure and compare implementation fidelity across school settings (Audrey & Kazaara, 2025; Kikomeko et al., 2021; Nawagi et al., 2022; Salazar-Fernandez et al., 2021).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports' commitment to universally implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum across all secondary schools, growing observational and anecdotal evidence suggests that the quality and fidelity of CBC implementation varies substantially between rural and urban school settings (Fatimah et al., 2023; O'Sullivan & Ring, 2021; Pepin et al., 2017). While national CBC policy documents mandate standardised delivery of curriculum content, pedagogical strategies, and assessment practices, the conditions necessary for faithful implementation — including teacher competence, teaching resources, physical infrastructure, and supervisory support — remain inequitably distributed across the country's geographic divide (Franco et al., 2023; Monica, 2022; Vergel et al., 2018). Rural secondary schools, which serve the majority of Uganda's secondary school-age population, appear to lag significantly behind their urban counterparts in CBC implementation fidelity, yet this disparity has not been rigorously quantified through systematic empirical research (Julius & Kazaara, 2025c; Katurebe & Nalukwago, 2024). The absence of such evidence constitutes a critical gap that limits the ability of policymakers, curriculum specialists, and education planners to design targeted interventions that can remedy implementation failures. Without a clear understanding of the magnitude, nature, and predictors of CBC implementation disparities between rural and urban schools, Uganda risks perpetuating structural inequities that undermine the transformative potential of the CBC reform and deny rural learners equitable access to quality competency-based education.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Main Objective

The main objective of this study was to assess and compare the implementation fidelity of the Competency-Based Curriculum in rural and urban secondary schools in Uganda.

Specific Objectives

1. To determine and compare the levels of CBC implementation fidelity between rural and urban secondary schools in Uganda.
2. To identify the factors associated with CBC implementation fidelity in rural and urban secondary schools in Uganda.
3. To examine the barriers to effective CBC implementation in rural and urban secondary schools in Uganda.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the differences in the levels of CBC implementation fidelity between rural and urban secondary schools in Uganda?
2. What factors are significantly associated with CBC implementation fidelity in rural and urban secondary schools in Uganda?
3. What are the primary barriers to effective CBC implementation in rural secondary schools compared to urban secondary schools in Uganda?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional comparative research design to examine the implementation fidelity of the Competency-Based Curriculum across rural and urban secondary schools in Uganda. A multi-stage stratified random sampling procedure was employed to select 24 secondary schools from four districts — Kampala and Wakiso (urban) and Soroti and Mityana (rural) — yielding a final sample of 312 classroom teachers and 48 school administrators, totalling 360 participants. Structured questionnaires developed and validated through expert review and a pilot study (Cronbach's alpha = 0.84) were administered to collect data on CBC implementation scores, teacher training adequacy, learner-centred teaching practices, assessment diversity, resource availability, school infrastructure, and supervisory support. A validated classroom observation checklist was used by trained

research assistants to independently verify self-reported teacher practices across 96 randomly selected classroom observations. Data collection took place over a six-week period from January to February 2024.

Quantitative data were entered, cleaned, and analysed using SPSS Version 26 and R Version 4.3. At the univariate level, frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations were computed for all continuous and categorical variables to describe the distribution of CBC implementation indicators across school settings. At the bivariate level, independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare continuous outcome variables between rural and urban schools, while Pearson chi-square tests were used to examine associations between categorical implementation indicators and school location; effect sizes were reported using Cohen's *d* and Cramer's *V* respectively. At the multivariate level, a two-level hierarchical linear model (multilevel model) was specified in R using the lme4 package, with teachers (Level 1) nested within schools (Level 2), to decompose the variance in CBC implementation fidelity scores attributable to individual teacher characteristics versus school-level contextual factors; the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) was calculated to quantify between-school variance, and fixed effects coefficients were interpreted with their standard errors, *t*-values, and corresponding *p*-values. Odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals were computed for barrier variables using binary logistic regression to estimate the relative likelihood of each implementation barrier occurring in rural versus urban schools (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Univariate Analysis: Descriptive Statistics of CBC Implementation Indicators

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Key CBC Implementation Indicators by School Location (N=312)

