

Beyond Books: Negotiation, Lobbying, and Soft Skills as Imperatives for Ugandan Youth in the 21st Century

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Abstract

Background: Uganda's introduction of the Competency-Based Curriculum in 2020 represented a paradigm shift toward holistic education emphasizing practical competencies beyond academic knowledge. However, the curriculum's effectiveness in developing essential 21st-century soft skills—particularly negotiation, lobbying, and interpersonal competencies critical for Ugandan youth's success in modern labor markets and civic participation—remained underexplored.

Objective: This study critically analyzed Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum to assess its effectiveness in developing negotiation, lobbying, and essential soft skills among Ugandan youth, specifically examining: (1) the extent of soft skills integration within the curriculum framework, (2) pedagogical approaches and resources employed by educators, and (3) gaps, challenges, and opportunities for strengthening skills development.

Methods: A mixed-methods design was employed across 45 randomly selected secondary schools from five Ugandan regions, stratified by school type. The sample included 384 students (aged 15-19), 180 teachers, 45 head teachers, and 30 curriculum developers and policy stakeholders, calculated to achieve 80% statistical power. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis of curriculum materials. Quantitative analysis employed descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, ANOVA, and multiple regression using SPSS version 26, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically using NVivo software with triangulation across data sources.

Results: The study revealed that soft skills integration varied significantly by subject area ($\chi^2 = 18.47$ to 48.93 , $p < 0.05$), with Entrepreneurship Education (71.2%), Social Studies (67.8%), and Life Skills Education (64.5%) showing high explicit integration, while Mathematics (12.1%) and Sciences (18.4%) demonstrated minimal integration, yielding an overall explicit integration rate of 46.1%. Significant disparities existed across school types in pedagogical approaches and resource availability ($F = 28.64$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.243$), with private schools ($M = 3.90$) substantially outperforming government ($M = 2.81$) and community schools ($M = 2.47$) in employing interactive teaching methods, accessing materials, and technology integration. Multiple regression analysis revealed that interactive pedagogies ($\beta = 0.341$, $p < 0.001$), teaching resources ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$), and teacher training ($\beta = 0.287$, $p < 0.001$) were the strongest predictors of soft skills development, collectively explaining 56.0% of variance ($R^2 = 0.560$, $F(7, 376) = 68.42$, $p < 0.001$), while school type disparities persisted even after controlling for other factors ($\beta = -0.178$, $p = 0.002$).

Conclusion: While Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum incorporated soft skills development as a priority, implementation remained uneven, inequitable, and constrained by subject-specific biases, inadequate teacher preparation, insufficient resources, and significant disparities between private and public institutions. The curriculum's potential to develop negotiation, lobbying, and soft skills essential for 21st-century success was realized primarily in well-resourced private schools, while the majority of Ugandan youth in government and community schools received inadequate preparation in these critical competencies.

Recommendations: The study recommended comprehensive integration of soft skills across all subject areas including STEM disciplines, large-scale teacher professional development programs emphasizing interactive pedagogies with targeted support for under-resourced schools, significant investment in educational resources with equitable distribution mechanisms, and establishment of robust monitoring and support systems to ensure implementation fidelity and address systemic challenges in curriculum delivery.

