

Understanding a Competency-Based Curriculum and Education: The Zambian Perspective

by

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Abstract

The rapid and intricate changes in the labour industry in the global community in the last decades such as technological advancements have brought about significant challenges and novel responsibilities especially to the field of curriculum development and education. The past education traditionally thinking of acquiring as much knowledge as possible has hence been overtaken by the new task of modern society which is exposed to an immense amount of knowledge and information. The new challenge in education is therefore to select the highest quality of knowledge and make effective use of it. Thus, a curriculum being a means through which education systems help its citizens acquire desirable knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, must seek to overcome the narrow-minded past of traditional syllabi or written plans and to focus on providing learners with the ability to acquire, develop and apply knowledge, values and attitudes which should lead to the utilization of skills. In order to meet

these concerns, a number of countries in Africa, such as South Africa, Tanzania, Rwanda, Kenya, Mozambique Zimbabwe and Zambia have since the year 2000 moved away from a content based curriculum to competency or outcomes-based curriculum in their education systems. However, the majority of ideas and arguments regarding a competency-based curriculum still remain as mere discourse and have yet to demonstrate how key competencies can be developed by learners through a school curriculum. Such a situation has partly been propelled by the lack of understanding of what a competency-based curriculum is all about. Using some examples, from the Zambian experience of curriculum review which commenced in 2013 and concluded in 2017, scholars in this paper explain the key principles that constitute a competency-based curriculum, using examples from the 2013 Zambian Curriculum Framework Policy (ZCFP) and the Teacher's Curriculum Implementation Guide (TCIG). After making a distinction between competence and competency, the authors provide a historical and fundamental premise of a competency-based education. The measurements of intent in a competency-based curriculum have been explained too while a detailed description of the components of a competency curriculum has been given to shade more light on the concept and how the curricular in question can be assessed.

Keywords: Competency, Competence, Curriculum,

Competency/Outcome-based Education and Authentic Assessment.

Introduction

In 2013, the Ministry of General Education in Zambia adopted a Competency-Based or Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) approach to learning. The adoption meant a move from the Content-Based education which the country had been using since its political independence in 1964. Hence in 2013, the development of a competency based curriculum was initiated and was finalized in 2017 together with its implementation. A competency-based curriculum seeks to link education to the real life experiences as it helps learners acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to access, criticize, analyse and practically apply them to reality. In this regard, learners are provided with practical experiences during the teaching and learning processes that are likely to help them gain life skills. In fact, Mulenga and Kabombwe (2019:124) rightly observed as they reviewed the competency-based curriculum developments in some parts of the world that:

There seemed to be a very common element among all the countries that adopted the competency based curriculum that the education system was not responding to the developmental needs of the countries since learners lacked appropriate skills and applicable knowledge.

The two terms, Competency-based education and Outcome-based education are synonymous. In other words, they mean one and the same thing as it will be seen in their historical background.

A competency - based curriculum (CBC) is a complex and multilayered phenomenon and thus it requires educationists, teachers and society to be aware and knowledgeable of its principles so that they can understand and appreciate it if it is to be effectively implemented. Jansen (1998) warned that the language of innovation associated with OBE can be too complex, confusing and at times, contradictory. Chisholm (2007) confirmed that in South Africa for instance, the level of understanding of the competency/ outcomes based curriculum was compromised by the complexity of terminologies used in relation to curriculum implementation. It was therefore, difficult for most teachers to give meaning to competency-based policies through their classroom practices. Jansen (1998) argued that the other challenge is that OBE policy in South Africa was implicated in problematic claims and assumptions about the relationship between curriculum and society. Thus, one of the criticisms leveled against OBE is that the language associated with OBE-based curriculum reform is sometimes too complex and difficult for some educators and teachers to identify with (Jansen, 1998). Additionally, in other countries where competency-based curriculum has been used, schools perceived outcomes as checklists while others thought of them as learning targets or mastery outcomes. That being the case, it would be significant at this point to draw a distinction between the terms competence and competency as a way of enriching the understanding of a competency-based curriculum.

