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## Pedagogical Practices for the Development of Learners' Imagination and Creativity in the Competency Based Curriculum in Primary Schools in Kitui West Sub-County, Kenya

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### Abstract

The introduction of competency-based curriculum in Kenya demands new roles and instructional skills. This study examined the pedagogical practices for developing learner imagination and creativity in the competency-based curriculum in primary schools in Kitui west sub-county, Kenya. The research objectives were: to establish the teacher practices that develop learner imagination and creativity; to examine the learning activities that develop learner imagination and creativity; and to determine the role of the parents in developing learner imagination and creativity in the competency-based curriculum. The mixed-method research study adopted a concurrent triangulation design. The study target population was two hundred and ninety-four (294) lower grade teachers and ninety-eight (98) head teachers. Purposive and proportionate sampling was applied in selection of one hundred and twenty (120) participants. Data was collected quantitatively and qualitatively using questionnaires, content analysis and semi-structured interviews respectively. The quantitative data was analyzed descriptively thus presented in form of means, percentages and standard deviation. Thematic analysis was used for qualitative data analysis. The findings revealed that pedagogical practices had a great influence on learner imagination and creativity. The learner-centered methods of teaching gave learners room to learn independently as indicated by a mean of 3.73. Teacher assessment skills were high especially on portfolio-based assessment. Language barriers, limited time and inadequate learning resources were found to hinder development of learner imagination and creativity. The study recommended that the government through the Ministry of Education should provide enough teaching and learning resources especially the crayons and plasticine to enable learners realize their full potential. In addition, parents' sensitization and teacher training on information, communication and technology should be prioritized.

**Keywords:** *competency-based curriculum, Imagination and creativity, Primary schools, Teacher practices, Learning activities.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

In the last two decades, investment in education in Sub-Saharan Africa has now not translated into useful know-how and competencies that can transform individuals and economies in which they live (EFA, 2012). This has therefore called for a move to a Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in many countries across the world and Kenya is now not an exception. The CBC is intended to point out the importance of creating skills and knowledge and furthermore applying those skills to real-life situations (Nyakang'i, 2018). There are seven core competencies to be accomplished by each student at each phase of learning. These are Imagination and Creativity, Communication and Collaboration, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Citizenship, Digital Literacy, Self-efficacy and Learning to Learn. The framework tries to build up these competencies with the goal that all Kenyans can flourish in the 21st century.

Creativity and imagination as one of the key competences in the CBC lay the foundation and gives rise to the acquisition of all other competencies and it's like the fulcrum. Increasing creativity in teaching begins with education. However, the absence of teacher training in creativity has been recognized in the research as an explanation for their failure to utilize imaginative exercises in the classrooms (Fleith, 2000; Kim, 2008). Authors stress the requirement for greater creative training in teacher preparation programs, which serves as a presumable beginning stage for imagination. Kim (2008) suggested teacher training in nonconforming practices, which helps in esteeming learner creativity, while Fleith (2000) prescribed imagination training including instructional planning, discourses, and follow-up observations.

There is little discussion in the initiatives on the guidelines of pedagogical strategies to adopt for fostering creativity (Lin, 2011). On the other hand, there is little response from school teachers on the urge of enhancing creativity through education (Cheng, 2004; Wu, 2004). Due to the paucity of empirical research on the pedagogical strategies to adopt, bolster and foster, a comprehensive framework is proposed to offer a more consistent rhetoric and since teaching and learning activities should be interrogated in the CBC to help learners acquire this key competence, this study therefore, sets out to examine the pedagogical practices for developing learner's imagination and creativity in the competency-based curriculum in primary schools in Kitui West sub-county, Kenya.

## **2.0 Literature review**

Jallow (2011) asserts that competency-based curriculum is the educational plan that looks to create in students the capacity to know, to learn and figure out how to learn; to get things done; and the capacity to be, to live and work with others. The CBC emphasizes on what learners are required to do instead of mostly concentrating on what they are relied upon to know (KICD, 2017). Such a curriculum is learner-centered and versatile to the changing needs of learners, educators, and society. The CBC suggests that students can acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and values. It focuses on observable and quantifiable practices that can be shown through some basic plans driven by an individual's basic motivations, character, attitudes, values or self-ideas (Weddel, 2006).