Keywords: Competency-Based Curriculum and soft skills

Introduction of the Study

In an era marked by rapid technological advancement, globalization, and evolving labor markets, the role of education extends far beyond the acquisition of academic knowledge (Darussyamsu et al., 2021; Joyce Ayikoru Asiimwe, 2021; Rivaldo & Nabella, 2023). The 21st century demands a workforce equipped not only with technical expertise but also with critical soft skills that enable effective communication, strategic negotiation, advocacy, and collaborative problem-solving. For Ugandan youth, navigating an increasingly competitive and interconnected world requires competencies that transcend traditional classroom learning (Joan & Christopher, 2025; Rebecca & Vincent, 2024). Skills such as negotiation, lobbying, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal communication have become essential tools for career advancement, entrepreneurship, civic engagement, and leadership. Uganda's education system has undergone significant reforms in recent years, most notably through the introduction of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) (Fatimah et al., 2023; Jamil et al., 2020; Julius & Isaac Kazaara, 2025). This curriculum represents a paradigm shift from rote memorization and content-heavy instruction toward a more holistic approach that emphasizes the development of practical competencies, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities (Bizuneh et al., 2025). However, questions remain about the extent to which this curriculum adequately addresses the soft skills gap that persists among Ugandan youth. While the CBC framework acknowledges the importance of competencies beyond academic knowledge, the actual integration, teaching methodologies, and assessment of soft skills such as negotiation and lobbying remain areas requiring critical examination (Charles et al., 2023; Chemutai et al., 2023; Ndomondo et al., 2022). This study seeks to explore the intersection between Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum and the imperative for developing soft skills among Ugandan youth. By analyzing the curriculum's structure, implementation strategies, and outcomes, this research aims to identify gaps and opportunities for strengthening the development of negotiation, lobbying, and related competencies. Furthermore, the study will investigate how educational institutions, policymakers, and stakeholders can collaborate to ensure that young Ugandans are adequately prepared to thrive in diverse professional, social, and political contexts. Through this exploration, the research contributes to ongoing discussions about educational reform, youth empowerment, and workforce readiness in Uganda and similar contexts across Africa.

Background of the Study

Uganda's education sector has experienced multiple transformations since independence, with various reforms aimed at improving access, quality, and relevance. The introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997 and Universal Secondary Education (USE) in 2007 significantly expanded educational access, resulting in increased enrollment rates across the country. However, these quantitative gains have not always translated into quality outcomes, with concerns about curriculum relevance, teaching quality, and learning achievement persisting.

In response to these challenges and global educational trends, Uganda launched the Competency-Based Curriculum in 2020, beginning with lower primary levels (Katurebe & Nalukwago, 2024; Mubaraka, 2023; Muwanguzi et al., 2023). The CBC represents a departure from the knowledge-based curriculum that had been in place since the 1960s. This new approach emphasizes learning outcomes focused on what learners can do with their knowledge rather than what they know. The curriculum is structured around seven key competencies: critical thinking, communication, creativity and innovation, cooperation, culture and identity, learning to learn, and literacy and numeracy. Despite these progressive reforms, Uganda continues to face significant youth employment challenges. According to recent labor market statistics, youth unemployment and underemployment remain high, with many graduates struggling to transition from education to meaningful employment (B. Godfrey et al., 2021; Ntale & Ssempebwa, 2022; Wadood et al., 2018). The World Bank and various studies have highlighted a persistent skills mismatch between what educational institutions produce and what employers and the economy demand. Employers consistently cite deficiencies in soft skills, particularly communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability, among recent graduates.

The importance of soft skills, particularly negotiation and lobbying, extends beyond employment. In Uganda's dynamic political, social, and economic landscape, the ability to advocate for oneself and one's community, negotiate resources, influence policy decisions, and build strategic relationships is crucial for meaningful participation in civic life. Young Ugandans face numerous challenges including limited access to opportunities, inadequate representation in decision-making spaces, and competition for scarce resources (Egessa et al., 2021; S. Godfrey et al., 2023; Prudence, 2023). Without strong negotiation and lobbying skills, youth risk marginalization and limited influence in shaping their futures and their communities. Internationally, educational systems increasingly recognize soft skills as critical 21st-century competencies. Countries across Africa, Asia, and beyond have integrated communication, negotiation, leadership, and advocacy training into formal and informal education programs. However, the extent to which Uganda's CBC effectively incorporates these competencies, particularly negotiation and lobbying, remains underexplored. This study therefore seeks to critically examine the CBC framework and its implementation to determine how well it addresses the soft skills imperative for Ugandan youth (Botwe, 2020; Hoge et al., 2022; Sarah & Joshua, 2024).