The Core Constructs of Competence and Competency

In order to have a clear understanding of the meaning of competency as it is used in education and curriculum development, it is important to make a distinction between the terms competence and competency. The terms competence and competency are sometimes confused and misused in the literature. These terms have been defined from several points of view and a lot of time has been spent on finding accurate definitions and distinctions between competence/competences and competency/competencies (Hoffman, 1999). Armstrong (2005) explained that whilst competency is a person-related concept, competence is a work related concept. Put more elaborately, Kouwenhoven (2003) tried to give a comprehensive definition of competency as the capability to choose and apply an integrated combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes with the intention to successfully accomplish a task in a particular context where motivation, self-confidence, and willpower are part of the context; and on the other hand the term competence is described as the capacity to accomplish ‘up to a set standard’ the key occupational tasks that characterize a specified profession. Thus, competency is defined as the necessary knowledge, skills, experience and attributes to carry out defined functions effectively, whilst competence means those things that a person, in a particular profession, must be good at in meeting the demands of an organization. (Mackay, 2003). Therefore, competences are usually job or role-specific (Whiddett & Hollyforde, 2003). It is for this reason that in relation to education and curriculum development the word “competency” is used as per the definition given by Whiddett &

Hollyforde (2003), where competency is the broader term that refers to ability based on acquired knowledge, skills, developed values and attitudes. A review of the historical development of competency-based education will help to shade more light on the understanding of competency-based curriculum and education.

The History of Competency/ Outcomes based Education

The origin of competency-based education has been traced differently by different authors (Achtenhagen & Grubb, 2001; Nijhof, 2003; Mulder, et al., 2006). For instance, Jansen (1997: 66) argued that ‘OBE does not have any single historical legacy’. Some trace its roots to Dewey’s educational philosophy of progressivism (Manno, 1994). While others trace it to behavioural psychology associated with B.F. Skinner, yet others associate it to mastery learning as espoused by Benjamin Bloom. Additionally, some link OBE to the curriculum objectives of Ralph Tyler, yet another claim is that OBE is from competency education models associated with vocational education in the United Kingdom. Jansen (1997) argued that the fact that OBE is linked to so many schools of thought explains perhaps why debates about it are not easy to resolve.

Literature however, has shown that most scholars concur with the view that Competency-Based Education (CBE) descended directly from the behavioral objective movement of the late 1950’s and early 1960’s (McAshan, 1979; Bowden, 1997). Early interest in CBE movement by greater educational community was centered on the uses of behavioral outcome statements to ensure the

validity of the content selection for curriculum and to improve teacher evaluation practices (McAshan, 1979). Further the movement was spurred by increased demands for accountability, instructional designs that would allow students to learn at their own pace and increased general programme quality that would be relevant to the goals of the society (McAshan, 1979). More specifically, teachers placed stronger emphasis on teaching what was tailored to meet specific goals with success being determined by evidence collected through criterion-referenced measurements of specific behavioral outcome performances (Paulo & Tilya, 2014).

On the other hand, Spady and Marshall (1994) have contested that outcomes-based education is not new, but is as old as mankind. It has had many names in its history, such as Transformation Education, Skills 2000, Performance-Based Learning, and Results-Based Curriculum (Giessen-Hood, 1999). Critics of OBE contend that OBE has been changing its name to stay relevant as quoted by Dr. Carl Rogers who said that “change the name [of the reform policy] as fast as necessary to stay ahead of the critics” (Celano, 1996: 1).

Despite the popularity of CBE especially during its early inception, this innovation lost its favour due to its behaviouristic character during the 1970s and 1980s (Paulo, & Tilya, 2014). This was because CBE programmes were characterised by detailed analysis of behavioural aspects of professional tasks into specific components resulting into long lists of fragmented behavioural elements which were used as a basis for curriculum development. This backward mapping of learning trajectories from job requirements enhanced the

development of procedural and technical workers' skills instead of being reflective as problem solvers and innovators (Boer & Nieuwenhuis, 2002). The approach turned out to be unfruitful thus decreasing interest in the original competency movement in the 1980s (Mulder, 2003).

During the early 1990s, OBE gained overwhelming support by many educators, politicians, and academics. Authors and scholars such as William Spady, David Hornbeck, Roy Killen, Theodore Sizer, Mureil Bebeau and John Goodlad argued for the implementation of OBE. Many considered it as a radical reform of the education system (Smith, 2010). Despite objections against the original behaviouristic competency-based education approach, the innovation has now made a comeback and is more alive than ever (Mulder, 2004). Competency-based education programmes have been popular in both the developed world such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the Netherlands and in developing countries such as Tanzania, Mozambique, Kenya, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Zambia. The emphasis on competency-based education has been due to the growing recognition of the need for direct development of capabilities and not just at acquiring qualifications since capabilities are perceived as pre-requisite for employability and also a link between education and the labour market (Mulder, 2004). Desirable capabilities (knowledge, skills and attitudes) eventually form the basis for the development of curriculum which is termed as competency-based curriculum.

