

**Community Attitudes And Competency-Based Curriculum Implementation In Uganda.**

**A Critical Analysis Of Stakeholder Perceptions**

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**Abstract**

Uganda's introduction of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) at the lower secondary level represents a bold restructuring of educational philosophy a shift from content transmission to skill mastery and applied learning. However, curriculum reform is not enacted in a social vacuum. Community attitudes shaped by cultural beliefs, historical experiences of schooling, and perceptions of what education is for profoundly mediate whether curriculum innovations are embraced, adapted, or subverted at the school level. This article presents a critical analysis of stakeholder perceptions of the CBC in Uganda, drawing on survey data from 1,847 respondents across parent, teacher, student, and community leader categories in eight districts. A structural model of curriculum implementation fidelity is specified and tested through multilevel regression. The study finds that community attitude is a statistically significant predictor of curriculum implementation effectiveness, operating both directly and through its influence on teacher motivation and parental support for learning. Significant regional and socioeconomic variations in attitudes are documented, with implications for differentiated implementation strategies.

**Keywords: Competency-based curriculum, Uganda, community attitudes, stakeholder perceptions, curriculum implementation, lower secondary education, educational reform, multilevel analysis**

**1.0 Introduction**

When National Curriculum Development Centre introduced the revised Lower Secondary Curriculum in 2020, it marked one of the most significant educational reforms in the history of Uganda (Julius & Kazaara, 2025a). The reform formally shifted the country's education system away from a traditionally content-heavy and examination-oriented model toward a Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) framework (Julius & Kazaara, 2025a). Prior to the reform, Uganda's education system had largely emphasized memorization, theoretical knowledge, and examination performance as the primary indicators of academic success (Julius & Nancy, 2026a). Learners were often evaluated based on their ability to recall information rather than their capacity to apply knowledge practically, solve problems creatively, or demonstrate critical thinking skills (Julius & Kazaara, 2025c). This approach had increasingly been criticized for producing graduates who possessed academic certificates but lacked the practical competencies, adaptability, and innovative capacities required in the modern labour market (A. I. Kazaara & Nancy, 2026).

The introduction of the Competency-Based Curriculum therefore represented a deliberate attempt to align Uganda's education system with emerging global and regional educational trends (Julius & Kazaara, 2025a). Across East Africa and many other developing regions, governments and education policymakers had increasingly recognized that 21st-century economies required learners who could think critically, communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and

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adapt to rapidly changing technological and social environments (Julius & Nancy, 2026b). Consequently, Uganda's curriculum reform formed part of a broader regional convergence toward skills-oriented education systems designed to prepare young people for participation in knowledge-based economies and sustainable development processes (Mobegi, 2026). The reform also reflected global commitments to educational transformation under frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4, which emphasized inclusive and quality education that promotes lifelong learning opportunities and relevant skills acquisition.

The revised curriculum placed strong emphasis on cross-cutting competencies including critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, self-directed learning, and responsible citizenship (Julius & Kaazara, 2025). Unlike the previous curriculum, which primarily prioritized subject content coverage, the CBC sought to balance knowledge acquisition with the development of practical competencies and life skills (Julius & Audrey, 2025). Learners were expected not merely to memorize concepts but to apply them in real-life situations, work collaboratively in groups, engage in inquiry-based learning, and develop innovative solutions to societal challenges (Julius & Kaazara, 2025). Teachers were similarly expected to move away from teacher-centered instructional methods toward learner-centered pedagogies that encouraged participation, experimentation, and active engagement in the learning process (A. G. Kazaara & Kazaara, 2025).

This shift represented a fundamental reconceptualization of the purpose of schooling itself. Education was no longer viewed solely as a mechanism for passing examinations or securing formal employment but increasingly as a process of developing holistic individuals capable of contributing meaningfully to society, the economy, and democratic governance (Ahumuza et al., 2025). The reform reflected an understanding that the demands of the 21st century required citizens who were flexible, innovative, technologically aware, ethically responsible, and capable of lifelong learning (Audrey & Nancy, 2025). In this sense, the curriculum reform extended beyond academic restructuring to encompass broader national aspirations related to human capital development, economic competitiveness, and social transformation (Julius & Kazaara, 2025b).

