



EFFECT OF RE-TOOLING ON TEACHERS' USE OF STRATEGIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO GRADE TEN LEARNERS IN SENIOR SCHOOLS IN TRANS-NZOIA COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract:

Retooling of teachers in senior schools in Kenya is aimed at ensuring a smooth transition from 8:4:4 to CBE. This is an initiative of the Teachers Service Commission. Retooling started in 2023 and continued up to 2024 for teachers teaching grades 2 to 7. In 2023, the TSC trained 60,642 teachers for these grades. The retooling for Senior school teachers (grades 10 to 12) started in 2025. The training utilized a [Smart Cascade Model](#), where Master Trainers first trained Trainers of Trainers (ToTs), who then led face-to-face, subject-clustered training sessions for the teachers at county or sub-county venues. Teachers were grouped based on their learning areas, such as English, Mathematics, Science, and Creative Arts, to ensure specialized instruction. The primary goal was to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively implement the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) and conduct Competency-Based Assessments (CBA). The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of retooling on teachers' use of strategies in teaching English in senior schools in Trans-Nzoia County. The study is guided by the following objectives: to determine the effect of retooling on teachers' ability to employ learner-centred strategies, to determine how teachers facilitated learning in class after retooling, and to establish the challenges teachers of English face when teaching English after retooling. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), descriptive survey design is used in collecting data from the members of a population in order to determine the current status

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under study. The target population comprised 750 teachers, who were retooled from whom a sample of 250 teachers was selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Approval to interview teachers was sought through the County Director of Education, Heads of respective institutions and the teachers themselves. Data were collected through questionnaires and interview guides. The study is anchored on Aileen Kennedy's (2005) Model of Continuing Professional Development, which suggests that *"individual teachers attend 'training events' and then cascade or disseminate the information to colleagues"* (Kennedy, 2005, p.240). Data was analysed descriptively using measures of central tendency. Findings of the study revealed that the teachers had undergone CBC retooling; however, most training sessions lasted short sessions, most of those trainers did not grasp the content so well, the training was not so much tailored to specific learning areas, many teachers still suffer from an attitude of contempt towards CBE and lacked adequate follow-up sessions. The study concluded that effective teacher retooling is key to successful CBE implementation in Senior Schools. It therefore recommends continuous professional development, training of trainers to be learning area specific, need to train teachers based on their learning areas continuously, need to rework on teachers' attitude towards CBE and peer mentorship programs to ensure effective CBE Curriculum implementation.

Keywords: retooling, Competency-Based Education (CBE), teaching strategies, grade ten learners, senior schools, curriculum implementation, Trans-Nzoia County

1. Introduction

As the needs of society change around the globe, so do the education systems, so that they can align with the skills and competences of the 21st century. Many education systems around the world are moving away from a knowledge-based curriculum to a competence-based curriculum. UNESCO (2023) hailed the Competence-Based Curriculum as one loaded with skills, values and attitudes. UNESCO views Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) as a positive, learner-centered, and skills-oriented reform designed to address 21st-century needs and reduce unemployment. Kenya introduced the [Competency-Based Curriculum](#) (CBC) in 2017 to replace the exam-oriented 8-4-4 system with a learner-centered model focused on practical skills, core competencies, and nurturing individual talents. The shift aims to address 21st-century needs, foster innovation, reduce academic pressure, and ensure education meets industry requirements. The [Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development \(KICD\)](#) views the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) as a transformative, progressive, and necessary shift for Kenya, focusing on nurturing learner potential through skills rather than mere knowledge.

The new 2-6-3-3-3 education structure focuses on holistic development of learners, talent identification, capacity building, and experiential and inquiry-based learning principles. The curriculum is built on the basis that every learner is guaranteed an

opportunity to develop and exercise creativity and be self-reliant for life in order to acquire lifelong learning competencies. UNESCO (2021) underscores the role of teacher training in achieving educational goals. The teachers are therefore required to use learner-centred strategies, make use of technology and creativity, and use real-world experiences to teach the learners' experiences (Oduor & Bett, 2024; Mwebi, 2023). For these changes in curriculum to happen, there was a need for teacher retooling. Retooling was necessary since curriculum implementation cannot happen if the teachers are not prepared (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2020).

Kenya has now introduced CBE to senior schools, with the first cohort joining grade ten in January 2026. This means that teachers who were retooled in 2025 are expected to handle these grade ten learners. Successful implementation of the strategies after retooling is therefore key to a seamless transition.

Retooling took cognizant of the central role that teachers play in this transition, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) undertook large-scale retooling initiatives in mid-2025 to arm Senior School teachers with core competencies related to the three curriculum pathways: Arts and Sports Science, Social Sciences, and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) (Nation Media, 2025; TSC, 2025). These programs are intended to enhance teachers' preparedness in learner-centred pedagogy, digital integration, and competency-based assessment, which was slated to start in January 2026.

2. Statement of the Problem

Teachers play a central role in the implementation of any curriculum. CBE in Kenya transitioned to senior schools in January 2026. The teachers, therefore, handled the first cohort of CBE learners in senior schools in January 2026. This was a culmination of teacher retooling in mid-2025. The expectation was that after retooling, teachers would be equipped with the necessary strategies to handle CBE learners. This research sought to investigate the effect of this retooling on teachers' use of strategies to teach English to grade ten learners in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya.

2.1 Purpose of the Study

- To investigate the effect of retooling on teachers' use of strategies in teaching English to grade ten learners in senior schools in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya.