The current competency-based education programmes are characterized by learner-centred constructivist approaches to teaching and learning.

Constructivism is based on the view that knowledge and skills are not the products that can be transferred from teacher to learner rather they are the result of learning activities done by learners themselves individually or in groups (Wisselink et al., 2007). Therefore, this calls for teachers to use varieties of teaching strategies such as small groups, discussions and practical activities. Teaching and learning activities are to be featured by inquiry predominantly focusing on real life phenomenon in classroom, outdoors or in the laboratory where learners are given opportunities to investigate and construct their own truth (Wisselink et al., 2007). Having found no essential difference between outcomes and competency-based education in practice; this paper has aligned itself with Hodges (2010) and Morcke et al., (2012) in using the term Outcome Based Education and Competency-Based Education to refer to both. As mentioned earlier, scholars in this paper have singled out one recent experience of the competency-based curriculum in the name of the Zambian 2013 to 2017 curriculum review. It is for this reason that in the next section some prominent literature has been reviewed from a Zambian perspective.

Literature from a Zambian Perspective

This being a relatively new approach and thinking in the Zambian education system few studies on the competency-based curriculum in Zambia have been undertaken. For instance, Nambela's (2016) work on the evaluation of the effectiveness of the 2013 revised curriculum on improving the provision of education in Kitwe district, indicated that the implementation of

the competency-based curriculum was not properly done as most educators in the district indicated that they were not adequately prepared for it, there was inadequate and inappropriate provision of teaching and learning resources, teachers were neither trained nor retrained to teach new subjects and the infrastructure was not expanded to reduce and accommodate the high numbers of learners in these schools.

Furthermore, a study by Mulenga and Mwanza (2019) sought to establish whether secondary school teachers in Lusaka urban of Zambia were adequately and actively involved in the curriculum development process of the competency-based curriculum. It was however revealed that teachers were not adequately involved in the curriculum development process with their role being mainly to implement the already developed curriculum. Consequently, most teachers' encountered challenges when implementing the developed curriculum.

Additionally, Musilekwa and Mulenga (2019) observed in their study that the content and correctness of textbooks that were produced for the competency-based curriculum were highly questionable. For instance, the duo specifically mentioned that the integration of the three learning areas namely; Civics, Geography and History at Junior Secondary School resulting in one subject, Social Studies, lead to the development of a totally new learners' textbook for this particular subject. The findings of the study showed that the Social Studies learners' textbooks were of extreme poor quality. They cited lack of teacher involvement in textbook development; lack of coordination in textbook development; lack of a national textbook

policy; political interference in textbook development as some of the main contributing factors to this situation.

The competency-based curriculum in Zambia also brought about the introduction of new subjects as a way of responding to national and global technological changes. Thus Computer Studies was introduced as a compulsory study area. Masumba (2019) investigated the extent to which Computer Studies Curriculum was being effectively implemented in rural secondary schools in Mufumbwe district of Zambia. The findings of the study revealed that there were insufficient facilities and equipment such as computer laboratories and computers, internet connectivity, printers, backup generators, overhead projectors and photocopiers. Findings further indicated that there were no qualified teachers of computer studies and inappropriate teaching methods such as lecture methods were being used during lessons.

Further a theoretical discourse by Mulenga and Kabombwe (2019) on the competency-based curriculum in Zambia emphasised the fact that the Zambian education system adopted a competency-based curriculum in order to help learners to acquire desirable knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to meet the demands of society and to help them to compete on the global market in the labour industry. In this chronicle Mulenga and Kabombwe (2019) explained some of the effective competency based approaches of teaching and assessing learners. They further suggested and cautioned the Ministry of General Education in Zambia and other education funders that there was a need to allocate sufficient financial resources for the competency-based curriculum and upskilling of teachers and teacher

educators if it was to be implemented effectively in all schools. The literature that has been brought forward in this section is of great use to the reader of this work in the sense that while this paper is concerned with the meaning of a competency-based curriculum, the studies and reflections of this section situate the definitions and understanding of this educational concept in a real Zambian educational environment. Some of the challenges that have been highlighted will help to appreciate the profound requirements of a competency-based curriculum if it is to be effectively implemented.