Mosha (2012) asserts that the focus of the competency-based program is not with respect to learning theory. However, it is more on the needs of the learner. The needs are commonly fundamental skills, the application of those skills and the achievement of higher abilities. In competency-based projects, the instructional process encourages the development and assessment of specific competencies. The CBC stipulates the utilization of learner-centered activity-based instructional methods during teaching and learning. It states that teachers are encouraged to utilize participatory teaching and learning methodologies as much as possible to assist students with showing self-esteem, confidence, certainty, and assertiveness (GOK, 2015).

A study conducted in Tanzania by Paulo (2014) showed that despite pre-service teachers' familiarity with the teaching methods prescribed to be used in the implemented CBC, majority of pre-service teachers were not able to adopt most of the recommended learner-centered teaching methods and thus they were implementing the curriculum using the conventional teacher-centered methods. Research has indicated that teacher's participation in in-service training of their own field makes students' learning results better in every aspect of their abilities (Hilden & Rautopuro, 2014). Besides, Niemi (2015) noticed that instructors' professional development should be viewed as a continuum starting from pre-service schooling, proceeding through the induction phase and continuing during the entire career.

In a study to establish the extent to which competency-based ethos were communicated in the learning materials in the fourth and seventh year of schooling. Mosha (2012) found that there was poor instructor readiness at the school level and poor induction or no induction courses at all. This denied most educators in primary schools the opportunity to gain essential capabilities for teaching the CBC effectively. These findings vary from the ones by Pianta (2011) that short, single workshops regular to educator professional development days have little follow up and have little impact on instructor development and understanding

The findings of a study by Olibie (2014) on parental involvement in curriculum implementation demonstrated that guardians are engaged with schools' curriculum implementation only to a little extent. Indeed, it is just in provision of course readings, requesting for extra lessons for learners, contributing for instructive film shows, discussing about learners' academic activities with staff, ensuring that learners do their home tasks just as well as giving positive feedback and showing regards for teachers and the heads for successful curriculum implementation that the guardians are included. Waweru (2018) carried out a study on the influence of teacher preparedness on the implementation of CBC in public primary schools. He did not investigate the pedagogies for developing learner imagination and creativity. This study attempts to fill that gap.

Despite a high level of awareness about CBT approaches among pre-service teachers, research indicates that teachers were unable to practice competency based instructional approaches (Kafyulilo et al., 2012). According to Jeffrey (2011), students use their imagination and experience to develop their learning by contributing to classroom curriculum and pedagogy. The literature review reveals that there is paucity of empirical studies carried out on pedagogical practices in

development of learner imagination and creativity in the CBC. This study therefore, sought to fill that empirical gap.

**3.0 Materials and methods**

This study adopted the pragmatic worldview. A pragmatism world view is essential in this study on various study stages. Pragmatism believes that research is g underpinned by the worth of knowledge being pursued as opposed to the realists-positivists/ relativists-interpretivists with a distinctive viewpoint about the world as being real (Creswell and Creswell 2018). The present study espoused a mixed-methods research approach that adopted a concurrent triangulation research design that permitted the instantaneous collection of both quantitative and qualitative data and the use of the results to comprehend a research problem as denoted by Creswell et al. (2018).

The study was conducted in Kitui West sub-county. Out of the eight sub-counties, the study chose Kitui West sub-county because it had all the features of a typical rural and urban environment found in many schools in Kenya. 120 participants were selected from the thirty selected primary schools in Kitui-West sub-County. The study applied both probability sampling and non-probability sampling procedures. Probabilistically, thirty primary schools were selected using stratified sampling proportionally based on the total number of private and public primary schools in the sub-County while non-probabilistically, purposive sampling was used to select 30 head-teachers and 90 lower grade teachers (grade 1, 2 & 3) where each grade had one teacher. This is portrayed in Table 1.

**Table 1: The study sample**

Category	Sample category		Sample	Sampling technique
	Public	Private		
Head teachers	23	7	30	Stratified sampling purposive
Teachers of grade one	23	7	30	Stratified sampling purposive
Teachers of grade two	23	7	30	Stratified sampling purposive
Teachers of grade three	23	7	30	Stratified sampling
Total	92	28	120	

Source: Survey data (2020)

A closed-ended questionnaire and a semi-structured interview schedule were applied to collect quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Piloting of Research Instruments was done in a neighboring sub-County of Mwingi West to detect the uncertainties of the items and ambiguous questions for improvement as denoted by (Creswell et al., 2018). The researcher preferred face, construct and content validity as they were relevant to the nature and purpose of the interview

schedule and questionnaire that were used. The researcher used data gathered from the pilot study to establish the reliability of the instrument's item for quantitative data.