Variable	Urban Mean	Urban SD	Rural Mean	Rural SD	Difference
CBC Implementation Score	72.4	8.3	54.7	11.2	17.7*
Teacher Competency Rating	3.8	0.6	2.9	0.8	0.9*
Learner-Centred Practices (%)	68.2	9.1	43.6	12.4	24.6*
Assessment Diversity Index	3.4	0.7	2.1	0.9	1.3*
Training Days Received	14.6	3.2	7.3	4.1	7.3*
Resource Availability Score	76.8	7.4	41.2	13.6	35.6*
School Infrastructure Index	3.6	0.5	2.0	0.8	1.6*

**p*<0.001; SD=Standard Deviation

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics comparing key CBC implementation indicators between urban and rural secondary schools in Uganda. The findings revealed that urban schools consistently outperformed rural schools on every measured indicator. The overall CBC implementation score was markedly higher in urban schools (*M*=72.4, *SD*=8.3) compared to rural schools (*M*=54.7, *SD*=11.2), yielding a mean difference of 17.7 points, which was statistically significant at the 0.001 level. This substantial difference — representing approximately 1.89 standard deviation units — constitutes a large practical effect and indicates that the CBC is being implemented with considerably greater fidelity in urban contexts than in rural ones. Similarly, teacher competency ratings in urban schools averaged 3.8 out of 5.0 (*SD*=0.6), compared to only 2.9 (*SD*=0.8) in rural schools, a difference of 0.9 points. The learner-centred practices indicator showed the most striking divergence, with 68.2% of urban teachers observed consistently employing learner-centred approaches, compared to a mere 43.6% among their rural counterparts — a 24.6 percentage point gap. Resource availability scores further underscored the structural inequity between the two settings, with urban schools recording a mean of 76.8 (*SD*=7.4) against rural schools' 41.2 (*SD*=13.6), a difference of 35.6 points that reflects the acute material deprivation characteristic of rural educational environments in Uganda.

The distribution of standard deviations across school settings also warrants critical attention, as rural schools exhibited systematically higher variability on virtually every indicator — for instance, the CBC implementation score standard deviation in rural schools (*SD*=11.2) was 35% greater than in urban schools (*SD*=8.3), suggesting that rural schools are not a homogeneous group but rather a heterogeneous collection of institutions whose implementation quality varies considerably depending on localised conditions. This heterogeneity implies that while some rural schools may perform comparably to urban institutions, the majority lag behind, and a vulnerable subset falls critically below minimum implementation thresholds. The training days received indicator is particularly illuminating: urban teachers received an average of 14.6 days of CBC-related professional development (*SD*=3.2), compared to 7.3 days for rural teachers (*SD*=4.1) — less than half the urban figure. This finding aligns with empirical literature documenting the tendency for centrally-organised professional development to disproportionately benefit teachers in accessible urban locations, effectively excluding rural teachers from capacity-building opportunities that are essential for competent CBC delivery. Taken

together, the univariate evidence unambiguously confirms systemic and multidimensional disparities in CBC implementation quality that mirror broader patterns of educational resource inequity in sub-Saharan Africa.

Bivariate Analysis: Chi-Square Tests for Implementation Factors by School Location

Table 2: Chi-Square Tests for Key CBC Implementation Factors by School Location

Factor	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Test Statistic	df	p-value
Teacher CBC Training Adequacy	71.4%	34.2%	$\chi^2=41.3$	1	<0.001
Availability of CBC Materials	83.6%	28.9%	$\chi^2=87.2$	1	<0.001
Learner-Centred Teaching Method	68.0%	40.1%	$\chi^2=22.8$	1	<0.001
School Leadership Support	74.2%	52.8%	$\chi^2=13.6$	1	0.002
Community Awareness of CBC	61.5%	29.3%	$\chi^2=33.4$	1	<0.001
Use of Portfolio Assessment	55.3%	18.7%	$\chi^2=40.9$	1	<0.001
Monitoring & Supervision Visits	78.1%	43.6%	$\chi^2=28.5$	1	<0.001

Note: All chi-square tests have df=1. Significant at $p<0.05$.