Focus and Fundamental Premise of Competency-Based Education

The underlying focus of CBE is ‘success for all learners’. This was explained by Spady (1994:9) who stated that the primary focus for CBE was to;

- ensure that all learners are equipped with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and qualities needed to be successful after they exit their educational system
- structure and operate schools so that planned learning outcomes can be achieved and maximized for all learners.

These two purposes commit the system to focus on the future performance abilities of learners and to establish a success-orientated way of operating. They reject the prevalent belief that learners of variable aptitudes or abilities should be given different curricula and learning opportunities, thereby leaving some learners permanently behind and others permanently

ahead. Hence, it can be argued that CBE aims at embracing all learners in schools. Spady and Marshall (1991:67) further explained the focus of CBE that it is based on three fundamental premises that;

- (a) all learners can learn and succeed but not on the same day or in the same way,
- (b) success breeds success and that,
- (c) schools control the conditions of success.

Thus, an Outcome Based-Education means providing an opportunity for all learners to learn well, not just for the fastest, the brightest, or the most advantaged. Spady (1994) argued that CBE promises that all learners can learn if given the time and support to do so, so that success encourages success, and that schools are responsible for creating and controlling the conditions for success. Education that is outcomes-based is a learner-centred, results-oriented system that hinges on the belief that all individuals can learn (Brady, 2006: 8). It is an accepted fact that all learners can learn successfully regardless of their mental abilities. McKernan (1993:1) concurred with this fact when he stated that children learn all the time and that they are good learners. Danielson (1988:1) also shared this viewpoint when he wrote that in the pre-school there are no unsuccessful learners. He continued to state that young children differ in learning speed but all of them do learn.

Danielson (1988) advocated that success breeds success in school. When learners succeed in school they are motivated to embark upon new challenging tasks to gain more success. The major benefit of learners who tasted success is that they become persistent until they achieve any objective that they have stated

for themselves. Unfortunately, the converse is also true. Repeated failure at school is detrimental in the sense that it may encourage the learners to avoid tasks in future and may negatively affect the learner's self-esteem. It is a truism that schools control the conditions of success. Through its curriculum, the school should provide a conducive environment for all learners to learn successfully (Danielson, 1988). Thus, it is clear that the learner is a key focus in the CBE and schools have a huge task of ensuring that they provide opportunities for all learners to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills in order to be successful in society. As mentioned earlier in this paper one of the challenges faced by teachers who are the implementers of any competency-based school curriculum are the terms used and what they would mean in practice. In the next sections we make an effort to explain the main terms that describe intent in competency-based curriculum and education.

Measurement of Intent in Competency-Based Curriculum

Outcomes: An outcome defines what skills and qualities that learners should acquire during the process of learning. Spady (1994:2) specifically defined outcomes as, 'clear learning results that learners should demonstrate by the end of any significant learning experiences. These are actions and performances that embody and reflect learner capabilities in using content, information, ideas and tools successfully.' There are two types of outcomes namely; critical and developmental outcomes and learning outcomes.

Critical and developmental outcomes: Critical

and developmental outcomes are broad, generic, cross-curricular intentions which are spelt out in the education policy of any nation. The clear formulation of an intelligible set of overall aims has long been recognized as a basic didactical principle since “true” education is always purposeful. They describe the kind of citizen the education and training system should aim to create (Mazabow, 2003). For instance, in the 2013 revised Zambian curriculum one of the critical and developmental outcome is to produce a self-motivated, life-long learner, confident and productive individuals, who are holistic, independent learners with the values, skills and knowledge to enable them to succeed in school and in life. As can be noticed from this critical and developmental outcome, it clearly captures the two key guiding principles of CBE, namely that the curriculum should be both learner-centred and outcome-based. It should however be emphasized, that critical and developmental outcomes are empty without contexts that give them substance and specificity (Deacon & Parker 1999:61). This function is served by learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes: Learning outcomes are knowledge, skills, values and attitudes constituting what learners should exactly know, demonstrate and be able to do at the end of schooling. For instance, the Zambian 2013 revised curriculum defined learning areas for Zambian schools. These learning areas include Natural and Environmental Sciences, Design and Technology, Entrepreneurship and Business Studies, Mathematics, Performing and Creative Arts, Languages, Social Sciences, Music, Religious Knowledge, Health and Physical Education, Community Studies and Environmental

Education. This necessitated the formulation of a set of learning outcomes for each learning area which would provide a guide for the choice of content focus areas and for the selection of teaching resources and strategies to be employed in the teaching and learning process.