The reliability of the research instruments was realized through the test-retest technique. Pearson product-moment was employed to compute the correlation coefficient in order to establish the extent to which the content of the questionnaires was consistent in eliciting the same response every time the instrument is administered. A correlation coefficient of 0.87 was arrived at. Kothari (2004) says that a coefficient of 0.7 or more implies that there is a high degree of reliability. For quantitative data, descriptive statistics, percentages mean and frequencies were used while for the qualitative data analysis, it was done thematically through identifying themes, categories and patterns emerging from the information collected. The data was analyzed to ascertain the accuracy, credibility, consistency, usefulness of the information as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The current study observed the following ethical measures; ethical clearance from Moi University, National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), and County Director of Education in Kitui County, Informed Consent and Voluntary participation from participants; and; confidentiality, privacy, anonymity and plagiarism. The referencing was also done according to the APA style.

#### **4.0 Results and discussion**

This section presents the analysis, interpretation and discussions of the effects of pedagogical practices for developing learner imagination and creativity in terms of: Teacher practices, teacher professional development, learning activities and parental involvement.

##### ***4.1 Effects of teacher practices for developing learner imagination and creativity in the competency-based curriculum***

The study sought to find out the extent to which the grade one, two and three teachers used a variety of given teaching strategies to develop learner imagination and creativity in the competency-based curriculum.

#### **Table 2: Descriptive statistics for the effect of teaching methods on learner imagination and creativity in the competency-based curriculum**

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<https://journals.mu.ac.ke/index.php/edj/>

Code	Item				N	Mean	SD
Stat	Stat	SE	Stat				
TP1	I use whole-class pupil discussions				87	3.24	.120
	repeat my words	87	3.89	.099			.920
TP3	I let pupils present their work in class				87	3.82	.103
TP4	I let pupils answer my questions in a chorus				87	1.64	.095
TP5	I use multiple information to describe a strand				87	3.45	.102
TP6	I encourage pupils to discuss and listen to each other						
	on issues I teach	87	4.16	.089			.834
TP7	I let pupils invent their own methods of doing tasks				87	3.71	.119
TP8	I let pupils use only methods I teach them				87	2.26	.131
TP9	<i>I draw link between strands and move back and forth</i>				87	4.17	.085
	<i>Source: Survey data (2020)</i>						.795

Table 2 indicates the descriptive statistics for the items of teaching methods used. The table shows that the mean scores were in the range of 1.64 to 4.17 which gave an overall mean of 3.37. The item TP9 ‘I draw link between strands and go back and forth between strands’ recorded the highest mean value of 4.17 with a standard deviation of 0.795 while the item TP4 ‘I let pupils answer my questions in a chorus’ had the lowest mean value of 1.64 and a standard deviation of 0.889. Interpreting the data in response to the question implied that, the learner centered methods posted high means as compared to the teacher centered methods which shows that teachers embraced methods that nurtured acquisition of key competencies.

Qualitative data in response to this question revealed that teachers of grade one, two and three were mostly encouraging discussions among pupils and the project work method to enhance acquisition of creativity and imagination competencies. These are learner-centered strategies that give learners room for self-discovery and explanation with the teacher playing the role of guiding unlike the teacher centered strategies where the teacher dominates in the teaching and learning process. This concurs with what Sawyer (2011) says that creative teaching and learning are fundamentally collaborative and improvisational and creative learning is likely to occur when rigid division between teacher and somewhat relaxed, creating an environment where students and teachers jointly construct the improvisational flow of the classroom. The above is evident from the following quotation:

*“[...] they encourage group work. May be in pairs, in groups, and rarely individually. So, pupils discuss among themselves, then now they give the feedback to the teacher and then the teacher summarizes.” (Interview, key informant, line 2, p.1 {7/1/2020}).*

*“Teachers in my school encourage pupils first of all, to look at the questions that have been asked and discuss among themselves especially the grade three pupils, but still in*

*grade one and two they do discuss and listen to each other on issues that teachers are teaching. Still, the pupils are encouraged by their teachers to link what they are taught and relate it to what the strand tells them.” (Interview, key informant, line 6, p.3 {9/1/2020}).*

The use of learner centered approaches could be attributed to the curriculum design requirement that by the end of the early year’s education, learners should communicate appropriately using verbal and non-verbal modes, as well as applying creative and critical thinking skills in problem solving. The current findings differ from the findings of a study in Tanzania by Paulo (2014) which indicated that, the pre-service teachers dominated the teaching and learning process by assuming most of the roles during the learning activities except for short recall based verbal questions which needed teachers’ verbal instructions.