2.2 Objectives of the Study

- 1) To determine the effect of retooling on teachers' ability to employ learner-centred strategies in teaching English.
- 2) To determine the teachers' role in class during English lessons after retooling.
- 3) To establish the challenges teachers of English face when teaching English to grade ten learners after retooling.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The study was based on Aileen Kennedy's (2005) Model of Continuing Professional Development, which suggests that “*individual teachers attend ‘training events’ and then cascade or disseminate the information to colleagues*” (Kennedy, 2005, p.240).

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The new 2-6-3-3-3 education structure focuses on holistic development of learners, talent identification, capacity building, and experiential and inquiry-based learning principles. The curriculum is built on the basis that every learner is guaranteed an opportunity to develop and exercise creativity and be self-reliant for life in order to acquire lifelong learning competencies. The teachers are therefore required to use learner-centred strategies, make use of technology and creativity, and use real-world experiences to teach the learners' experiences (Oduor & Bett, 2024; Mwebi, 2023). For these changes in curriculum to happen, there was a need for teacher retooling. Retooling was necessary since curriculum implementation cannot happen if the teachers are not prepared (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2020).

The Teachers Service Commission, therefore, started retooling teachers for the effective implementation of CBE. In particular, grade ten learners were expected to join senior schools in January 2026, and therefore, retooling of teachers was done from mid-2025. It is expected that teachers handling grade ten learners are applying learner-centred strategies they were exposed to during retooling. A study by Ndizeye, Mukamana, Uwizeyimana, & Nshimiyimana (2024) highlights teachers as primary stakeholders and they must adjust their pedagogy to suit the goals of CBE.

However, previous studies show that while most educators attended CBC retooling sessions, the majority rated the training quality as poor, citing short durations, under qualified facilitators, and minimal practical application (Kalla *et al.*, 2025). Research by Ashiali, H. (2023) identified pertinent problems of lack of training, scarcity of assessment resources and challenges in aligning the traditional assessment processes with those required for CBE. Sikolia (2024) shows that such collaborative practices among teachers as peer coaching, joint lesson planning, and collective problem-solving are critical factors that determine the success of CBE implementation.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Effect of Retooling on Teachers' Ability to Use Group Work, Project Work, Peer Teaching and Field Trips

The teachers of English were exposed to these strategies during retooling. All teachers agreed that retooling was important as it equipped them with confidence in implementing CBE. They all agreed that these strategies are effective when used in teaching. Group work, in particular, was the most popular strategy used according to the data. However, the teachers faced challenges with large numbers of grade ten learners against limited space in the class. The teachers said it was a challenge to have learners sitting in the "CBE" way since most classrooms were small, yet the learners were many. Most teachers asked learners to form groups based on how close they sat to each other. This, in turn, limits the creativity, one of the bedrocks of CBE, among learners, which comes with learners interacting with others from slightly different environment.

Group work was not extensively used, as many teachers said it took a lot of lesson time and feared they would not achieve all the set learning outcomes.

4.2 The Teachers' Role in the Classroom After Retooling

Findings of the study revealed that most teachers still held the role of the custodian of knowledge. They did more talking instead of the learners. This is contrary to CBE philosophy, where the teacher's role is facilitation of learning. Most teachers went ahead to explain ideas to the learners, as it was with the 8:4:4 curriculum. In an ideal CBE classroom, the teacher is purely a facilitator of learning. Sophisticated forms of teaching are needed to develop student competencies such as deep mastery of challenging content, critical thinking, complex problem-solving, effective communication and collaboration, and self-direction. In turn, effective professional development (PD) is needed to help teachers learn and refine the pedagogies required to teach these skills (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2016).

4.3 The Challenges Teachers Face When Teaching English After Retooling

The findings revealed that most teachers still felt inadequate in their teaching strategies for English. The teachers said they didn't really get adequate training during the days of training. This denied the trainee teachers the mentorship that is key to CBE implementation. Research conducted by Ochieng (2020) reveals that mentorship is a key factor in developing the competencies and knowledge needed to adapt to the changes implied by the CBE framework. They also revealed that some trainers were equally inadequate in mastery of content, to the point that they simply read the slides prepared in PowerPoint to the teachers. While the trainers would have focused mainly on strategies, the teachers felt the trainers took too much time on the overview of CBE and its justification. Differences in training length, methods, and resource allocation led to varying degrees of preparedness among teachers (Wanjiku *et al.*, 2024; Kimosop *et al.*, 2023).

Another challenge was inadequate resources in schools. Not many schools have computers, and learners in Kenyan schools are not allowed to carry phones to school. This has impacted negatively on digital literacy as a CBE competence. In most classrooms, teachers used their phones or laptops to demonstrate how to look up the meaning of a word. For every learner to learn that, the phone would go around the class, or learners would crowd around the device. As a result, this undermined the principle that teachers should make use of technology and provide authentic learning experiences that would stimulate learning (Oduor & Bett, 2024; Mwebi, 2023).

5. Recommendations

- 1) The Teachers Service Commission should increase the period of training to at least one month with regular follow-up programs.
- 2) Those teachers trained to train others should be assessed thoroughly by experts in CBE to ensure they have mastered content before they train their colleagues.
- 3) There is a need for the Ministry of Education to equip senior schools with more digital infrastructure to enable both teachers and learners in CBE to teach and learn digital literacy respectively.
- 4) The TSC should come up with training programs that target clusters of learning areas instead of the current mass training that pools all teachers together before they move to their clusters.
- 5) The TSC should develop structures for a teacher mentorship program that should be reviewed every year.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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