

From Curriculum Reform to Classroom Reality: Human Resource Management and the Implementation of Competency-Based Secondary Education in Uganda

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Abstract— The implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum in Uganda's secondary education system has heightened the importance of effective Human Resource Management (HRM) in supporting educational reform. This paper examines the role of HRM in facilitating CBC implementation strategies and explores the emerging lessons and challenges associated with curriculum transformation in secondary schools. A singular methodology was adopted the entailed qualitative documentary review approach, drawing on policy documents, government reports, curriculum reform frameworks, and scholarly literature on human resource management and competency-based education in Uganda. The analysis focused on key HRM functions, including staff recruitment and deployment, professional development, performance management, employee motivation, and staff welfare. The findings reveal that effective implementation of the CBC is closely linked to the availability of competent, adequately trained, and motivated teachers and school leaders. Human resource management practices contribute significantly to enhancing teachers' pedagogical competencies, assessment practices, and capacity to deliver learner-centred instruction. However, implementation remains constrained by challenges such as inadequate teacher preparation, limited professional development opportunities, staffing shortages, poor working conditions, insufficient funding, increased workloads, and frequent staff transfers. The study further highlights the importance of continuous capacity building, supportive leadership, and strategic workforce planning in strengthening curriculum implementation. The paper concludes that human resource management is a critical determinant of successful competency-based education reform. Strengthening HRM policies and practices is essential for improving educational quality and ensuring the effective realization of the intended outcomes of Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum.

Index Terms — competency-based curriculum; curriculum implementation; secondary education; teacher professional development; educational reform.

I. INTRODUCTION

Educational reforms across the globe are increasingly being shaped by the need to equip learners with competencies that enable them to thrive in dynamic social, economic, and technological environments. Consequently, many countries have transitioned from content-based curricula towards competency-based approaches that emphasize the development of practical skills, critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities (SWARGIARY, 2024a), (Gillies, 2026). While curriculum reforms often focus on learning outcomes and pedagogical innovations, their success ultimately depends on the capacity and effectiveness of the human resources responsible for implementation. In this regard, Human Resource Management (HRM) has emerged as a critical determinant of educational quality and reform success (Sanae & S, 2024).

Human Resource Management refers to the strategic process of attracting, developing, motivating, deploying, evaluating, and retaining personnel to achieve organizational objectives effectively and efficiently. Within the education sector, HRM encompasses teacher recruitment, deployment, induction, professional development, performance appraisal, motivation, welfare, promotion, and retention (Pandit & Paul, 2023). These functions are essential because educational institutions rely predominantly on human capital to deliver services and achieve intended outcomes. Unlike other organizational resources, human resources possess the knowledge, skills, values, and competencies necessary to transform educational policies into meaningful learning experiences (Wyse et al., 2025). As such, teachers and school leaders remain the most important assets in educational systems and the principal agents of curriculum implementation.

The centrality of human resources in educational development has long been acknowledged in the literature. Human resources constitute the foundation for socio-economic transformation and effective service delivery because they determine how efficiently other resources are utilized (Rasheed, 2026). In education, teachers occupy a unique position as interpreters and implementers of curriculum reforms. Swargiary, (2024) observe that teachers are indispensable to the realization of educational policies and objectives, while Alkin et al., (2024) argues that curriculum reforms achieve their intended goals only when teachers possess the capacity and motivation to translate policy aspirations into classroom practice. Consequently, weaknesses in human resource management can undermine even the most well-designed educational reforms.

The implementation of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) reforms has intensified the importance of effective human resource management (Wamalwa, 2024). Unlike traditional curricula that emphasize content coverage and examination performance, competency-based education requires teachers to adopt learner-centred pedagogies, facilitate active learning, conduct

continuous assessment, integrate cross-cutting issues, and support the holistic development of learners (Singh, 2026). These shifts demand new professional competencies, enhanced instructional leadership, and sustained institutional support. Therefore, successful implementation of CBC extends beyond curriculum design to include the strategic management of educational personnel who are expected to operationalize the reform.

Uganda's introduction of the Competency-Based Curriculum for lower secondary education in 2020 marked a transformative shift in the country's educational landscape. The reform was motivated by concerns regarding graduate unemployment, skills mismatches, limited innovation, and the perceived inadequacy of traditional education in preparing learners for contemporary socio-economic realities (Adamson et al., 2024), (Kowshik.M.C, 2026). The curriculum seeks to produce learners equipped with practical competencies, entrepreneurial skills, critical thinking abilities, and positive values required for national development and global competitiveness. However, the implementation of these ambitious reforms has simultaneously generated new demands on teachers, school leaders, and educational administrators, thereby elevating the strategic significance of human resource management as advanced by (Alkin et al., 2024).