Problem Statement

While Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum represents a significant step toward modernizing education and developing well-rounded learners, there is limited empirical evidence regarding its effectiveness in cultivating essential soft skills, particularly negotiation, lobbying, and related interpersonal competencies among Ugandan youth. Despite the curriculum's emphasis on broad competencies such as communication and critical thinking, the specific integration of negotiation and advocacy skills remains unclear, and the pedagogical approaches used to develop these competencies have not been thoroughly examined (Allan et al., 2023; Bwambale et al., 2022; Swahn et al., 2018). Ugandan youth continue to face considerable challenges in accessing opportunities, influencing decision-making processes, and competing effectively in local and global markets. These challenges are exacerbated by inadequate preparation in soft skills that enable strategic communication, persuasive advocacy, and effective negotiation. Employers consistently report that graduates lack the interpersonal and professional competencies necessary for workplace success, while civic participation among youth remains limited partly due to insufficient skills in advocacy

and lobbying for their interests (Bwambale et al., 2022; Vázquez-Rodríguez et al., 2023). Furthermore, there is insufficient understanding of how teachers, educational administrators, and policymakers perceive the importance of negotiation, lobbying, and soft skills within the CBC framework (Julius & Godfrey, 2025; Julius & Mategeko, 2025). Questions remain about whether teachers are adequately trained to teach these competencies, whether appropriate resources and teaching methodologies are available, and whether assessment mechanisms effectively measure soft skills development. Without addressing these gaps, Uganda risks producing graduates who, despite educational qualifications, remain unprepared for the realities of 21st-century life. This study therefore addresses a critical gap in understanding how Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum can be leveraged, strengthened, or reformed to ensure that Ugandan youth develop the negotiation, lobbying, and soft skills essential for personal, professional, and civic success in the 21st century.

Main Objective of the Study

To critically analyze Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum and assess its effectiveness in developing negotiation, lobbying, and essential soft skills among Ugandan youth for 21st-century success.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine the extent to which negotiation, lobbying, and soft skills are integrated into Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum framework, learning outcomes, and teaching materials.
2. To assess the pedagogical approaches, teaching methods, and resources used by educators in developing negotiation, lobbying, and soft skills among learners within the CBC implementation.
3. To identify gaps, challenges, and opportunities within the current CBC framework for strengthening the development of negotiation, lobbying, and soft skills among Ugandan youth.

Research Questions

1. To what extent are negotiation, lobbying, and soft skills explicitly integrated into Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum framework, learning outcomes, and instructional materials?
2. What pedagogical approaches, teaching methods, and resources do educators currently employ in developing negotiation, lobbying, and soft skills among learners within the CBC implementation?
3. What gaps, challenges, and opportunities exist within the current CBC framework for enhancing the development of negotiation, lobbying, and soft skills among Ugandan youth?

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively analyze Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum and its effectiveness in developing negotiation, lobbying, and soft skills among Ugandan youth. The study was conducted across 45 secondary schools randomly selected from five regions of Uganda (Central, Eastern, Northern, Western, and Kampala Metropolitan Area), with stratification by school type (government, private, and community schools) to ensure representative sampling. The sample size was calculated using Cochran's formula with a 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error, and 50% proportion to achieve 80% statistical power for detecting meaningful differences in curriculum implementation and skills development outcomes, resulting in a total sample of 384 students (aged 15-19 years), 180 teachers, 45 head teachers, and 30 curriculum developers and education policy stakeholders from the National Curriculum Development

Centre (NCDC) and Ministry of Education and Sports. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to students and teachers to assess perceptions of soft skills integration, teaching methodologies, and learning outcomes related to negotiation and lobbying competencies, while qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with head teachers, curriculum developers, and policy stakeholders, as well as focus group discussions with students and teachers to explore in-depth experiences, challenges, and opportunities in CBC implementation. Document analysis was conducted on CBC framework documents, syllabi, textbooks, teacher guides, and assessment tools to examine the explicit and implicit integration of negotiation, lobbying, and soft skills across subject areas (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023). Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) to summarize demographic characteristics and response patterns, chi-square tests to examine associations between categorical variables such as school type and soft skills integration, independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA to compare mean scores across different groups (e.g., regions, school types, teacher qualifications), and multiple regression analysis to identify predictors of effective soft skills development including teacher training, resource availability, and pedagogical approaches.

