ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26may1382

From Policy to Practice: Pedagogical Strategies for Generic Skills Enhancement in Uganda's Competence-Based Curriculum

Emmanuel Adengo[1]; Stephen Ndawula[2]; Bashir Kishabale[3]

[1]Program Manager, Luigi Giussani Foundation, Kampala, Uganda
[2]Senior Lecturer, Educational Technology, Department of Curriculum, Pedagogy & Educational Media, Kyambogo University.
[3]Lecturer, Instructional Technology & Computer Education, Department of Curriculum, Pedagogy & Educational Media, Kyambogo University.

Publication Date: 2026/06/05

Abstract: Globally, education systems are shifting from knowledge-based to competence-based curricula, emphasizing the development of generic or transferable skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, communication, and problem-solving. In Uganda, the Lower Secondary Curriculum (LSC) introduced in 2020 foregrounds these skills across subject areas, yet empirical evidence on how teachers foster them in classroom practice remains limited. Effective pedagogy is essential to translate curriculum intentions into meaningful learning outcomes, particularly in resource-constrained contexts.

This study examined the pedagogical strategies teachers employ to foster generic skills within Uganda's competence-based lower secondary curriculum. It aimed to understand how constructivist, collaborative, inquiry-based, and integrative approaches are implemented, and how classroom practices support the development of transferable skills among learners.

Guided by social constructivist and curriculum innovation theories, the study adopted a qualitative case study design. Three purposively selected secondary schools in Iganga District were included, representing diverse ownership, class sizes, and performance levels. Data were collected through document analysis, non-participant classroom observations, and in-depth interviews with twenty teachers and three deputy headteachers. Thematic analysis was conducted using Atlas.ti, with credibility ensured through member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation across data sources.

Teachers employ a deliberate blend of pedagogical strategies to cultivate generic skills. Constructivist methods, including guided discovery, practical demonstrations, incidental learning, and observation, facilitate active engagement, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Collaborative strategies such as peer learning, group discussions, debates, and clubs enhance communication, teamwork, leadership, and socio-emotional competencies. Inquiry-based approaches - including research projects, Socratic questioning, role play, and excursions—promote real-world application and reflective learning, while integrative strategies like project-based learning, ICT integration, and drama foster creativity, digital literacy, and learner agency. Overall, the findings highlight that learner-centred, contextually responsive, and inquiry-driven pedagogy is essential for developing transferable skills.

The study recommends that the Ministry of Education and Sports support teacher professional development and flexible, gender-sensitive policies that promote learner-centred pedagogy. The National Curriculum Development Centre should embed generic skills and real-world problem-solving tasks across curricula and provide guidance for differentiated, ICT-integrated teaching. School leaders should foster inclusive, collaborative, and resource-rich learning environments, while teachers should adopt experiential, inquiry-driven strategies with active feedback mechanisms. Development partners and NGOs should strengthen teacher capacity and facilitate access to digital and experiential learning tools, and national assessment bodies should design assessments that reward critical thinking, creativity, research, and authentic application of knowledge.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26may1382

Keywords: *Competence, Competence-Based Curriculum, Fostering, Generic Skills, Knowledge-Based Curriculum.*

How to Cite: Emmanuel Adengo; Stephen Ndawula; Bashir Kishabale (2026) From Policy to Practice: Pedagogical Strategies for Generic Skills Enhancement in Uganda's Competence-Based Curriculum. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 11(5), 3318-3327. https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26may1382

I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, education systems are undergoing significant curriculum reforms driven by the need to enhance national competitiveness, economic productivity, and workforce relevance. Central to these reforms is a growing shift from knowledge-based curricula towards competence-based approaches that prioritise the development of skills and competences over the mere acquisition of content knowledge (Gleeson et al., 2020). A competence-based curriculum (CBC) emphasises what learners are able to do with what they know, focusing on the integration of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes required to navigate real-life situations and the demands of the 21st century (Kanyonga et al., 2019; Soare, 2015).

Within this paradigm, increasing attention has been paid to the development of generic skills - often referred to interchangeably as transferable skills, employability skills, life skills, or 21st-century skills - which are widely recognised as essential for learners' success in education, work, and society (Clokie & Fourie, 2016; McGunagle & Zizka, 2020). These skills include critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, communication, collaboration, research competence, interpersonal skills, and lifelong learning capabilities among others (Nyaboke et al., 2021; Singer et al., 2014). Beyond employability, generic skills enable learners to adapt to rapidly changing social, technological, and economic contexts, positioning them as active and reflective participants in lifelong learning.

The effective fostering of generic skills places substantial demands on pedagogical practice. Teachers are required to move beyond traditional teacher-centred approaches towards learner-centred pedagogies that promote active engagement, collaboration, inquiry, and reflective learning (Closs et al., 2022). Such pedagogical approaches necessitate learning environments that are safe, supportive, and inclusive, while offering meaningful opportunities for interaction, experimentation, and problem-solving (Labani et al., 2019; Paulo & Tilya, 2014). Consequently, the role of the teacher shifts from knowledge transmitter to facilitator of learning, guiding learners in constructing knowledge and developing skills through authentic learning experiences.