However, despite the ambitious vision underpinning the Competency-Based Curriculum, curriculum reform literature had consistently shown that the greatest challenge in educational transformation often lay not in policy design but in implementation (A. G. Kazaara & Julius, 2025). Across many countries, reforms that appeared promising on paper frequently encountered significant difficulties during execution due to institutional resistance, inadequate preparation, limited resources, and sociocultural misunderstandings (Julius & Nancy, 2025). Scholars in educational change theory had repeatedly emphasized that successful reform required more than the introduction of new policies or curriculum documents; it demanded changes in attitudes, institutional culture, teaching practices, and stakeholder perceptions.

Educational theorist Michael Fullan notably distinguished between what he termed first-order change and second-order change. First-order change referred to efforts aimed at improving existing systems without fundamentally altering their underlying assumptions or structures. Such changes involved doing familiar things more efficiently or effectively (Brian et al., 2024). In contrast, second-order change involved deep transformation that challenged established norms, beliefs, and institutional cultures (Nancy & Audrey, 2026). According to Fullan, reforms of this nature required profound cultural reorientation because they fundamentally altered how individuals understood their roles, relationships, and responsibilities within educational systems.

The Competency-Based Curriculum in Uganda clearly fell within the category of second-order change because it sought to transform not only what students learned but also how teaching, assessment, and learning were conceptualized (Julius, 2025). Teachers were expected to abandon long-established methods centered on lectures and rote memorization in favor of participatory and competency-focused instructional approaches. Students were expected to become active participants in learning rather than passive recipients of information (Christopher et al., 2022). Parents and communities were similarly expected to appreciate educational outcomes beyond examination grades, recognizing the value of creativity, innovation, communication skills, and practical competence. Such transformations inevitably required significant shifts in mindset and educational culture.

### **2.0 Structural Model: Curriculum Implementation Fidelity**

$$CIF = \alpha + \beta_1(CA) + \beta_2(TR) + \beta_3(RM) + \beta_4(SL) + \beta_5(PS) + \beta_6(CA \times PS) + u_j + \epsilon$$

Where: CIF = Curriculum Implementation Fidelity (classroom observation + teacher report composite, 0–100) CA = Community Attitude Index (parent + community leader survey composite) TR = Teacher Readiness for CBC (content knowledge + pedagogical skills + assessment literacy) RM = Resource Mobilisation (availability of CBC materials, labs, ICT, library resources) SL = School Leadership Quality (principal's CBC orientation + instructional leadership score) PS = Parental Support for Learning (home learning environment + attendance supervision + academic engagement) CA×PS = Interaction: Community Attitude × Parental Support  $u_j$  = District-level random effect (multilevel model)  $\epsilon$  = Error term

### **3.0 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Sample and Data Collection**

A multilevel cross-sectional design was employed, covering 8 districts selected to represent geographic, urbanisation, and socioeconomic diversity: Kampala, Wakiso, Jinja, Mbale, Gulu, Arua, Mbarara, and Masindi. Within each district, 5–7 secondary schools were randomly selected. Respondents included: parents/guardians (n = 642), S2 and S3 students (n = 731), teachers (n = 298), school heads (n = 47), and community leaders including local council officers and religious leaders (n = 129). Total sample: n = 1,847 (Nelson et al., 2022).

Community Attitude Index was constructed from 14-item Likert-scale surveys administered separately to parents and community leaders, assessing: perceived value of practical skills over academic credentials, trust in curriculum designers, understanding of CBC philosophy, and alignment between CBC goals and community aspirations for young people. Classroom observation data (CIF component) were collected by trained research assistants using a validated 40-item observation checklist adapted from the NCDC's CBC implementation fidelity instrument.

**4.0 Results**

**Table 1: Predictors of CBC Implementation Fidelity in Ugandan Secondary Schools**

Variable	$\beta$	SE	t-stat	p-value
Community Attitude (CA)	0.264***	0.049	5.39	<0.001
Teacher Readiness (TR)	0.341***	0.044	7.75	<0.001
Resource Mobilisation (RM)	0.198**	0.058	3.41	0.001
School Leadership (SL)	0.223***	0.051	4.37	<0.001
Parental Support (PS)	0.182**	0.056	3.25	0.001
CA $\times$ PS	0.114**	0.042	2.71	0.007
District Variance ( $u_j$ )	0.087		ICC=0.14	
Constant	16.43***	4.87	3.37	0.001
R <sup>2</sup> (within)	0.573			
R <sup>2</sup> (between)	0.631			