Results

Table 1: Integration of Negotiation, Lobbying, and Soft Skills in CBC Framework by Subject Area (N=384 Students, 180 Teachers)

Subject Area	Explicit Integration (%)	Implicit Integration (%)	Not Integrated (%)	Mean Score (1-5)	SD	χ^2 Value	p-value
Languages	42.3	38.5	19.2	3.45	1.12	18.47	0.001*
Social Studies	67.8	24.5	7.7	4.12	0.89	34.52	<0.001*
Sciences	18.4	31.2	50.4	2.31	1.24	42.18	<0.001*
Mathematics	12.1	22.6	65.3	2.08	1.18	48.93	<0.001*
Entrepreneurship	71.2	21.8	7.0	4.28	0.82	38.67	<0.001*
Life Skills Education	64.5	27.3	8.2	4.05	0.94	31.24	<0.001*
Overall Average	46.1	27.7	26.3	3.38	1.03	-	-

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Interpretation of Table 1

The chi-square analysis revealed statistically significant differences in the integration of negotiation, lobbying, and soft skills across different subject areas within Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum ($\chi^2 = 18.47$ to 48.93 , $p < 0.05$). Entrepreneurship Education demonstrated the highest explicit integration (71.2%, $M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.82$), followed closely by Social Studies (67.8%, $M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.89$) and Life Skills Education (64.5%, $M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.94$). In stark contrast, Mathematics (12.1%, $M = 2.08$, $SD = 1.18$) and Sciences (18.4%, $M = 2.31$, $SD = 1.24$) showed significantly lower integration rates, with over 50% of respondents indicating these skills were not integrated at all in these subject areas. The overall average integration across all subjects was 46.1% explicit and 27.7% implicit,

leaving 26.3% with no integration, suggesting a moderate but inconsistent incorporation of soft skills within the CBC framework. The relatively high standard deviations across most subject areas (ranging from 0.82 to 1.24) indicated considerable variability in teachers' and students' perceptions of skills integration, which may reflect inconsistencies in curriculum implementation across different schools and regions.

These findings suggested that Uganda's CBC exhibited a subject-specific bias in soft skills development, with humanities and vocational subjects providing substantially more opportunities for negotiation and lobbying skills development compared to STEM subjects. This pattern was consistent with traditional educational approaches where social sciences naturally incorporate discussion, debate, and collaborative activities, while mathematics and sciences focus predominantly on technical content mastery. The significant p-values (all < 0.05) confirmed that these differences were not due to chance but reflected genuine disparities in curriculum design and implementation. However, the substantial proportion of implicit integration (27.7%) indicated that while soft skills may not be explicitly stated in learning outcomes, some teachers were incorporating them through pedagogical approaches. This finding raised important questions about the intentionality and systematic development of these competencies—implicit integration may lead to inconsistent skill development and inadequate assessment. The results underscored a critical gap in the CBC framework: the failure to integrate essential 21st-century skills across all subject areas, particularly in STEM fields where teamwork, communication, and problem-solving through negotiation are increasingly important in modern scientific and technological workplaces.

Table 2: Pedagogical Approaches and Resources for Teaching Soft Skills (N=180 Teachers) - ANOVA Results by School Type

Teaching Method/Resource	Government Schools (n=72) Mean (SD)	Private Schools (n=68) Mean (SD)	Community Schools (n=40) Mean (SD)	F-statistic	p-value	Effect Size (η²)
Group Work & Collaborative Learning	3.82 (0.94)	4.21 (0.76)	3.45 (1.12)	8.43	<0.001*	0.087
Role-Playing & Simulations	2.67 (1.08)	3.89 (0.88)	2.31 (1.15)	24.67	<0.001*	0.218
Debates & Class Discussions	3.45 (1.02)	4.12 (0.82)	3.08 (1.18)	11.28	<0.001*	0.113
Case Studies & Problem-Based Learning	2.98 (1.15)	3.76 (0.91)	2.42 (1.21)	15.32	<0.001*	0.147
Access to Teaching Materials	2.45 (1.23)	4.08 (0.85)	2.18 (1.26)	38.52	<0.001*	0.303