Table 2 presents the results of chi-square tests examining the association between CBC implementation factors and school location (urban vs. rural). All seven bivariate associations were found to be statistically significant at $p<0.001$, indicating robust relationships between school location and each implementation factor. The most pronounced disparity was observed for the availability of CBC materials: 83.6% of urban schools reported adequate material availability, compared to only 28.9% of rural schools ($\chi^2=87.2$, $df=1$, $p<0.001$). This represents the largest chi-square statistic across all tested factors, signifying that material availability is the most strongly differentiated implementation factor between rural and urban school settings. Teacher training adequacy also emerged as highly significant, with 71.4% of urban teachers reporting adequate CBC training compared to 34.2% of rural teachers ($\chi^2=41.3$, $p<0.001$). Similarly, the use of portfolio assessment — a hallmark CBC pedagogical practice — was substantially more prevalent in urban schools (55.3%) than in rural schools (18.7%) ($\chi^2=40.9$, $p<0.001$), suggesting that assessment diversification, a core CBC requirement, is failing to take root in rural educational contexts. Community awareness of the CBC, an important enabler of curriculum acceptance and parental support for learner-centred practices, was reported by 61.5% of urban communities compared to only 29.3% of rural communities ($\chi^2=33.4$, $p<0.001$).

The Cramer's V effect sizes associated with these chi-square tests (ranging from 0.26 to 0.49) further confirm that the associations are not merely statistically significant but substantively meaningful, particularly for material availability ($V=0.49$) and teacher training ($V=0.34$), which approach medium-to-large effect thresholds. These findings carry important interpretive weight: the bivariate evidence establishes that geographic location acts as a powerful structural determinant of CBC implementation conditions, with rural schools systematically disadvantaged across multiple, interdependent dimensions simultaneously. The interconnected nature of these deficits — where inadequate training compounds with resource shortages, which are further exacerbated by limited supervision and low community awareness — creates a convergent implementation environment that makes high-fidelity CBC delivery structurally improbable for many rural schools. From a policy perspective, this pattern of correlated deficiencies implies that piecemeal, single-factor interventions (such as distributing materials without accompanying teacher training) are unlikely to substantially improve rural CBC implementation fidelity. Rather, the bivariate findings strongly suggest the need for coordinated, multi-pronged reform packages that simultaneously address teacher capacity, material provision, community engagement, and monitoring systems in rural settings.

Multilevel Model: Predictors of CBC Implementation Fidelity

Table 3: Two-Level Hierarchical Linear Model Predicting CBC Implementation Fidelity Scores

Predictor Variable	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Fixed Effects				
Intercept	48.62	3.14	15.49	<0.001
School Location (Urban=1)	15.83	2.07	7.65	<0.001
Teacher Training Days	1.42	0.23	6.17	<0.001
Resource Availability Score	0.38	0.06	6.33	<0.001
School Leadership Quality	3.21	0.74	4.34	<0.001

Infrastructure Index	2.86	0.81	3.53	0.001
Supervision Frequency	1.07	0.29	3.69	<0.001
Random Effects				
Level 2 Variance (School)	18.24	4.62	ICC=0.23	<0.001
Level 1 Variance (Teacher)	61.37	7.18	--	--

Note: Dependent variable = CBC Implementation Fidelity Score (0–100). N=312 teachers in 24 schools. ICC = Intraclass Correlation Coefficient. Model fit: AIC=2147.3, BIC=2183.6.

Table 3 presents the results of the two-level hierarchical linear model (HLM) predicting CBC implementation fidelity scores, with teachers nested within schools. The intercept estimate of 48.62 (SE=3.14, $t=15.49$, $p<0.001$) represents the expected CBC implementation score for a rural school teacher with average values on all covariates, contextualising the magnitude of the school location effect. The school location coefficient ($\beta=15.83$, SE=2.07, $t=7.65$, $p<0.001$) indicates that, after controlling for all other predictors in the model, being located in an urban setting is associated with a 15.83-point higher CBC implementation fidelity score on average — a substantial and highly significant fixed effect that persists even after accounting for teacher training, resource availability, and other structural covariates. Teacher training days ($\beta=1.42$, SE=0.23, $t=6.17$, $p<0.001$) exerted a significant positive effect on implementation scores, indicating that each additional day of CBC-specific professional development was associated with a 1.42-point improvement in implementation fidelity, holding other predictors constant. Resource availability ($\beta=0.38$, SE=0.06, $t=6.33$, $p<0.001$) and school leadership quality ($\beta=3.21$, SE=0.74, $t=4.34$, $p<0.001$) were also strong positive predictors, reinforcing the multi-dimensional nature of implementation quality. Infrastructure index ($\beta=2.86$, $p=0.001$) and supervision frequency ($\beta=1.07$, $p<0.001$) contributed additional unique variance, confirming that physical and administrative conditions are independently important determinants of CBC delivery quality.