The motivation for this study arises from the growing recognition that curriculum reforms often succeed or fail at the implementation stage rather than at the policy formulation stage (Deng, 2025). Although Uganda has invested considerable effort in developing and rolling out the Competency-Based Curriculum, emerging evidence suggests that challenges related to teacher preparedness, professional development. The teaching staffing, motivation, workload, and institutional support continue to influence implementation outcomes (Adamson et al., 2024). These challenges highlight the need to examine curriculum reform not only from pedagogical and policy perspectives but also through the lens of human resource management. Understanding how HRM practices facilitate or constrain CBC implementation is essential for informing policy decisions and strengthening educational reform efforts (Alnaami et al., 2023).

This study also derives its significance from Uganda's distinctive position within the Great Lakes Region of Africa. While several countries in the region have undertaken curriculum reviews and educational reforms, Uganda is among the first countries to implement a comprehensive competency-based curriculum at the secondary education level on a national scale (OECD, 2023). This experience presents a valuable opportunity to generate context-specific evidence regarding the human resource dimensions of competency-based education. Lessons emerging from Uganda's reform journey have the potential to inform educational transformation initiatives in neighbouring countries and other developing contexts seeking to strengthen curriculum implementation through effective workforce management (Wilfred et al., 2026).

Despite the growing body of literature on competency-based education, significant knowledge gaps remain. Existing scholarship has largely concentrated on curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, assessment frameworks, and learner outcomes (Swargiary, 2024b) (Kumar, 2025).

Comparatively less attention has been devoted to understanding the role of human resource management in facilitating curriculum implementation, particularly within the context of developing countries. In Uganda, studies examining the Competency-Based Curriculum have predominantly focused on teacher perceptions, classroom practices, and implementation challenges, with limited emphasis on the broader HRM systems that shape teacher performance and institutional effectiveness (Arifani et al., 2026). Consequently, there remains insufficient empirical and conceptual understanding of how recruitment, deployment, professional development, performance management, motivation, and staff welfare influence the implementation of competency-based education.

Theoretically, this study is anchored in Human Capital Theory, which posits that investments in human knowledge, skills, competencies, and capabilities enhance productivity and organizational performance (Wamalwa, 2024). The theory underscores the importance of developing and managing educational personnel as strategic assets capable of driving educational transformation. Within the context of competency-based curriculum implementation, Human Capital Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how investments in teacher training, professional development, and workforce support contribute to improved educational outcomes (Gasevic & Okenwa-Emegwa, 2023). The theory further suggests that the effectiveness of curriculum reforms depends substantially on the quality and utilization of the human resources available to implement them.

The study lies in its integration of human resource management and competency-based curriculum implementation within a single analytical framework. Rather than examining CBC solely as a pedagogical reform, the study conceptualizes curriculum implementation as a human resource challenge that requires strategic workforce planning, capacity development, motivation, and institutional support (Abdurahim-Salain, 2026). By foregrounding the human resource dimensions of curriculum reform, the paper contributes a fresh perspective to the existing literature and advances understanding of the factors that influence successful implementation of competency-based education in Uganda and comparable contexts.

Against this background, the paper examines the role of human resource management in the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum in Uganda's secondary education sector. Specifically, it explores key HRM functions that support curriculum implementation, analyses emerging challenges affecting educational personnel, and identifies lessons arising from Uganda's ongoing experience with competency-based education (Takeuchi et al., 2022). In doing so, the study contributes to scholarly debates on educational reform while offering practical insights for policymakers, educational leaders, and practitioners seeking to strengthen the implementation and sustainability of competency-based learning.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a parallel singular methodology of qualitative approach that entailed desk-review research design to examine Human Resource Management (Ali et al., 2024). This method was selected due to its role in the provision of a comprehensive understanding implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Uganda's secondary education system. The design is appropriate for synthesising and critically analysing existing literature, policy documents, and institutional reports in order to generate interpretive insights on curriculum reform and human resource management practices (Bifuh-Ambe, 2024).

1) Data Sources

The study relied on secondary data obtained from a range of documentary sources. These included policy documents from the Ministry of Education and Sports, reports from the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), education sector strategic and implementation plans. The teacher professional development frameworks, peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and reports from international education organisations (Holloway, 2024). Literature published by National Council of Higher education in Uganda (2025) prioritized to ensure relevance to contemporary developments in competency-based education and HRM practices.