In Africa, and particularly in Uganda, the adoption of competence-based education has gained momentum as governments seek to address persistent concerns about graduate unemployability and skills mismatch. Uganda's introduction of the Lower Secondary Curriculum (LSC) in 2020 represents a significant milestone in this reform agenda (National Curriculum Development Centre [NCDC], 2019). The LSC explicitly foregrounds the development of five core generic skills: critical thinking and problem solving; creativity and innovation; cooperation and self-directed learning; communication; and mathematical computation and ICT proficiency (National Curriculum Development Centre [NCDC], 2020). These skills are not taught as standalone subjects but are embedded across subject areas, with the expectation that teachers intentionally foster them through appropriate pedagogical strategies.

Despite the centrality of pedagogy in realising the goals of the CBC, empirical research on how teachers practically foster generic skills in classroom contexts remains limited, particularly within African education systems (Kusaka, 2020; Ngeno & Mwoma, 2021). Understanding teachers' pedagogical approaches is critical, as classroom practice ultimately determines whether curriculum reforms translate into meaningful learning outcomes. This study therefore examined the pedagogical strategies teachers employ to foster generic skills within Uganda's competence-based lower secondary curriculum. By foregrounding teachers' experiences and practices, the study contributes context-specific insights to the growing discourse on competence-based education and learner-centred pedagogy in sub-Saharan Africa.

➢ *Research Problem*

Uganda's competence-based curriculum places strong emphasis on the development of generic skills. Achieving these outcomes requires the adoption of learner-centred, interactive, and problem-based pedagogical approaches that actively engage learners in applying cognitive, social, and practical skills within authentic learning contexts (Evans, 2020). In principle, such pedagogies are intended to transform classrooms into spaces that support deep learning, collaboration, and real-world application of knowledge.

In practice, however, the implementation of these pedagogical approaches remains constrained by several systemic challenges. Teacher-centred instructional practices continue to dominate classroom instruction (Nantambi, 2022), compounded by limited instructional resources (Malunda & Atwebembeire, 2018), overcrowded classrooms (Salmon, 2023), and persistent examination-oriented teaching pressures (Atuhurra & Kaffenberger, 2022). Additionally, many pre-service and in-service teachers lack adequate preparation to effectively integrate generic skills development into classroom pedagogy within the CBC framework (Muhwezi, 2022). These conditions raise concerns about teachers' capacity to translate the intentions of the CBC into meaningful pedagogical practices.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26may1382

Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence on whether classroom pedagogical approaches under the CBC are genuinely fostering generic skills as intended. It remains unclear how pedagogical practices, teacher capacity, and contextual constraints shape learners' opportunities to engage in collaborative learning, problem-solving, and real-life application of knowledge. This disconnect between curriculum design and classroom enactment underscores the need for systematic inquiry into pedagogical approaches used in CBC classrooms. Addressing this gap is critical for understanding the extent to which current teaching practices align with the competence-based vision and for identifying pathways to strengthen the fostering of generic skills in Ugandan secondary schools.

- *Significance of the Study*

This study is significant as it contributes empirical, context-specific evidence on pedagogical approaches for fostering generic skills within Uganda's competence-based curriculum. By examining classroom practices and learners' experiences, the study enhances understanding of how generic skills are developed or constrained, through everyday teaching and learning processes.

The findings are valuable to the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), and Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) by providing insights that can inform curriculum implementation guidelines, teacher support strategies, and assessment reforms aligned with competence-based learning outcomes. The study also offers practical implications for Teacher Training Institutions, highlighting areas where pre-service and in-service teacher preparation can be strengthened to better support learner-centred and skills-oriented pedagogy.

Furthermore, the study provides evidence that can support civil society organisations and education development partners in designing targeted interventions aimed at improving classroom practice, resource provision, and learner support mechanisms. At a scholarly level, the study contributes to the limited body of African research on competence-based pedagogy and generic skills development, thereby enriching global discussions on curriculum reform and learner-centred education in low- and middle-income contexts.

Overall, the study offers actionable insights that can support more effective alignment between CBC policy intentions and classroom pedagogical realities, ultimately enhancing the quality and relevance of secondary education in Uganda.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored in Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory of Learning (1978), which conceptualises learning as an active, socially mediated process through which learners construct knowledge by interacting with others and with their learning environment (Bélanger, 2011; Brau, 2020). Social constructivism emphasises that meaningful learning occurs when learners engage collaboratively with content, peers, and teachers, thereby positioning learner-centred pedagogy as fundamental to effective teaching and learning (Rodriguez, 2012).