**Table 3: Most and least suitable method used for developing learner imagination and creativity in the competency-based curriculum**

Code	Item	Most Suitable				Least Suitable					
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
TP1	I use whole-class pupil discussions teacher’s words	2	2.3	3	3.4	TP2	I let pupils repeat	1	1.1	5	5.7
TP3	I let pupils present their work in class	5	5.7	1	1.1						
TP4	I let pupils answer my questions in a chorus	–	–	39	44.8						
TP5	I use multiple information to describe a strand	1	1.1	1	1.1						
TP6	I encourage pupils to discuss and listen to each other on issues taught	45	51.7	–	–						
TP7	I let pupils invent their own methods	29	33.3	3	3.4						
TP8	I Let pupils use only the methods I teach them	3	3.4	33	37.9						
TP9	I draw link between strands and go back and forth between strand	1	1.1	2	2.3						
<b>Total</b>		87	100	87	100						

Source: Survey data (2020)

Table 3 shows the quantitative analysis in response to the question in the questionnaire on which methods, the teachers thought suitable for developing learner imagination and creativity in the competency-based curriculum. 51.7% of the respondents indicated that item (TP6) ‘I encourage pupils to discuss and listen to each other on issues that I teach’ was recorded as the most suitable method for developing imagination and creativity. While 44.8% of the respondents indicated that item (TP4) ‘I let pupils answer my questions in a chorus’ as the least suitable method to develop learner imagination and creativity in the competency-based curriculum. The above findings could imply that, giving learners room to air their views to one another through discussions could enhance their creativity and imagination skills unlike encouraging them to give answers as whole class since this could distract thinking and imagination of slow learners.

#### 4.2 Teacher professional development in utilization of learner imagination and creativity

The study sought to find out the number of surveyed teachers who had undergone through CBC trainings and further look at the effectiveness of the trainings towards learner acquisition of imagination and creative competencies in the CBC.

**Figure 1: Attendance of teacher training**

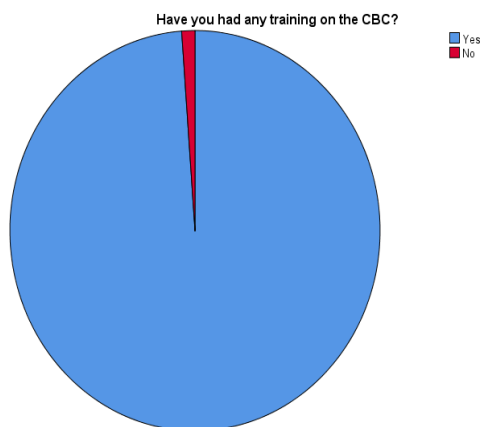


Figure 1 shows that almost all of the surveyed respondents 98.9% had been trained on the competency-based curriculum while 1.1% had not received any training on CBC. Failure to attendance could be attributed to their nature of work or the hindrances to attending the training as most the trainings were held during the midterms and on holidays. These findings concur with a study conducted in Nigeria which found that teachers were exposed to trainings for them to handle the learners in the new curriculum (Ikegwuani, 2019). Moreover, the current findings are in line with Stronge (2011) who put emphasis that instructors must receive training to assume their purposes in aid to learner's fulfillment of their potential.

The following quotations are evidence of the above:

*"The CBC trainings have been undertaken; I think they went for the fourth one last holiday. Most of the teachers have been trained so I think the ministry has done so well on the same. However, they should increase the trainings because they are helpful to the teachers." (Interview, key informant line, 71, p.23 {16/1/2020}).*

KNUT (2019) report which stated that, short duration trainings meant that teachers might not have been equipped with necessary skills about competency-based curriculum. Therefore, teachers need time for in-service training for them to have considerable knowledge to understand CBC and implement it confidently, effectively and successfully.



### 4.3 Effectiveness of learning activities in development of learner imagination and creativity in the CBC

The study sought to examine the learning activities that develop learner imagination and creativity in the CBC. This section therefore serves to analyze, present and show interpretation of those learning activities in response to the questions in the questionnaire and the responses from the interviews.