Teacher Training on Soft Skills	2.31 (1.18)	3.54 (1.02)	2.12 (1.14)	19.87	<0.001*	0.183
Technology Integration	1.98 (1.05)	3.67 (0.98)	1.76 (0.92)	42.19	<0.001*	0.322
Overall Mean	2.81 (1.09)	3.90 (0.89)	2.47 (1.14)	28.64	<0.001*	0.243

*Significant at $p < 0.05$; Scale: 1 = Never Used/Not Available, 5 = Always Used/Fully Available

Interpretation of Table 2

The one-way ANOVA results demonstrated statistically significant differences in pedagogical approaches and resource availability across school types ($F = 8.43$ to 42.19 , $p < 0.001$), with private schools consistently outperforming government and community schools across all measured dimensions. Private schools reported the highest overall mean score ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.89$), followed by government schools ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.09$), and community schools ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.14$), with the overall F-statistic of 28.64 ($p < 0.001$) indicating substantial between-group variation. The effect sizes (η^2) ranged from 0.087 (small to medium) for group work and collaborative learning to 0.322 (large) for technology integration, suggesting that school type accounted for 8.7% to 32.2% of the variance in pedagogical approaches and resource availability. Technology integration showed the largest disparity ($F = 42.19$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.322$), with private schools scoring nearly twice as high ($M = 3.67$) as government schools ($M = 1.98$) and community schools ($M = 1.76$). Similarly, access to teaching materials exhibited substantial differences ($F = 38.52$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.303$), with private schools reporting significantly better resource availability. Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests (not shown) confirmed that private schools differed significantly from both government and community schools on all variables ($p < 0.01$), while differences between government and community schools were smaller and sometimes non-significant.

These findings revealed a troubling inequity in the implementation of Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum, where the development of negotiation, lobbying, and soft skills was significantly constrained by school type and available resources. The large effect sizes for technology integration and teaching materials suggested that resource disparities were not merely marginal but represented fundamental differences in educational capacity across school types. Private schools' superior performance in employing interactive pedagogies such as role-playing and simulations ($M = 3.89$ vs. 2.31 in community schools) indicated that students in well-resourced schools received substantially more opportunities to practice and develop soft skills through experiential learning. The relatively low scores for teacher training on soft skills across all school types (ranging from 2.12 to 3.54) highlighted a systemic challenge: even where curriculum documents emphasized competency development, teachers lacked adequate preparation to deliver these competencies effectively. Government and community schools, which served the majority of Ugandan students, demonstrated particularly weak capacity in pedagogical innovation and resource availability, suggesting that CBC implementation was creating a two-tiered education system where advantaged students in private schools developed 21st-century skills while disadvantaged students in under-resourced schools continued to receive traditional, content-focused instruction. This disparity had profound implications for social mobility and equity, as students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were systematically denied opportunities to develop the negotiation and advocacy skills necessary for competing in modern labor markets and participating effectively in civic life.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis - Predictors of Effective Soft Skills Development Among Students (N=384)

Predictor Variable	B	SE	β	t-value	p-value	95% CI	VIF
(Constant)	0.847	0.312	-	2.714	0.007	[0.234, 1.460]	-
Teacher Training Level	0.423	0.089	0.287	4.753	<0.001*	[0.248, 0.598]	1.42
Availability of Teaching Resources	0.381	0.076	0.312	5.013	<0.001*	[0.232, 0.530]	1.38
Use of Interactive Pedagogies	0.512	0.093	0.341	5.505	<0.001*	[0.329, 0.695]	1.56
Class Size (reversed)	0.198	0.068	0.156	2.912	0.004*	[0.064, 0.332]	1.23
School Type (Private = ref)	-0.267	0.087	-0.178	-3.069	0.002*	[-0.438, -0.096]	1.34
Student Socioeconomic Status	0.156	0.072	0.121	2.167	0.031*	[0.015, 0.297]	1.18
Curriculum Implementation Fidelity	0.298	0.081	0.223	3.679	<0.001*	[0.139, 0.457]	1.45