Within the context of Uganda's competence-based curriculum, social constructivism provides a relevant lens for understanding how generic skills are developed in classroom settings. Through structured interaction, dialogue, collaboration, and guided support from more knowledgeable others, learners are able to deepen conceptual understanding while simultaneously developing critical thinking, communication, cooperation, and problem-solving skills (Brandt, 2020). These processes align with the CBC's emphasis on active participation and skills integration across subject areas.

The study is further informed by Havelock's (1969) Social Interaction Model of Curriculum Innovation, which complements social constructivist principles by emphasising collaborative and dynamic learning environments as central to effective curriculum implementation. The model highlights the importance of negotiation within learning groups, peer assessment, reflective dialogue, and continuous feedback as mechanisms through which curriculum intentions are translated into classroom practice (Patel, 2013). This perspective is particularly useful for examining how teachers facilitate interaction and how learners participate in the co-construction of knowledge within competence-based classrooms.

Together, these theoretical perspectives provide a robust framework for analysing pedagogical approaches used to foster generic skills. They enable the study to examine how classroom interactions, teaching strategies, and learner participation collectively shape learning experiences, clarify the roles of teachers and learners, and support the development of generic skills envisioned by the competence-based curriculum.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The quality of teaching and learning, as well as learners' access to knowledge and professional learning conditions, is strongly influenced by the pedagogical approaches teachers employ in implementing curriculum policies (Roegiers, 2010). Within competence-based education systems, pedagogy plays a critical role in fostering generic skills by creating learning environments that promote active engagement, collaboration, reflection, and real-world application of knowledge. This section reviews empirical and theoretical literature on pedagogical approaches that support the development of generic skills among learners.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26may1382

Cooperative and group-based learning has been widely identified as an effective approach for fostering generic skills, particularly collaboration, communication, and independent learning. Studies suggest that intentional grouping of learners enhances peer interaction and promotes learning across diverse socio-economic contexts (Aliyu et al., 2023; Seherrie & Mawela, 2023). For example, Seherrie & Mawela's (2023) exploratory study involving secondary school teachers in South Africa found that group work encourages learner autonomy and collaborative problem-solving when groups are deliberately structured by the teacher. Such findings highlight the pedagogical value of cooperative learning in competence-based classrooms.

Role-play and dialogic teaching have also been shown to support the development of life skills and personal agency among learners. Evidence from Rwanda's 12+ program for adolescent girls demonstrated that role-play activities fostered confidence, assertiveness, and independent decision-making (D'Angelo et al., 2022). Similarly, Busaka et al. (2022) found that the use of role-play in Zambian mathematics classrooms enhanced learners' self-esteem, communication skills, and self-awareness. These studies illustrate how experiential pedagogies enable learners to actively engage with content and reflect on personal and social identities. However, much of the existing research is subject-specific, leaving limited understanding of how such approaches are applied across different disciplines.

Debates and structured discussions are another cooperative learning strategy linked to the development of higher-order thinking and communication skills. Scholars argue that debates promote creativity, cooperation, and respect for diverse perspectives while strengthening language and reasoning skills (D'Angelo et al., 2022; El-Koumy, 2019). El-Koumy (2019) specifically notes that debates enhance critical listening, reading, and writing skills, depending on the level of learner preparation and engagement. (Chan & Chen, 2022) further emphasise that debate-based pedagogy cultivates dispositions such as openness to alternative viewpoints and effective interpersonal interaction, aligning closely with the goals of competence-based education.

Inquiry-based learning emphasises investigation, exploration, and learner-driven discovery as pathways to deep learning. Research from Rwanda using the 5E instructional model (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate) demonstrated that inquiry-based approaches stimulated learner interest, engagement, and conceptual understanding in physics education (Nkurikiyimana et al., 2022). While these findings affirm the effectiveness of inquiry-based pedagogy, the literature largely focuses on science subjects, with limited exploration of its application in humanities and language education. This gap underscores the need for broader examination of inquiry-based practices across subject areas.

Problem-based and project-based learning approaches have also been associated with enhanced learner motivation, persistence, and problem-solving abilities. Saad (2021) found that problem-based learning increased learner motivation and reinforced the relevance of ICT in education, particularly for learners at risk of low achievement and school dropout. Similarly, Busaka et al. (2022) reported that project-based learning encouraged learner engagement, exploration, and solution-oriented thinking with minimal teacher guidance. Given that project-based learning is a mandatory pedagogical approach within Uganda's competence-based curriculum, understanding how it is implemented across different subjects is critical.

Technology-enhanced learning has emerged as an important pedagogical approach for fostering generic skills, particularly ICT proficiency, critical thinking, and real-world application of knowledge. Mugisha et al. (2021) demonstrated that the use of digital content and devices enabled lower secondary learners in Rwanda to apply classroom knowledge to personal, family, and community health contexts. However, such studies often assume the availability of ICT infrastructure and adequate digital competence among teachers and learners. This assumption may not hold in all contexts, particularly in low-resource settings such as Uganda, where access to technology varies significantly across schools.