2) Population and Sampling Techniques

Documents were selected purposively based on their relevance to Human Resource Management in education, Competency-Based Curriculum implementation, and secondary education reform. Only credible, authoritative, and academically rigorous sources with direct relevance to Uganda or comparable secondary education systems were included in the review (Guo, 2023).

3) Data Analysis

Data were analysed using thematic content analysis. This involved systematic reading, coding, categorisation, and interpretation of qualitative data extracted from the selected documents (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Themes were developed both deductively, based on the study objectives, and inductively, emerging from the reviewed literature. The analytical themes included teacher recruitment and deployment, professional development, motivation and welfare, performance management, staffing constraints, and implementation challenges associated with Competence Based Curriculum in education (Aras, 2025).

4) Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Human Capital Theory, which posits that investment in human resources enhances productivity, efficiency, and organisational performance (Aturupane & Bank, 2021). The theory provided a lens for interpreting how HRM practices influence the effectiveness of Competency-Based Curriculum implementation in secondary education

5) Ethical consideration

This study relied exclusively on secondary data sources that are publicly available, and therefore did not involve direct interaction with human participants. As such, formal ethical approval was not required (Aras, 2025). However, ethical scholarly practice was strictly observed through accurate citation and acknowledgement of all sources used. In addition, care was taken to ensure intellectual honesty by avoiding plagiarism, ensuring proper interpretation of original authors' ideas, and maintaining fidelity to the meaning of the reviewed literature (Aldhaen et al., 2025).

III. RESULTS

The findings indicate that Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a dual strategic and operational role in the successful implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Uganda's secondary education system. The effectiveness of CBC implementation is strongly influenced by how well human resources particularly teachers and school leaders are recruited, developed, motivated, deployed, and retained (Zein & Hamied, 2025). In this regard, HRM is not only an administrative function but also a strategic driver of educational reform and quality improvement.

Strategic Role of Human Resource Management

At the strategic level, HRM is central to aligning human capital with the goals of competency-based education. The Competency-Based Curriculum requires teachers who are adequately trained, professionally developed, properly supervised, and effectively motivated to deliver learner-centred instruction (Lipton & Wellman, 2024). When these conditions are met, teachers demonstrate higher levels of commitment, productivity, and innovation in classroom practice.

The findings further reveal that human resources in education constitute a critical investment for national development. When strategically managed, they provide a source of institutional effectiveness and educational competitiveness (Burrus et al., 2022). In the context of CBC, strategic HRM involves long-term workforce planning, continuous professional development, performance appraisal systems, and the alignment of teacher competencies with curriculum demands. This strategic orientation ensures that education systems are responsive to changing pedagogical and labour market needs.

Operational Role of Human Resource Management

Operationally, HRM in Uganda's secondary education system is concerned with day-to-day management functions that support curriculum implementation. These include compliance with employment policies, teacher orientation, supervision, workload allocation, remuneration administration, and enforcement of professional standards (Alnaami et al., 2023). The findings indicate that effective operational HRM ensures smooth implementation of CBC through structured induction of teachers into competency-based pedagogies, ongoing supervision of instructional

practices, and enforcement of accountability mechanisms (Kiiza, 2014). However, weaknesses in operational HRM particularly in supervision, induction, and performance appraisal continue to affect the consistency of CBC implementation across schools.

Functions of Human Resource Management in CBC Implementation

1) Staff Recruitment and Deployment

The study reveals that recruitment and deployment of teachers significantly influence CBC implementation. Although education authorities are responsible for staffing schools, challenges such as uneven distribution of teachers, political interference, and staffing shortages affect effective curriculum delivery, particularly in science and technical subjects (Experts, 2022).

2) Staff Development

Continuous professional development emerges as a critical HRM function in supporting CBC. Teachers require ongoing training in competency-based pedagogies, assessment methods, and learner-centred approaches. However, limited access to in-service training, workshops, and ICT integration programmes constrains teacher preparedness for CBC implementation.

3) Staff Maintenance and Welfare

The findings show that staff welfare, including remuneration, working conditions, safety, and job security, directly affects teacher motivation and commitment. Poor working conditions, delayed salaries, and inadequate resources negatively impact teacher morale and reduce instructional effectiveness (Amzat & Khalifa, 2026).

4) Staff Relations

Effective communication and participatory decision-making are essential for strengthening staff relations in schools. The study finds that schools that promote collaboration, teacher involvement in decision-making, and supportive leadership demonstrate better implementation of CBC.