Malan (2000:24) however, warned against seeing critical and developmental outcomes and learning outcomes in isolation to one another; the framework of OBE is holistic in its outcome focus and although the learning outcomes are aimed at grass-root levels, attaining learning intentions, they are not an end in themselves since they provide building blocks for achieving higher-level outcomes. Following this line of thought, Deacon & Parker (1999:61) identified an “outcome” as appearing usually in the form of ‘a clear and unambiguous statement containing a performative verb’. Consequently, Killen (1998) explained that learning is not significant unless the outcomes reflect the complexities of real life and give prominence to the life-roles that learners will face after they have finished their formal education. It is for this reason that when formulating a lesson plan it is stated as learning outcomes and not competency because competencies are not in any hierarchical order. We have in this paper referred to what makes up a competency as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. What do these refer to in this context?

Components of a Competency

Competencies are composed of four elements namely; knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

Knowledge: Tomlinson (1995:96) defined

knowledge as, ‘a more or less lasting representation of reality. Humans may possess it in a variety of forms as visual, verbal, concrete or symbolic. When it is knowledge of processes, how things work, we tend to call it understanding’. From knowledge curriculum developers select content which is the subject matter of the teaching and learning process. Fraser et al (1991:14) explained that knowledge gained through meaningful learning content enables the learner to interpret aspects of reality and to establish his/her own perspective on reality; thus, ‘transfer of knowledge implies more than the transfer of related facts; but it involves the acquisition of insight and understanding in a functional manner’. Since the OBE approach attempts to effect a shift away from the content-based approach of the past, its primary aim is not only to increase the general knowledge of the learner, but to develop their skills, attitudes and values as well. Schoeman (2003:5) stated that, although knowledge of content remains of importance, more significance is now attributed to how learners utilize the knowledge acquired in the classroom than to whether they know all the facts off by heart, memorization. Schoeman (2003) further explained that content is still important, but is only of value if it can be used to develop the skills, values and influence the attitudes of learners needed for success after they leave school or have completed their training at a specific level.

Skills: According to Dean (1996:62-66) ‘skills, in contrast to knowledge, are more obviously about knowing how to do something’. If learners are to become independent, it is essential that school teaches them the skills of study. These skills include for

instance planning, making judgements and hypotheses, collecting information from a variety of sources, observation, discussion with other people, making notes, interpretation, evaluation, selection and organization of material, and making and evaluating presentations. Life Skills for instance are abilities for adopting positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. These include; livelihood skills which could be referred to as vocational or practical or productive or survival skills, Practical health related skills, Expressive skills for instance sports, music and art, Literacy skills, Numeracy and Mathematical skills; and Psychosocial life skills which are skills related to behaviour and interaction with other people and the environment (MoGE, 2013a).

Values and Attitudes: the inculcation of sound values and attitudes is a primary goal of the Zambian 2013 Revised Curriculum. In the Teachers' Curriculum Implementation Guide (TCIG) the Ministry of General Education (2013b: 3) stated that 'values are an essential element of the curriculum'. The aspirations of the kind of society the Zambians would want, depend upon learners developing appropriate values and attitudes.

Values are grouped under four headings so that teachers can easily identify opportunities for exploring and developing them in lessons and plan for appropriate activities. It is important that learners have a set of values which will encourage them to strive for personal excellence build positive relationships with others, become good citizens and celebrate their faith and respect the diversity of beliefs of others. In the Zambian curriculum framework for instance some of the values

that are listed include excellence, innovation, inquiry and curiosity, diversity, equity and empathy citizenry, community and participation, ecological sustainability, honesty and integrity respect and honour, faith in god, love, professionalism, discipline, tolerance, patriotism and hard work. It is learners' values that shape their attitudes. Values are reflected in personality and behaviour and they have a powerful influence on the life chances of every learner. To help learners understand these values and build commitment to them, teachers should plan for them to be incorporated into learning activities. Once these values are appreciated by learners, then their attitudes will follow. All this is very good to have in a competency-based curriculum however; the real test depends on the effectiveness of the implementation process. The success of a competency-based curriculum will very much depend on how teachers go about assessing learners and how they use the assessment results to improve learning.