Model Summary: $R = 0.748$, $R^2 = 0.560$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.552$, $F(7, 376) = 68.42$, $p < 0.001$, Durbin-Watson = 1.98

*Significant at $p < 0.05$; Dependent Variable: Student Soft Skills Competency Score (Scale 1-5)

Interpretation of Table 3

The multiple regression model explained 56.0% of the variance in students' soft skills development ($R^2 = 0.560$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.552$), with the model being statistically significant ($F(7, 376) = 68.42$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a strong overall fit. All seven predictor variables demonstrated statistically significant relationships with soft skills competency outcomes ($p < 0.05$). The use of interactive pedagogies emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.341$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that for every one-unit increase in the frequency of interactive teaching methods, students' soft skills scores increased by 0.512 points, holding other variables constant. Availability of teaching resources ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$) and teacher training level ($\beta = 0.287$, $p < 0.001$) were the second and third strongest predictors respectively, both demonstrating substantial positive effects on learning outcomes. Curriculum implementation fidelity ($\beta = 0.223$, $p < 0.001$) also showed a significant positive relationship, indicating that schools adhering more closely to CBC guidelines produced better soft skills outcomes. School type had a significant negative coefficient ($\beta = -0.178$, $p = 0.002$), meaning that after controlling for other factors, students in government and community schools scored lower than their private school counterparts. The Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) for all predictors ranged from 1.18 to 1.56, well below the threshold of 10, indicating no multicollinearity concerns, while the Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.98 suggested minimal autocorrelation in residuals.

These regression results provided crucial insights into the mechanisms through which Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum could be optimized for soft skills development. The finding that interactive pedagogies had the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.341$) was particularly significant because it represented a modifiable factor that could be enhanced through targeted professional development and pedagogical reform. Unlike structural factors such as school type or socioeconomic status, teaching methods were directly amenable to intervention, suggesting that investments in training teachers to employ role-playing, simulations, debates, and collaborative learning could yield substantial improvements in students' negotiation and lobbying competencies. The strong effect of teaching resources ($\beta = 0.312$) highlighted the material constraints facing CBC implementation—curriculum reform alone was insufficient without

corresponding investments in learning materials, technology, and infrastructure. The significant but relatively smaller effect of student socioeconomic status ($\beta = 0.121$, $p = 0.031$) suggested that while background factors mattered, they were less determinative than school-level factors, offering hope that quality education could partially mitigate socioeconomic disadvantages. However, the persistent negative effect of school type even after controlling for resources, teacher training, and pedagogy ($\beta = -0.178$) indicated that unmeasured factors—possibly school culture, peer effects, or administrative support—contributed to private school advantages. The model's explained variance of 56.0%, while substantial, left 44.0% unexplained, suggesting that other factors not captured in this study—such as student motivation, parental involvement, community support, or specific curriculum content—also influenced soft skills development. The significant effect of curriculum implementation fidelity ($\beta = 0.223$) underscored a critical implementation challenge: the CBC framework's potential benefits were realized only when schools followed the prescribed approaches faithfully, yet many schools struggled with inconsistent implementation due to capacity constraints, resistance to change, or insufficient monitoring and support systems.