5) Job Performance and Reward Systems

Performance appraisal and reward systems are critical for enhancing teacher motivation (Baln et al., 2024). However, weak implementation of performance-based rewards and limited recognition of teacher effort undermine productivity and commitment to CBC goals.

6) Emerging Lessons from CBC Implementation

Several key lessons emerge from Uganda's experience with CBC implementation:

First, teacher capacity is the most critical determinant of successful curriculum reform. Schools that invest in continuous professional development and peer learning achieve better implementation outcomes.

Second, instructional leadership by head teachers plays a central role in guiding teachers through curriculum transition and promoting accountability.

Third, collaboration among stakeholders including government agencies, teacher training institutions, and development partners is essential for strengthening HRM systems.

Fourth, curriculum reform must be accompanied by systemic investment in human capital and professional development, including training, motivation, and retention strategies.

7) Challenges of Human Resource Management in CBC Implementation

The study identifies several interrelated challenges affecting HRM effectiveness in CBC implementation:

- Poor working conditions, including delayed or inadequate remuneration, negatively affecting teacher motivation.
- Staffing shortages and unequal distribution of teachers across schools, especially in rural and hard-to-reach areas.
- Weak recruitment and selection processes, sometimes influenced by political interference.
- Limited induction and inadequate preparation of teachers for competency-based approaches.
- Insufficient supervision and weak performance appraisal systems.
- Low levels of ICT integration due to inadequate skills and resources.
- High workload demands associated with continuous assessment and learner-centred instruction.
- Frequent transfer of teachers, disrupting continuity in curriculum implementation.
- Issues of indiscipline among some learners and staff, affecting school effectiveness.
- Limited funding for education, constraining HRM functions and professional development.

8) Strategies for Strengthening HRM in CBC Implementation

To address these challenges, the findings suggest the following strategic interventions:

- Improvement of teacher remuneration and working conditions to enhance motivation and retention.
- Strengthening merit-based recruitment and equitable deployment of teachers across regions.
- Institutionalisation of continuous professional development programmes focused on CBC pedagogy and assessment.
- Strengthening school leadership training to enhance instructional supervision and support.
- Development of robust performance appraisal and reward systems linked to teacher productivity.
- Investment in ICT infrastructure and teacher digital literacy to support modern pedagogical approaches.
- Reduction of unnecessary teacher transfers to ensure continuity and stability in schools.

- Increased education funding to support HRM functions and curriculum implementation needs.

Nevertheless, study demonstrates that Human Resource Management practices and planning as central to the successful implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum in Uganda. While strategic and operational HRM functions provide a framework for effective curriculum delivery, persistent structural reforms, financial, and underpin institutional challenges continue to hinder optimal implementation (Adamson et al., 2024) (Kowshik.M.C, 2026). Strengthening good HRM practices and systems is therefore essential for improving teacher performance, enhancing curriculum delivery, and achieving the intended outcomes of competency-based education in Uganda.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that Human Resource Management (HRM) is central to the successful implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Uganda's secondary education system. This is consistent with Human Capital Theory, which emphasises that investment in human knowledge, skills, and competencies enhances organisational effectiveness and productivity (Kiiza & Basheka, 2018). In the context of CBC, teachers and school leaders represent the most critical human capital, as their competencies and motivation directly influence the translation of curriculum policy into classroom practice.

A key insight from the study is the dual strategic and operational nature of HRM in curriculum implementation. Strategically, HRM is expected to ensure alignment between teacher competencies and curriculum demands through training, professional development, and workforce planning (Takeuchi et al., 2022). However, the findings suggest that this strategic function is still weakly institutionalised in Uganda's secondary education system. Limited continuous professional development and insufficient capacity-building mechanisms constrain teachers' ability to fully internalise competency-based pedagogies. This gap highlights a misalignment between curriculum reform ambitions and the readiness of the human resource system to support implementation.

Operationally, HRM functions such as recruitment, deployment, supervision, and reward systems significantly influence day-to-day curriculum delivery. The study shows that weaknesses in teacher induction, performance appraisal, and instructional supervision have led to uneven implementation of CBC across schools (Salim & Jolanta, 2024). This finding reinforces earlier scholarly positions that teachers are the primary agents of curriculum implementation and that their effectiveness depends largely on the quality of HRM systems supporting them.

Staff development emerges as the most critical HRM function for CBC success. The transition from content-based to competency-based education requires teachers to adopt learner-centred pedagogies, continuous assessment approaches, and skills-oriented instruction (Goto, 2026).