In summary, the literature indicates that pedagogical approaches such as cooperative learning, role-play, debates, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, and technology-enhanced instruction are effective in fostering a range of generic skills, including collaboration, communication, critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and self-directed learning. Nevertheless, gaps remain regarding how contextual factors - such as class size, availability of resources, subject-specific demands, administrative support, school timetabling, and teachers' technological pedagogical content knowledge - influence the effective implementation of these approaches. Addressing these gaps is essential for understanding how competence-based pedagogy can be realistically enacted within Ugandan classrooms.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design and Philosophical Foundation

- *Philosophical Orientation*

The study was grounded in a constructivist philosophical orientation. Epistemologically, it assumes that knowledge about pedagogical practices and generic skills is socially constructed, with multiple realities shaped by teachers' experiences (Blaikie, 2007; Gergen & Gergen, 2007). The study valued both majority and minority teacher perspectives on how generic skills are fostered. Ontologically, the study aligned with the constructivist view that reality is multiple and context-dependent, influenced by teachers' social, cultural,

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26may1382

and institutional environments (Hammarberg et al., 2016; Rahman, 2016; Yin, 2011). The researcher played an interactive role in mediating meaning through engagement with teachers, acknowledging diverse classroom experiences in the Ugandan context.

➢ *Research Approach*

The study adopted a qualitative research approach. This approach was suitable for exploring the pedagogical strategies teachers employ to enhance generic skills. By focusing on teachers lived classroom experiences, the qualitative approach enabled an in-depth exploration of teaching practices, perceptions, and contextual realities as revealed through classroom observations and key informant interviews.

➢ *Research Design*

The study employed a case study research design. This design allowed for an in-depth, contextualized examination of pedagogical practices used by teachers to foster generic skills within real classroom settings under the competence-based curriculum. The case study design was appropriate because it facilitated a detailed understanding of the phenomenon as it occurred in practice, where the boundaries between pedagogical approaches and the classroom context are closely intertwined.

B. Ethical Considerations and Community Engagement

The researcher obtained ethical clearance from Uganda Christian University (REC) and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST). Participant anonymity and confidentiality were ensured through the use of pseudonyms, secure storage of data, and use of information solely for research purposes. The teachers assented on behalf of parents, to conduct interviews and lesson observations through verbal and written forms to allow for voluntary participation of learners in the study. Following ethical guidelines, participants could benefit from the study, as the findings may enhance the teaching of generic skills, while the entire data collection and analysis process adhered to UNCST regulations.

C. Participant Selection and Sampling Strategy

➢ *Sampling Strategy*

This study involved three purposively selected secondary school cases from Nawaningi and Bulamagi sub-counties in Iganga District, chosen based on school ownership (government/private), class size enrolment, and rural–urban location to capture contextual factors that may influence the fostering of generic skills beyond teacher-related factors. School P was a private, mixed day and boarding school with a religious affiliation and average academic performance, operating two streams per class with about 40 learners per stream. School Q was a government seed, mixed day school with no religious affiliation and relatively low academic performance, also with two streams per class but with large enrolments of approximately 90 learners per stream. School R was a government-aided, non-USE, single-sex boarding school with a religious affiliation and high academic performance, offering four streams per class with an average enrolment of 70 learners per stream.

The study purposively selected teachers of English, Mathematics, Pre-Vocational Studies, and Religious Education. English and Mathematics subjects were included due to their compulsory nature and higher timetable allocation in S.2 and S.3, allowing for more sustained interaction with learners. Teachers of Pre-Vocational Studies and Religious Education were also selected as they handle elective subjects that reflect learner choice and operate within shorter instructional periods. Preference was given to teachers with adequate curriculum experience, as they were considered more likely to provide rich insights into classroom practices for enhancing generic skills.

➢ *Sample Size*

In terms of sample size, the study targeted eight teachers per case - four from S.2 and four from S.3 - resulting in an expected total of 24 teachers across the three cases. This sample size was deemed sufficient to achieve data saturation. In addition, one Deputy Headteacher from each school was included as a key informant, bringing the total expected number of participants to 27.

A total of twenty participants from the three case study schools took part in in-depth and key informant interviews, comprising both classroom teachers and school administrators. The majority of participants were male, and most were below 40 years of age, indicating a relatively young teaching workforce. In terms of qualifications, most teachers held bachelor's degrees, with a few holding diplomas and only one participant possessing a master's degree. Teaching experience varied, though the majority had less than ten years of experience, alongside a smaller number of more experienced teachers. Participants occupied diverse roles, ranging from subject teachers to administrative positions such as deputy headteachers, heads of departments, and directors of studies, enabling the study to capture perspectives from both instructional and leadership levels within the schools.

D. Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

➢ *Data Collection Methods and Tools*

The study employed a combination of interactive and non-interactive qualitative data collection methods to explore teachers' perspectives, pedagogical strategies, and experiences in fostering generic skills within the competence-based curriculum. Document analysis, with the support of the analysis guide, was used to examine curriculum and instructional documents—such as lesson plans, schemes of work, syllabi, textbooks, and timetables—to understand teachers' planning practices, targeted generic skills, and proposed assessment approaches. Classroom observations

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26may1382

were conducted using a non-participant approach and observation protocol, with each teacher observed for one 80-minute lesson to capture actual teaching practices, learner engagement, classroom interactions, assessment strategies, use of instructional materials, and classroom challenges. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with teachers to generate rich, open-ended data on their planning, teaching, and assessment practices, while key informant interviews with deputy headteachers were used to triangulate and substantiate teachers' accounts. All interviews were audio-recorded and guided by structured protocols to ensure consistency and depth of data.

➢ *Data Collection Procedures*

Following approval of the study, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from Kyambogo University, which was used to inform the Chief Administrative Officer of Iganga District about the study. The officer then introduced the researcher to the school administrators of the three selected schools, who granted permission to access the teachers. Both teachers and deputy headteachers voluntarily provided signed consent before participation. Data collection with these participants included document analysis, classroom observations, and interviews, conducted after consent was obtained, ensuring voluntary and informed participation.

E. Data Quality Control

The study ensured credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative data through rigorous analysis. Credibility was achieved by engaging in peer debriefing with a knowledgeable colleague, allowing alternative interpretations and identification of potential biases. Additionally, member checking was conducted by sharing interview transcripts and classroom observation feedback with participants to confirm that the records accurately reflected their views. Observations were conducted over a month to allow careful evaluation of data at each stage.

Trustworthiness was maintained through thick, detailed descriptions that faithfully represented participants' perspectives, including contradictory viewpoints. Transcripts and observation records were read repeatedly, with sub-codes identified and manually cross-checked, while supervisors, peers, and an external auditor reviewed the coding for validation. Audio recordings and classroom video clips were also revisited to verify observations and support accurate interpretation of teaching practices.

F. Data analysis

Qualitative data from in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and document reviews were systematically analyzed following established qualitative procedures. All interviews and discussions were transcribed verbatim to preserve participants' original meanings, then imported into Atlas.ti for management and analysis. Coding segmented data into meaningful units based on literature, emerging patterns, and researcher insights, guided by a codebook to ensure consistency and rigor. Related codes were then grouped into categories, from which themes were generated, reflecting both anticipated patterns and conceptually significant unexpected findings. Finally, these themes were examined holistically to provide a coherent account of participants lived experiences in relation to the research questions.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study revealed that teachers employ a range of learner-centred, interactive, and inquiry-based pedagogical strategies to cultivate generic skills - such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, creativity, and leadership - among learners. Data from lesson observations, interviews, and document analysis highlighted four overarching approaches: constructivism, collaborative learning, inquiry-based learning, and integrative learning, with sub-strategies implemented through practical demonstrations, ICT integration, projects, role play, and extracurricular activities.

Constructivist approaches were widely used, with teachers facilitating guided discovery, practical demonstrations, incidental learning, and careful observation. Guided discovery was central, combining teacher scaffolding, discussions, and group activities to promote critical thinking and teamwork. As one English teacher explained, "*I use the guided discovery methodology because it helps my learners to stretch their understanding of a certain concept"* [Female, School Q]. Practical demonstrations allowed learners to build mental models from real-life experiences, such as "*Some skills… learners were not knowing anything about farming and then how to establish a nursery bed came in*" [Male, Agriculture, School P], highlighting the relevance of hands-on activities. Incidental learning occurred through modeling behaviours and leveraging the school environment to reinforce values, e.g., "*If we write these things around…learners were understanding them because they were looking at them as they are moving*" [Male, English, School Q]. Observation served as both assessment and reinforcement, allowing teachers to monitor responsibility, teamwork, and communication in authentic contexts.

Collaborative learning strategies included peer-to-peer learning, group discussions, debates, and participation in clubs and societies. Peer interactions were essential for knowledge construction and confidence-building: "*Discussions amongst friends can help even those learners who don't have any ideas in the lesson*" [Female, Mathematics, School Q]. Group discussions enabled shy learners to engage, develop leadership skills, and practice communication. During a classroom observation of an English language lesson at case R, the teacher was seen to have engaged learners in collaborative tasks prior to the lesson and encouraged presentations of the activity products and peer feedback. The learning outcome involved designing a poster. The output of group activity

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26may1382

showed acquisition of intended and unintended competences as in Figure 1.

Fig 1 Sample Posters Designed by S.3 Learners in an English Language Lesson

Extracurricular clubs—debate, drama, and writing—enhanced higher-order thinking, creativity, and persuasive communication. For instance, a debate on business structures encouraged learners to articulate arguments and reasoning skills: "*It was about different forms of business…learners poured out the information*" [Female, Entrepreneurship, School R].