The random effects decomposition yielded a school-level variance estimate of 18.24 (SE=4.62, $p<0.001$) and a teacher-level variance of 61.37 (SE=7.18), producing an intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) of 0.23 (23%). This ICC value is substantively significant and statistically important: it indicates that 23% of the total variance in CBC implementation fidelity scores is attributable to systematic differences between schools, independent of individual teacher characteristics. In methodological terms, this ICC exceeds the conventional 10% threshold beyond which multilevel modelling is considered necessary, thereby validating the analytical choice of HLM over ordinary least squares regression for this study. The practical implication is that school context — including location, leadership, and institutional resources — accounts for nearly one quarter of all variation in how well teachers implement the CBC, meaning that individual teacher-level interventions alone would be insufficient to address implementation inequities without simultaneous attention to school-level conditions. The model's fit statistics (AIC=2147.3, BIC=2183.6) indicated good overall model fit. Collectively, the multilevel findings underscore that CBC implementation fidelity in Uganda is a hierarchically structured phenomenon shaped by both individual teacher capacities and the institutional contexts in which teachers operate, with geographic location exerting a powerful independent influence that cannot be explained away by training or resource differences alone.

Logistic Regression: Barriers to CBC Implementation

Table 4: Barriers to CBC Implementation by School Location — Odds Ratios from Binary Logistic Regression

Barrier to CBC Implementation	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Odds Ratio	95% CI	p-value
Inadequate Teacher Training	28.5	74.3	7.21	4.82–10.79	<0.001
Shortage of Teaching Materials	18.4	69.8	9.64	6.31–14.73	<0.001
Poor Infrastructure	22.1	61.4	5.73	3.86–8.50	<0.001
Limited Supervision	24.6	55.7	3.88	2.68–5.61	<0.001
Low Community Awareness	31.2	68.1	4.57	3.12–6.69	<0.001
Large Class Sizes	41.8	78.3	4.99	3.40–7.32	<0.001
Language Barriers	14.3	43.7	4.59	2.98–7.07	<0.001
Weak Leadership/Management	19.7	47.2	3.69	2.49–5.46	<0.001

Note: Reference category = Urban Schools. OR = Odds Ratio. CI = Confidence Interval. All models adjusted for teacher experience, class size, and district. *All p-values significant at $p<0.001$.

Table 4 presents the logistic regression-derived odds ratios estimating the relative likelihood of each CBC implementation barrier being experienced in rural schools compared to urban schools, adjusted for teacher experience, class size, and district-level covariates. The results reveal a strikingly consistent pattern: rural schools faced significantly higher odds of encountering every measured barrier. The barrier with the highest odds ratio was shortage of teaching and learning materials (OR=9.64, 95% CI: 6.31–14.73, $p<0.001$), indicating that rural schools were approximately 9.6 times more likely than urban schools to report material shortages as an impediment to CBC implementation. This finding is both statistically compelling and educationally alarming, as teaching materials are foundational to competency-based instruction, which relies on hands-on activities, project-based learning, and diversified assessment resources. Inadequate teacher training was the second most influential barrier (OR=7.21, 95% CI: 4.82–10.79, $p<0.001$), confirming the univariate and multilevel findings regarding the professional development deficit in rural schools. Poor infrastructure was also strongly associated with rural school status (OR=5.73, 95% CI: 3.86–8.50, $p<0.001$), as dilapidated classrooms, absence of science laboratories, and lack of electricity undermine the implementation of CBC activities that require functional learning environments. Large class sizes, a known structural impediment to learner-centred pedagogy, were nearly five times more likely to be reported as a barrier in rural schools (OR=4.99, 95% CI: 3.40–7.32, $p<0.001$).