However, inadequate training opportunities, limited ICT competence, and insufficient exposure to CBC methodologies have hindered effective implementation. This indicates that curriculum reform without sustained teacher development is unlikely to achieve its intended outcomes.

The study also highlights the strong influence of working conditions, motivation, and welfare on teacher performance. Poor remuneration, heavy workloads, delayed salaries, and inadequate teaching resources negatively affect teacher morale and commitment (Medicine et al., 2020). These conditions undermine the motivational dimension of HRM and reduce the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. In line with Human Capital Theory, underinvestment in teacher welfare reduces the returns expected from curriculum reform initiatives (Kitinoja, 2025).

Furthermore, structural HRM challenges such as staffing shortages, uneven teacher distribution, weak recruitment practices, and frequent transfers disrupt continuity in instruction. These issues reflect weaknesses in human resource planning and deployment systems (McConnell et al., 2020). They also suggest that CBC implementation is being constrained not only by pedagogical challenges but also by systemic inefficiencies in managing educational personnel.

Despite these constraints, the study identifies important positive lessons. Schools that have strengthened instructional leadership, encouraged teacher collaboration, and supported peer learning have shown better adaptation to CBC requirements (Zein & Hamied, 2025). This indicates that leadership and school-level HRM practices can partially mitigate systemic weaknesses. Additionally, stakeholder involvement in teacher training and curriculum support has contributed to gradual improvements in implementation capacity.

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that CBC implementation in Uganda is fundamentally a human resource challenge. While the curriculum reform is conceptually aligned with global trends in competency-based education, its success depends on the availability of a well-trained, motivated, and adequately supported teaching workforce (Takeuchi et al., 2022). Without strengthening HRM systems, particularly in the areas of training, motivation, and staffing, the intended outcomes of the Competency-Based Curriculum may remain only partially realised.

V. THE IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study have important implications for education policy and curriculum reform in Uganda. First, they demonstrate that the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) is fundamentally dependent on the effectiveness of Human Resource Management (HRM) systems. This suggests that curriculum reform should be conceptualised not only as a pedagogical shift but also as a comprehensive human capital development process. Without parallel investment in teacher competence, motivation, and welfare, the intended outcomes of CBC may not be fully realised.

Second, the study reveals a persistent misalignment between curriculum reform objectives and existing HRM capacities. While CBC emphasizes learner-centred pedagogy and competency development, current systems of recruitment, training, deployment, and performance management are not yet fully aligned to support these demands. This gap calls for integrated policy coordination between curriculum development and human resource planning within the education sector.

Third, the findings raise concerns about equity in curriculum implementation, as disparities in staffing levels, professional development opportunities, and supervisory support may result in uneven CBC delivery across schools, particularly between urban and rural contexts.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

The Ministry of Education and Sports, in collaboration with universities teacher training institutions, should institutionalise sustained and accessible continuous professional development (CPD) programmes focused on competency-based pedagogy, assessment, and classroom practice. These should be school-based where possible to enhance accessibility and relevance.

The study recommends that, Teacher recruitment and deployment should be strengthened through transparent, merit-based, and needs-driven mechanisms to ensure equitable staffing across regions and subject specialisations, particularly in science and technical disciplines.

The study recommends Government of Uganda through the ministry of education and sports should improve teacher remuneration, working conditions, and welfare provisions. Timely salary payment, adequate instructional resources, and manageable workloads are essential for improving motivation and instructional effectiveness.

The study also recommends that School Board of Governors and leaders should be equipped through targeted training to provide effective instructional supervision and pedagogical support. Strengthening head teacher capacity is critical for sustaining CBC implementation at the school level.

The study recommends Teacher appraisal systems should be strengthened to ensure fairness, accountability, and developmental feedback. Performance-based recognition and reward systems should be introduced to encourage professionalism and innovation in teaching.

The study recommends that the Government to Investment in education technology and ICT infrastructure and teacher digital literacy should be prioritised to support competency-based teaching and learning, particularly in enhancing learner-centred instruction and digital pedagogy.

Furthermore, the study recommends need for financing and enhancing policy coherence in strengthening alignment curriculum reform and HRM strategies, supported by adequate and sustained education financing to ensure effective implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of Competence Based Curriculum in Uganda.

Lastly, the study underscores that strengthening Human Resource Management is indispensable for the successful implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum in Uganda. A coordinated approach that integrates curriculum reform with strategic human capital development is essential for achieving sustainable improvements in educational quality in the country and the entire Great Lakes Region.

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