Note: \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

**Source: Primary Data, 2026**

The regression results present an analysis of the factors influencing the successful implementation and effectiveness of educational or institutional reforms, with particular attention to community and school-level dynamics. The findings demonstrate that multiple social, institutional, and leadership-related variables significantly contributed to the dependent variable under investigation. Overall, the model exhibited strong explanatory power, with an R<sup>2</sup> (within) value of 0.573 and an R<sup>2</sup> (between) value of 0.631. The within-group R<sup>2</sup> indicated that approximately 57.3% of the variation within schools or institutions was explained by the predictor variables included in the model, while the between-group R<sup>2</sup> showed that about 63.1% of the variation across districts or clusters was accounted for by the same factors. These values suggested that the model effectively captured both individual-level and contextual influences on the outcome variable.

The results further indicated the presence of meaningful district-level variation, as reflected by the district variance component ( $u_j = 0.087$ ) and the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC = 0.14). The ICC value implied that approximately 14% of the total variation in the dependent variable was attributable to differences between districts

rather than differences within schools or respondents themselves. This finding suggested that contextual district-level characteristics such as local governance quality, socioeconomic conditions, educational infrastructure, administrative effectiveness, and regional policy implementation practices influenced the outcomes observed in the study. The existence of such variation highlighted the importance of considering decentralized governance structures and local institutional environments when interpreting educational or organizational performance across different regions of Uganda.

Community Attitude (CA) emerged as a strong and statistically significant predictor of the dependent variable, with a beta coefficient ( $\beta$ ) of 0.264 and a highly significant p-value of less than 0.001. The t-statistic of 5.39 confirmed the robustness of the relationship. This result indicated that positive community perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes toward the reform or program significantly enhanced successful implementation and outcomes. Specifically, a one-unit increase in positive community attitude corresponded to a 0.264-unit increase in the dependent variable, holding other factors constant. This finding suggested that communities that understood, appreciated, and supported the goals of the reform were more likely to create enabling environments for success. Positive community attitudes may have promoted cooperation between schools and local stakeholders, increased trust in educational initiatives, and encouraged broader participation in school activities. The results underscored the critical role of societal acceptance and public engagement in determining whether reforms achieved their intended objectives.

Teacher Readiness (TR) emerged as the strongest predictor in the model, with a coefficient of 0.341 and a highly significant p-value below 0.001. The t-statistic of 7.75 further confirmed the strength and reliability of the relationship. This finding demonstrated that the preparedness, competence, and adaptability of teachers played the most important role in influencing the dependent variable. A one-unit increase in teacher readiness led to an estimated 0.341-unit increase in the outcome variable. The result emphasized that reforms, innovations, or institutional programs are unlikely to succeed without adequately trained and motivated educators. Teacher readiness may have included dimensions such as professional competence, pedagogical knowledge, understanding of curriculum changes, technological literacy, willingness to adopt new instructional methods, and confidence in implementing reforms. The strong effect of teacher readiness highlighted the central position of teachers as key agents of change within educational systems.

Resource Mobilisation (RM) also showed a positive and statistically significant effect on the dependent variable, with a coefficient of 0.198 and a p-value of 0.001. The t-statistic of 3.41 indicated that the relationship was statistically meaningful. This finding implied that the availability and effective mobilization of financial, material, technological, and human resources significantly enhanced implementation success. Schools and institutions with greater access to teaching materials, infrastructure, funding, and logistical support were more likely to perform effectively. Resource

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mobilization may also have reflected the ability of school administrators and communities to attract external support, coordinate local contributions, and utilize available resources efficiently. The findings therefore suggested that even well-designed reforms could struggle in contexts where institutions lacked adequate operational support and financial sustainability (Sarah & Audrey, 2024).

School Leadership (SL) was another highly significant predictor, with a coefficient of 0.223 and a p-value below 0.001. The t-statistic of 4.37 confirmed the reliability of the relationship. This result suggested that effective school leadership positively influenced the implementation and success of the dependent variable (Nancy & Prudence, 2024). A one-unit increase in school leadership effectiveness resulted in a 0.223-unit increase in the outcome variable. Strong school leadership may have involved strategic planning, instructional supervision, staff motivation, conflict resolution, accountability, stakeholder coordination, and the ability to manage change effectively. School leaders often serve as intermediaries between policy and practice, translating national reforms into actionable strategies at the institutional level. Therefore, the findings reinforced the argument that transformational and supportive leadership is essential for sustaining educational improvement and organizational effectiveness.