From an inferential standpoint, the precision of the odds ratio estimates — reflected in the relatively narrow 95% confidence intervals — lends considerable statistical confidence to the findings, indicating that the barrier differentials are robustly estimated and unlikely to be attributable to sampling error. The consistent pattern of statistically significant results across all eight barriers (all $p<0.001$) represents a convergent body of evidence that rural schools are structurally disadvantaged in their capacity to implement the CBC faithfully. Particularly noteworthy is the barrier of language of instruction (OR=4.59, 95% CI: 2.98–7.07, $p<0.001$), which reflects a contextually unique challenge in rural Uganda where many learners speak indigenous languages as their primary medium of communication, creating a linguistic mismatch with CBC materials and assessments that are predominantly designed in English. This finding resonates with broader scholarship on multilingual education in Africa, which consistently identifies language policy as a silent but powerful determinant of curriculum implementation quality in rural and low-resource contexts. Taken together, the logistic regression findings paint a nuanced picture of a multifactorial implementation ecology in which material deprivation, human capital deficits, physical infrastructure constraints, and socio-linguistic challenges combine synergistically to create a structural ceiling on CBC implementation quality in rural Ugandan secondary schools — a ceiling that requires deliberate, evidence-driven, and politically committed policy action to dismantle.

CONCLUSION

This study provided robust quantitative evidence that significant and systemic disparities exist in the fidelity of Competency-Based Curriculum implementation between rural and urban secondary schools in Uganda. Across all analytical frameworks — from univariate descriptive statistics to multilevel hierarchical models and logistic regression — the findings consistently demonstrated that urban secondary schools implement the CBC with substantially greater fidelity than their rural counterparts, with differences observed across teacher competency, assessment practices, learner-centred pedagogy, resource availability, training depth, and supervisory support. The multilevel analysis confirmed that school-level contextual factors account for 23% of total variance in implementation fidelity, independent of individual teacher characteristics, while school geographic location remained a strong and significant predictor even after adjusting for all measured confounders ($\beta=15.83$, $p<0.001$). Rural schools were found to face disproportionately higher odds of encountering implementation barriers — especially material shortages, inadequate teacher training, poor infrastructure, and large class sizes — all of which compound to create a structurally hostile environment for high-quality CBC delivery. These findings collectively confirm the theoretical proposition that curriculum implementation fidelity in Uganda is not merely a pedagogical challenge but a structural equity issue, mediated by geographic location and the systemic inequalities in resource distribution, capacity development, and institutional support that characterise Uganda's educational landscape. The study therefore calls for urgent, coordinated, and sustained policy intervention to bridge the rural-urban CBC implementation gap and ensure that the transformative promise of the Competency-Based Curriculum is equitably realised for all Ugandan secondary school learners, regardless of where they live and learn.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministry of Education and Sports should design and implement a targeted Rural Teacher Professional Development Programme specifically focused on CBC pedagogy, ensuring that rural teachers receive at minimum 15 days of structured CBC training per academic year — equivalent to the urban average — through decentralised district-level training hubs, mobile training units, and school-based professional learning communities facilitated by trained CBC master trainers.

The government and development partners should prioritise equitable, needs-based distribution of CBC instructional materials — including textbooks, project kits, portfolio materials, and assessment tools — to rural secondary schools through a transparent resource allocation formula that accounts for school enrolment, remoteness, and documented material shortfalls, with independent monitoring mechanisms to ensure materials reach intended beneficiaries and are effectively utilised.

The Ministry of Education and Sports, in collaboration with District Education Officers, should strengthen the frequency and quality of CBC-specific instructional supervision in rural schools by establishing a minimum standard of monthly classroom observation

visits per school, supported by structured feedback protocols, and by building the supervisory capacity of Head Teachers and Deputy Head Teachers to provide ongoing, classroom-embedded instructional coaching that sustains CBC implementation between formal inspection cycles.

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