Inquiry-based learning emphasized research, excursions, Socratic questioning, and role play. Teachers encouraged hands-on research projects, such as community surveys or building dustbins, which promoted critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and real-world application. A teacher observed, "*They go and consult as a team so that they can consult, relate and come up with various approaches…most of these skills have been acquired*" [Male, Mathematics, School P]. Excursions and charity visit bridged classroom learning with authentic experiences, enhancing observation, reflection, and social responsibility. Question-and-answer methods, including scenario-based questioning, stimulated critical analysis and independent thinking, while role play encouraged learners to adopt perspectives, engage socially, and transfer experiences from extracurricular contexts: "*We do role play to make the class at least active…they transfer experiences from MDD, scouting, etc., to such lessons*" [Female, English, School R].

Integrative learning involved project-based learning (PBL), ICT integration, and drama to foster multi-disciplinary and real-world competencies. PBL enabled learners to tackle authentic tasks, such as creating school calendars, managing gardens, or crafting objects, thereby developing planning, collaboration, problem-solving, and leadership skills. Challenges included motivational gaps and thematic constraints: "*Some relax and say others will do it for us. This requires them to have a group leader for steering*" [Female, Entrepreneurship, School R]. ICT integration connected classroom content with real-world contexts, leveraging multimedia, online resources, and tools like spreadsheets to foster digital literacy, analytical thinking, and collaboration. Teachers emphasized active engagement alongside technology: "*ICT alone is still not enough…they can really discover the ideas themselves*" [Male, English, School P]. Drama and storytelling were used as immersive methods to enhance creativity, critical thinking, and expressive communication, despite practical constraints such as time and space.

Overall, the findings underscore that intentional, learner-centred, and inquiry-driven pedagogical strategies—combined with collaborative and integrative approaches—effectively cultivate generic skills. Teachers create engaging, real-world relevant environments, scaffold learning, integrate technology, and foster peer and community interactions to prepare learners for complex, authentic challenges beyond the classroom.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that teachers deliberately employ a blend of constructivist, collaborative, inquiry-based, and integrative pedagogical strategies to foster learners' generic skills. Constructivist approaches, including guided discovery, practical demonstrations, observation, and incidental learning, enable learners to actively engage, connect theory with practice, and develop critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and teamwork skills. Collaborative and peer-centered strategies - such as group discussions, peer learning, debates, and participation in clubs - create social learning environments that strengthen communication, collaboration, leadership, and socio-emotional competencies.

Inquiry-based and experiential strategies, including research projects, Socratic questioning, role play, excursions, project-based learning, ICT integration, and drama, further deepen skill development by encouraging learners to explore real-world problems, apply knowledge authentically, and engage creatively. These methods enhance critical thinking, creativity, digital literacy, collaboration, and learner agency.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26may1382

Overall, the findings highlight that holistic, learner-centered, and contextually responsive teaching practices are essential for cultivating transferable skills that prepare learners for academic success, professional readiness, and active societal participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES):*

The Ministry should support teacher professional development and school policies that promote constructivist, collaborative, inquiry-based, and integrative pedagogies, ensuring flexible timetables and gender-sensitive learning.

- *National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC):*

The NCDC should embed generic skills and real-world problem-solving activities across curricula and textbooks, while providing guidance for learner-centred, differentiated, and ICT-integrated teaching.

- *Schools and School Leaders:*

School leaders should create inclusive cultures that encourage collaborative learning, experimentation, inquiry-based approaches, and access to ICT and other learning resources.

- *Teachers:*

Teachers should adopt learner-centred and experiential pedagogies, integrating guided discovery, project-based learning, inquiry, ICT, and feedback methods to develop generic skills.

- *Development Partners and NGOs:*

Development partners and NGOs should support teacher capacity-building, access to digital and experiential learning tools, and school-community partnerships to strengthen pedagogy.

- *National Assessment Body (UNEB):*

Examination bodies should design assessments that prioritize critical thinking, creativity, research, and real-world

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author acknowledges the Department of Curriculum, Pedagogy and Educational Media at Kyambogo University for their mentorship and support throughout my PhD journey. I am grateful to the management of the Luigi Giussani Foundation for their continuous guidance. My sincere appreciation goes to the headteachers who generously allowed me to engage with their teachers and learners, and to the students who participated in the study. Your openness and contributions were invaluable to the success of this research.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Emmanuel Adengo is a PhD candidate in Curriculum Studies at Kyambogo University. He holds a Master's Degree in Science Education, a Bachelor of Education (Science), and a Diploma in Secondary Science Education. He has extensive teaching experience across various levels and is deeply committed to effective curriculum implementation. Adengo serves as Program Manager at the Luigi Giussani Foundation, where he leads a dynamic team that trains and coaches secondary school teachers and administrators to strengthen critical thinking in classroom practice. He has also supported school leaders in fostering intentional, purposeful, and reflective leadership for positive school culture.