Authentic Assessment Methods

The success of a curriculum is realized by the way teachers measure learner achievement through assessment of learning. Assessment for a competency based curriculum is such a vast area that it cannot be exhausted in this single paper given that the scholars have taken an overview approach to the discourse on this matter. However, a brief explanation will help to give a snapshot of it. In a competency-based curriculum assessment takes the form that is known as Authentic Assessment. It is done in form of portfolios, projects,

oral presentations, self and peer-assessments, interviews and conferencing, tests and examinations. The emphasis is mostly on formative assessments as opposed to summative assessment. Authentic assessment methods are more useful for a competency-based curriculum than other forms of assessment because they provide opportunities for learners to demonstrate the competencies they have mastered in real life. More importantly, teachers are required to change from norm-referenced to criterion-referenced judgment of learners' capabilities or competencies as supported by Kouwenhoven (2003) who argued that in competency-based education, performance assessment is carried out by giving the learner a clearly defined task and a list of explicit criteria for assessing the performance or product. Criteria are often given in the form of rubrics that can be either analytic (specification of parts) or holistic (looking at overall performance). Finally, teachers are supposed to provide continuous, timely and constructive feedback to inform learners about the strength and weakness of their performance. Hence, competency-based education emphasizes on application of knowledge to integrate theory and practice in real or analogous life situations.

The phased out Zambian secondary school curriculum for instance was criticized for being content-driven compelling teachers to adopt transmission approaches such as lecturing so as to cover overloaded curriculum content by emphasizing learners' memorization of their lecture notes which were deemed crucial for passing examinations which often tested the ability to recall and repeat facts. Now, the revised curriculum emphasizes the application of knowledge

by stating that ‘learners should have the ability to make appropriate use of knowledge, concepts, skills and principles in solving various problems in daily life’ (MoGE, 2013 a:1). This policy statement appears to be supported by literature on competency-based education. For example, Kouwenhoven (2003) criticized learning of isolated knowledge and skills and later integration, arguing that learning environments should emphasize contextualization (from theory to situation, from general to specific) and de-contextualization (from situation to theory, from specific to general). Thus, teachers are required to design learning tasks which are to be carried out in a realistic context or authentic learning environment so as to develop the desired competencies.

Authentic assessments unlike conventional paper and pencil tests engage students in tasks similar in form to the tasks in which learners will engage in their life outside the classroom and probe for learners’ higher-order skills such as critical reasoning and problem solving rather than simply checking for memorized information (NRC, 1996). Further, in this type of assessment teachers should provide continuous feedback, timely and constructively so as to inform learners about the strength and weakness of their performance. Feedback is normally descriptive, directly linked to learning goals and pin point what is well done, what needs improvement and how to improve (Black & William, 1998).

Implications for Curriculum Implementation and Conclusion

As earlier indicated and repeated throughout this

paper, competency-based curriculum and education is a term that describes learning progressions based on mastery of content rather than passage of time. Competency-based learning is a system of education, often referred to as proficiency or mastery-based, in which learners advance and move ahead on their lessons based on demonstration of mastery or visibility of what they have learnt. Therefore, the current automatic progression of learners from primary school in grade seven to grade eight in secondary school in the Zambian education system is a total contradiction of the competency-based curriculum that the country's education system has embraced. In order for learners to progress at a meaningful pace, schools and teachers should provide differentiated learning and support so that every learner move to the next level with the required competencies. As mentioned in the research literature in the previous sections, the competency-based curriculum in Zambia is already facing a number of challenges related to the provision of teaching and learning resources and teacher's pedagogical content knowledge that is suitable for this type of education (Mkandawire, 2010). Another crucial challenge is what Mulenga and Lubasi (2019:72) identified in their study in the way schools continue to lose and misused time for learning to the extent that the duo explained that; 'learning time among educational staff seemed not to be regarded as a resource'. Educationalists around the world are aware that there is no miracle recipe for solving the different education problems because each education system has its own inertial forces and thus may respond differently to the same reality.

But irrespective of the assumed curricular model, a necessary basis for implementing a new or revised curriculum is the quality of professional development of teachers, adequate and appropriate teaching and learning resources. Any curriculum change needs to be accompanied by a consistent programme of teacher professional development. This is a necessary condition for a meaningful implementation of any curriculum.

In conclusion, the competency – based curriculum may appear sophisticated in design and not as easy as it appears in theory. For any education system to get the benefits of it, it requires teachers to be knowledgeable of the key principles of the curriculum and equipped with skills and desirable attitudes to teach using competency-based approaches. It can also be concluded that for a competency-based curriculum to be successful, teachers and teacher educators need proper in-service training so that they are acquainted with the basic tenets of the competency-based curriculum for it to be implemented effectively. Learning in a competency-based curriculum should be visible in the learner and not simply theorized about because the Outcome-based curriculum is designed in such a way that learners demonstrate the competencies.

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