Parental Support (PS) also demonstrated a positive and statistically significant influence, with a beta coefficient of 0.182 and a p-value of 0.001. The t-statistic of 3.25 indicated that the relationship was robust and meaningful. This finding implied that parents who actively supported educational initiatives contributed positively to the success of schools and student outcomes. Parental support may have included involvement in school activities, monitoring of student progress, encouragement of learning at home, financial contributions, and collaboration with teachers and administrators. The results highlighted the importance of family engagement as a critical component of educational success. Schools operating within supportive family environments were more likely to experience stronger student motivation, improved discipline, and enhanced community trust.

The interaction effect between Community Attitude and Parental Support ( $CA \times PS$ ) was positive and statistically significant, with a coefficient of 0.114 and a p-value of 0.007. This interaction term indicated that the positive influence of community attitude on the dependent variable became stronger when parental support was high. In practical terms, the findings suggested that supportive parents amplified the benefits of positive community perceptions. Communities that valued education and reform initiatives achieved even greater success when parents actively reinforced those values within households and school environments. This demonstrated the complementary relationship between broader community culture and family-level involvement. The interaction effect illustrated that successful reform implementation depended not only on institutional factors but also on the alignment of societal and family support systems. The constant term of 16.43 was statistically significant at the 0.001 level, indicating that even when all predictor variables were held constant at zero, there remained a baseline level of the dependent variable

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attributable to other unmeasured factors. These additional influences could have included student characteristics, national policy frameworks, cultural values, socioeconomic conditions, technological access, or broader institutional dynamics not directly captured within the model.

### **5.0 Stakeholder Perceptions: Critical Findings**

#### **5.1 Parental Ambivalence**

A recurring theme across focus group discussions was parental uncertainty about the CBC's relationship to examination performance and future employability. Many parents particularly in peri-urban and rural areas expressed support for the CBC's stated philosophy while simultaneously applying pressure on schools and children to prioritise examination subjects over practical and creative activities. This reveals a structural tension: community attitudes toward the CBC are not monolithic but segmented between declarative endorsement and behavioural resistance.

#### **5.2 Teacher Perceptions and Informal Resistance**

Among teachers, 67% reported receiving insufficient professional development for CBC implementation. More troublingly, 49% reported reverting to content-transmission pedagogy when under time pressure or examination season approaches. Teachers expressed genuine commitment to CBC's philosophy while identifying structural barriers workload, large class sizes (average 74 students per class in government schools), inadequate materials that made fidelity impractical. This pattern of constrained implementation willing compliance undermined by resource reality is a central finding.

#### **5.3 Student Perceptions**

Students presented the most favourable attitudes toward the CBC, with 71% reporting preference for project-based learning over lecture-and-memorise approaches. However, 58% reported that their schools were not fully implementing the CBC as they understood it should be, and 44% expressed anxiety that CBC's emphasis on process over examination performance would disadvantage them in university admissions. This anticipatory resistance — students resisting a reform they philosophically support because they distrust systemic consistency — underlines the importance of aligning assessment systems with curriculum reform.

### **6.0 Regional Variations**

Significant regional variation was documented. Northern Uganda districts (Gulu, Arua) recorded lower Community Attitude Index scores than Central and Western districts, associated with post-conflict educational disruption, lower parental education levels, and stronger traditional authority structures that frame education in instrumental rather than developmental terms. These regional dynamics call for regionally differentiated community engagement strategies rather than a one-size-fits-all communication approach from NCDC.

### **7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study confirms that community attitudes are a statistically significant and practically important determinant of CBC implementation fidelity in Uganda. Educational reform cannot succeed as a purely technical exercise. Uganda's curriculum reform agenda requires a sustained social communication strategy that explains the CBC's value in terms

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parents and communities recognize: employment, dignity, practical capability, and national pride. Teacher professional development must be deepened and sustained, not delivered as one-off workshops. Assessment reform must align with curriculum philosophy to remove the perverse incentives that drive reversion to examination-focused pedagogy. And regional differentiation must be built into implementation planning from the outset.

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