Conclusion

This study critically analyzed Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum to assess its effectiveness in developing negotiation, lobbying, and essential soft skills among Ugandan youth for 21st-century success, revealing both promising developments and significant implementation challenges. Regarding the first objective examining the integration of soft skills within the CBC framework, the findings demonstrated that while negotiation, lobbying, and soft skills were explicitly integrated into certain subject areas—particularly Entrepreneurship Education (71.2%), Social Studies (67.8%), and Life Skills Education (64.5%)—they remained poorly integrated in STEM subjects, with Mathematics and Sciences showing integration rates below 20%, resulting in an overall explicit integration rate of only 46.1% across the curriculum. Concerning the second objective assessing pedagogical approaches and resources, the study revealed substantial disparities across school types, with private schools significantly outperforming government and community schools in employing interactive pedagogies such as role-playing, simulations, and debates, while teacher training on soft skills remained inadequate across all school types (mean scores ranging from 2.12 to 3.54 on a 5-point scale), and technology integration and teaching material availability were particularly deficient in under-resourced schools. Addressing the third objective on identifying gaps, challenges, and opportunities, the multiple regression analysis demonstrated that the use of interactive pedagogies ($\beta = 0.341$), availability of teaching resources ($\beta = 0.312$), and teacher training levels ($\beta = 0.287$) were the strongest predictors of effective soft skills development, collectively explaining 56.0% of variance in student outcomes, while persistent inequities based on school type ($\beta = -0.178$) indicated that structural challenges extended beyond mere resource availability to encompass systemic factors such as implementation fidelity, institutional culture, and support systems. The study concluded that while Uganda's CBC framework represented a progressive step toward holistic education and incorporated soft skills development as a priority, its implementation remained uneven, inequitable, and constrained by insufficient teacher preparation, inadequate resources, limited integration across subject areas, and significant disparities between private and public institutions, ultimately creating a two-tiered system where advantaged students developed essential 21st-century competencies while the majority of Ugandan youth in government and community

schools continued to receive traditional, content-focused instruction that inadequately prepared them for the demands of modern labor markets, civic participation, and leadership roles.

Recommendations

Comprehensive Integration and Teacher Capacity Development: The Ministry of Education and Sports, in collaboration with the National Curriculum Development Centre, should mandate the explicit integration of negotiation, lobbying, and soft skills across all subject areas, including STEM disciplines, by revising learning outcomes, assessment frameworks, and instructional materials to ensure systematic and consistent skills development. Simultaneously, a large-scale teacher professional development program should be implemented focusing specifically on interactive pedagogies, experiential learning methodologies, and competency-based assessment techniques, with particular emphasis on reaching teachers in government and community schools where capacity gaps are most severe. This program should include pre-service training reforms, continuous professional development workshops, mentorship programs pairing experienced and novice teachers, and the development of comprehensive teacher guides with practical lesson plans, activities, and assessment tools for soft skills instruction across all subjects.

Resource Mobilization and Equitable Distribution: Government and development partners should significantly increase investment in educational resources, particularly teaching and learning materials, technology infrastructure, and physical facilities that support interactive and experiential learning, with strategic targeting of government and community schools to reduce disparities. This should include establishing resource centers at district levels stocked with materials for simulations, role-playing, and collaborative activities; expanding digital infrastructure and connectivity to enable technology-enhanced learning even in rural areas; implementing a needs-based resource allocation formula that provides additional support to under-resourced schools; and creating public-private partnerships to leverage resources, expertise, and innovative solutions from the private sector while ensuring that benefits reach disadvantaged communities rather than exacerbating existing inequalities.

Strengthening Implementation Monitoring and Support Systems: Education authorities should establish robust monitoring and support mechanisms to ensure curriculum implementation fidelity and address implementation challenges proactively, including the deployment of district-level curriculum support officers who provide ongoing technical assistance to schools, the development of implementation fidelity checklists and regular school-based assessments, the creation of professional learning communities where teachers can share best practices and troubleshoot challenges collaboratively, and the integration of soft skills competency measures into national learning assessments and school accountability frameworks. Additionally, schools should be encouraged to develop partnerships with civil society organizations, professional associations, and community groups that can provide real-world learning opportunities through internships, mentorship programs, community projects, and experiential activities that allow students to practice negotiation, lobbying, and advocacy skills in authentic contexts beyond the classroom.

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