Stephen Ndawula is a Senior Lecturer in Educational Technology in the Department of Curriculum, Pedagogy & Educational Media at Kyambogo University, Kampala, Uganda. His academic work focuses on the integration of technology in teaching and learning, curriculum development, and innovative pedagogical practices. He is actively involved in teacher education and research on improving instructional approaches to enhance learning outcomes.

Bashir Kishabale is a Lecturer of Instructional Technology and Computer Education at Kyambogo University, Kampala, Uganda. His professional interests include the use of digital technologies in education, computer-based instruction, and the development of effective teaching strategies for 21st-century learning. He contributes to teacher training and research aimed at strengthening the role of technology in education.

REFERENCES

[1]. Aliyu, J., Osman, S., Kumar, J. A., & Mohd Jamil, M. R. (2023). The design and development of a learning strategy to enhance students' engagement in simultaneous equations: An evaluation viewpoint. Journal of Technology and Science Education, 13(1), 36. https://doi.org/10.3926/jotse.1691

[2]. Atuhurra, J., & Kaffenberger, M. (2022). Measuring education system coherence: Alignment of curriculum standards, examinations, and teacher instruction in Tanzania and Uganda. International Journal of Educational Development, 92, 102598. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2022.102598

[3]. Bélanger, P. (2011). Learning Theories: Discussion. In Theories in Adult Learning and Education (1st ed., pp. 49–52). Verlag Barbara Budrich. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/j.ctvbkjx77

[4]. Blaikie, N. (2007). Approaches to social enquiry: Advancing knowledge (2nd edition). Polity.

[5]. Brandt, W. C. (2020). Measuring Student Success Skills: A Review of the Literature on Self-Directed Learning. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED607782.pdf

[6]. Brau, B. (2020). Constructivism. In The Students' Guide to Learning Design and Research. EdTech Books. https://edtechbooks.org/studentguide/constructivism

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26may1382

[7]. Busaka, C., Umugiraneza, O., & Kitta, S. R. (2022). Mathematics teachers' conceptual understanding of soft skills in secondary schools in Zambia. Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education, 18(7), em2128. https://doi.org/10.29333/ejmste/12160

[8]. Chan, C. K. Y., & Chen, S. W. (2022). Students' perceptions on the recognition of holistic competency achievement: A systematic mixed studies review. Educational Research Review, 35, 100431. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2021.100431

[9]. Clokie, T. L., & Fourie, E. (2016). Graduate Employability and Communication Competence: Are Undergraduates Taught Relevant Skills? Business and Professional Communication Quarterly, 79(4), 442–463. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329490616657635

[10]. Closs, L., Mahat, M., & Imms, W. (2022). Learning environments' influence on students' learning experience in an Australian Faculty of Business and Economics. Learning Environments Research, 25, 271–285.

[11]. Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (4th ed). SAGE Publications.

[12]. D'Angelo, S., Marcus, R., & Ngabonzima, E. (2022). Teaching and learning for life skills development: Insights from Rwanda's 12+ programme for adolescent girls: Development Policy Review, 40(2), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12622

[13]. El-Koumy, A. S. A. (2019). A Multifaceted Framework for EFL Curriculum Development to Prepare Students for Building a 21st Century Egypt. Modern Academy for University Books.

[14]. Evans, C. (2020). Measuring student success skills: A review of the literature on collaboration. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED607774.pdf

[15]. Gentles, S., Charles, C., Ploeg, J., & McKibbon, K. A. (2015). Sampling in Qualitative Research: Insights from an Overview of the Methods Literature. The Qualitative Report, 20(11), 1772–1789. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2015.2373

[16]. Gergen, M. M., & Gergen, K. J. (Eds.). (2007). Social construction: A reader (Reprinted). Sage.

[17]. Gleeson, J., Klenowski, V., & Looney, A. (2020). Curriculum change in Australia and Ireland: A comparative study of recent reforms. Journal of Curriculum Studies, 52(4), 478–497. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2019.1704064

[18]. Hammarberg, K., Kirkman, M., & De Lacey, S. (2016). Qualitative research methods: When to use them and how to judge them. Human Reproduction, 31(3), 498–501. https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/dev334

[19]. Kanyonga, L., Mtana, N., & Wendt, H. (2019). Implementation of Competence-Based Curriculum in Technical Colleges: The Case of Arusha City, Tanzania. International Journal of Vocational and Technical Education, 11(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.5897/IJVTE2018.0262

[20]. Kusaka, S. (2020). The Role of Curriculum Studies in the Spread of Competency-Based Educational Reforms in African Countries. Africa Educational Research Journal, 11, 26–35.

[21]. Labani, K., Noah, M., & Heike, W. (2019). Implementation of Competence-Based Curriculum in Technical Colleges: The case of Arusha City, Tanzania. International Journal of Vocational and Technical Education, 11(1), 1–21.