**Table 4: Descriptive statistics for the learning activities in the CBC**

Code	Item	N	Mean	SD		
		Stat	Stat	SE	Stat	
LA1	Drawings are key to acquisition of imagination and creativity	87	4.21	.047	.435	
LA2	Singing facilitates learner imagination and creativity	87	3.92	.084	.781	
LA3	Imagination and creativity can be acquired through modeling	87	3.48	.092	.861	
LA4	Imagination and creativity can be developed through stories	87	3.43	.086	.802	
LA5	Role plays promote imagination and creativity in learners	87	3.76	.088	.821	
LA6	Colouring can indicate an imaginative and/or a creative learner	87	3.15	.093	.870	

Source: Survey data (2020)

Table 4 indicates the descriptive statistics for the items of learning activities that the grade one, two, and three teachers let learners to employ in developing their imagination and creativity. The respondents scored highest in the aspect of LA1 ‘Drawings are key to acquisition of learner imagination and creativity’ with a mean value of 4.21 and a standard deviation of .435. Item LA6 ‘Colouring can indicate an imaginative and/or a creative learner’ scored the lowest mean of 3.15 and a standard deviation of .870. Interpreting the results indicated that, drawing was the most practiced learning activity that was thought to make learners creative whereas colouring was the least activity that was thought to provoke learner imagination and creativity.

Rowe et al., (2018) study on whether theatrical experiences improve creativity among preschoolers found that, participating in early childhood performances enhances imagination and creativity. The study further suggested that, engaging in early-childhood theatre may be one route to improving pretend play and ultimately creativity in young children.

The participants went ahead and said the following about other learning activities:

*“Through drawings, the children can be able to portray their imagination and creativity in most of the subjects we are teaching. So that is very effective. Role play is another one where learners are given room to demonstrate what they can do although most of them lack confidence and language.” (Interview, key informant, line 83, p.28 {21/1/2020}).*

The above findings are supported by Salmon and Lucas (2011) that, while drawing, children reconstruct their thoughts and represent their own mental images, portraying their creativity.

#### 4.4 Parents role in developing learner's imagination and creativity

The fourth objective of the study sought to determine the roles played by the parents in developing learner imagination and creativity in the CBC. This section analyzes, presents, interprets and discusses the findings that provide answer to the last research question of the study.

**Table 5: Descriptive statistics for the parents' role in development of learner imagination and creativity**

Code	Item					N	Mean	SD
Stat	Stat	SE	Stat					
PR1	Parents participate actively in developing learner creativity				87	3.09	.103	.779
PR2	Parents provide resources to support learner acquisition of imagination and creativity				87	3.83	.075	.702
PR3	Parents are involved in the CBC through the PTA				87	2.63	.084	.960
PR4	Parents make follow-ups of their children in the school				87	3.34	.088	.819
PR5	Parents need to be educated on their CBC roles				87	4.48	.054	.503

Source: Survey data (2020)

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics for the 5 items measuring the parents' roles in the development of learner imagination and creativity in the CBC. Interpreting the data further meant that there was low parental involvement in development of learner imagination and creativity.

The above findings differed from the findings arising from the interviews whereby, over half of the head teachers stated that parents participated actively in the school activities that develop imagination and creativity among the learners. This was through the provision of locally available resources and the collaboration between parents and teachers in designing the assessment tools. The reason behind this difference in findings could be due to the fact that, the question in the questionnaire did not specify the particular activities that parents got involved into but rather it focused on general involvement. However, item PR2 which recorded a mean of 3.83 clearly indicated a concurrence in responses from the questionnaires and the interviews.

## 5.0 Conclusions and recommendations

The choice of the teaching method is vital in instruction. The need to emphasize on the use of learner-centered methods is clear as indicated by the findings from this study and the literature reviewed. This study concludes that provoking learners to actively and fully participate in classroom tasks enhances imagination and creativity. Most of the learning activities in the CBC enhance participation and socialization. Majority of the parents were fully involved in activities

that enhance imagination and creativity in learners but some of them had a negative attitude towards the CBC. The study hence concluded that, induction of parents should be done thoroughly for them to embrace the new 2-6-3-3-3 system of education.

The study recommends Ministry of Education ought to consider introducing the CBC in the teacher training colleges for early preparation of the teacher trainees. In collaboration with school administrators, the MOE should create frequent forums for sensitizing parents on their CBC roles for enhancement of imagination and creativity of the learners.

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### **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this paper.

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