[22]. Malunda, P. N., & Atwebembeire, J. (2018). Instructional Resources and Teacher Effectiveness in Government-Aided Secondary Schools in Uganda. 356–371. https://doi.org/10.26803/MyRes.2018.26

[23]. Malunda, P. N., & Atwebembeire, J. (2021). Introduction to Research Methodology for Graduate Students (1st ed.). Fountain Publishers.

[24]. McGunagle, D., & Zizka, L. (2020). Employability skills for 21st-century STEM students: The employers' perspective. Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning, 10(3), 591–606. https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-10-2019-0148

[25]. Mishra, L. (2016). Focus Group Discussion in Qualitative Research. TechnoLearn: An International Journal of Educational Technology, 6(1), 1. https://doi.org/10.5958/2249-5223.2016.00001.2

[26]. Mugisha, M., Uwitonze, A. M., Chesire, F., Senyonga, R., Oxman, M., Nsangi, A., Semakula, D., Kaseje, M., Lewin, S., Sewankambo, N., Nyirazinyoye, L., Oxman, A. D., & Rosenbaum, S. (2021). Teaching critical thinking about health using digital technology in lower secondary schools in Rwanda: A qualitative context analysis. PLOS ONE, 16(3), e0248773. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0248773

[27]. Muhwezi, I. (2022). Teachers' Preparedness for the Implementation of the New Business Subjects' Curriculum in Selected Secondary Schools of Kabale District, Uganda [Master's Thesis, Moi University]. https://www.digiface.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Innocent-Thesis.20.09.2021_Final.pdf

[28]. Nantambi, A. (2022, April 22). Teachers Timid to Implement New Curriculum-Report. The New Vision, p.5.

[29]. National Curriculum Development Centre [NCDC]. (2019). Lower Secondary Curriculum: Curriculum Framework. https://www.ncdc.go.ug/images/DOCS/resources/Curriculum_Framework.pdf

[30]. National Curriculum Development Centre [NCDC]. (2020, January). Guidelines to Schools on Implementation of the New Lower Secondary School Curriculum [Amended Circular]. https://www.ncdc.go.ug/sites/default/files/Amended.pdf

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26may1382

[31]. Ngeno, B., & Mwoma, D. T. (2021). Teachers' Attitude Towards the Implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum in Primary Schools in Kericho County. 3(1), 13.

[32]. Nkurikiyimana, J. D. D., Uwamahoro, J., & Ndihokubwayo, K. (2022). Teaching and learning mechanics explored through the use of the 5E's Educational Model. Problems of Education in the 21st Century, 80(1), 179–194. https://doi.org/10.33225/pec/22.80.179

[33]. Nyaboke, R., Kereri, D., & Nyabwari, L. K. (2021). Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Kenya and the Challenge of Vision 2030. International Journal of Education, Technology and Science, 1(4), 155–169.

[34]. Patel, B. (2013). Social Interaction Model. International Journal for Research in Education, 2(5), 30–32.

[35]. Paulo, A., & Tilya, F. (2014). The 2005 Secondary School Curriculum Reforms in Tanzania: Disjunction between Policy and Practice in its Implementation. Journal of Education and Practice, 5(35), 114–123.

[36]. Priya, A. (2014). Revisiting Case Study Method of Social Research Examining Its Cardinal Attributes and Its Potential for Generating Authoritative Knowledge. IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 19(11), 40–44. https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-191174044

[37]. Rahman, M. S. (2016). The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches and Methods in Language "Testing and Assessment" Research: A Literature Review. Journal of Education and Learning, 6(1), 102. https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v6n1p102

[38]. Rodriguez, V. (2012). The Teaching Brain and the End of the Empty Vessel: The Teaching Brain. Mind, Brain, and Education, 6(4), 177–185. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-228X.2012.01155.x

[39]. Roegiers, X. (2010). Pedagogy of Integration: Education and Training Systems at the heart of our Societies (1st ed.). De Boeck Group.

[40]. Saad, A. F. (2021). An exploratory study regarding the use of blogs in a project management approach in teaching and learning for the case of "students at risk" [Doctoral Thesis, University of Petrosani]. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED621778

[41]. Salmon, J. (2023, January 23). Improving Uganda's Secondary School Curriculum. The Daily Monitor.

[42]. Seherrie, A. C., & Mawela, A. S. (2023). The use of a cooperative approach to enhance learner performance in life orientation. South African Journal of Education, 43(2), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v43n2a2183

[43]. Singer, F. M., Samihaian, F., Holbrook, J., & Crisan, A. (2014). Developing a Competence-based Curriculum for the 21st Century: The Case of Kuwait. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 128, 475–481. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.03.191

[44]. Soare, E. (2015). Perspectives on Designing the Competence Based Curriculum. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 180, 972–977. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.02.259

[45]. Yin, R. K. (2011). Qualitative research from start to finish. Guilford Press.