

Influence of Parental Role Construction on the Implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum in Public Primary Schools in Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract

The implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) remains a key priority in Kenya's ongoing educational reforms, aimed at fostering practical skills, values, and competencies among learners. Its successful rollout, however, largely depends on the active stakeholder engagement, most notably, parents. This study examined the influence of parental role construction on the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in public primary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. Guided by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Theoretical Model of the Parental Involvement Process, the research explored how parents' beliefs about their educational roles relate to CBC implementation. Using a mixed methods approach and a convergent research design, data was collected from 248 parents, 13 teachers, and 10 PTA representatives through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and linear regression, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Findings showed a moderate positive correlation ($R^2 = .548$, $p < 0.05$) between parental role construction and CBC implementation, with role construction explaining 30.1% of the variance in implementation success. Qualitative findings revealed that, while parents agreed on their responsibilities, such as attending meetings, communicating with teachers, and supporting home learning, their involvement in school events and volunteering activities varied. The study concludes that parents' perceptions of, and adherence to, their educational roles significantly affect CBC implementation. It is recommended that stakeholders develop targeted awareness programmes to clarify parental roles, build capacity through training and resources, and facilitate sustained communication between schools and families to support effective curriculum implementation.

Keywords: *Parental Role Construction, Parental Engagement, Competency-Based Curriculum, Implementation*

1.0 Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right and a key driver of personal and national development, equipping individuals with essential skills, knowledge, and values (Rieckmann, 2018; UNESCO,

2019). Kenya's education system has undergone several reforms aimed at improving quality, equity, and relevance in line with the country's Vision 2030 development goals. The most recent and significant of these reforms is the introduction of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in 2016, which shifts the focus from content mastery to the development of core competencies, values, and practical skills. Designed to nurture each learner's potential, CBC marks a transformative shift in teaching and learning approaches across all levels of basic education.

Successful implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) requires more than changes in teaching strategies or school infrastructure; it demands active collaboration among all education stakeholders, particularly schools and families. As research shows, educational reforms often fail when systemic support and stakeholder collaboration are lacking (Fullan, 2007; Sayed & Ahmed, 2015). Moreover, studies have consistently found that parental involvement enhances student learning outcomes (Kalayci & Oz, 2018; Sheridan & Wheeler, 2017). The CBC framework recognizes this by placing strong emphasis on parental empowerment and engagement as a core principle of its success (KICD, 2019).

Despite this policy emphasis, evidence from Kenya indicates a persistent gap between expectations and actual parental involvement in CBC implementation. Many parents remain unclear about the roles they are expected to play in supporting their children's learning under the new system (Amunga et al., 2020). This disconnect between policy and practice is attributed to inadequate sensitization, limited communication between schools and families, and minimal inclusion of parents in the curriculum design and rollout process. In addition, family beliefs, socioeconomic pressures, and cultural values influence how parents interpret and respond to invitations for involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) emphasizes active parental engagement as a key factor in its success, many parents remain uncertain about their roles in supporting its implementation. This uncertainty stems from inadequate sensitization, poor communication between schools and families, and limited inclusion of parents in curriculum-related activities. As a result, parental involvement often remains superficial, focusing on fundraising or disciplinary issues rather than learning support. In addition, social and cultural factors such as economic pressures, differing beliefs, and low confidence in engaging with teachers further hinder meaningful participation. Consequently, the partnership between schools and families, essential for the effective implementation of CBC, remains weak. This study, therefore, seeks to explore how parents in different socio-economic and cultural contexts in Nakuru County construct their roles and how these constructions influence the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H₀: There is no statistically significant relationship between parental role construction and CBC implementation in public primary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya.

1.4 Theoretical framework

This study was guided by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Theoretical Model of the Parental Involvement Process (figure 1), which offers a comprehensive explanation of the motivations, decisions, and actions that drive parental engagement in their children's education. Grounded in social learning theories such as Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), the model emphasizes that parental beliefs and social context significantly shape how and why parents choose to become involved in school-related activities (Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2011).

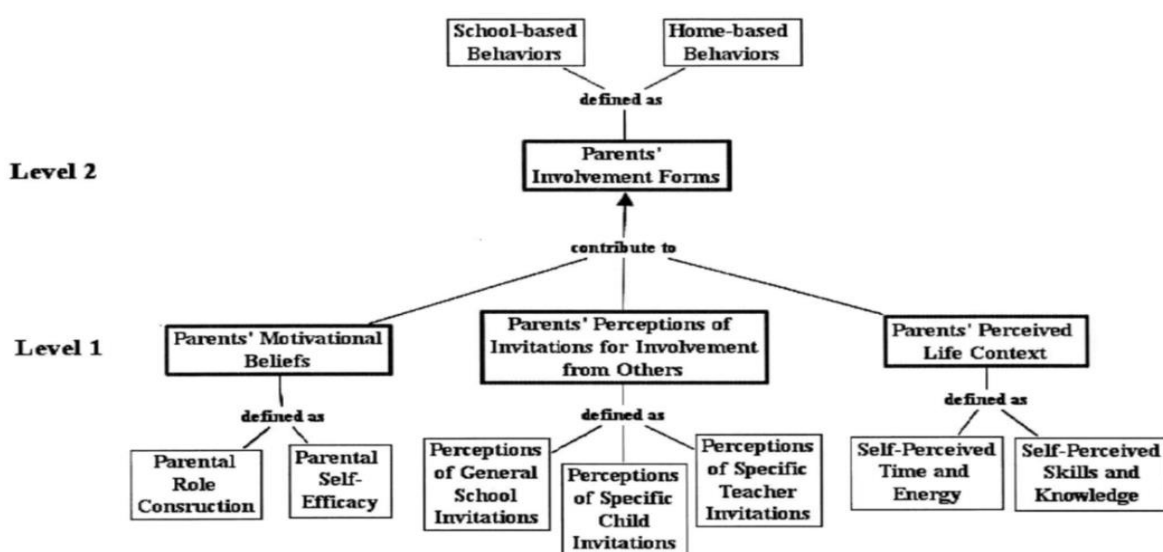


Figure 1. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Revised Model of the Parental Involvement Process
Source: Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler & Hoover-Dempsey (2005)

The model defines parental involvement as a multi-level process influenced by three primary factors: (1) parents' motivational beliefs, including role construction and self-efficacy; (2) perceptions of invitations for involvement from schools, teachers, and children; and (3) perceived life context, which includes time, energy, and skills for engagement (Walker et al., 2005). These interact to shape parents' decisions about how much and in what ways they engage in their child's learning. This study focused on parental role construction, a core component of motivational beliefs, as it forms the foundation for how parents perceive and enact their involvement in their children's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2011). While other factors in the model, such as self-efficacy and life context, also influence involvement, role construction is considered a foundation to these, shaping whether parents engage at all. Focusing on this construct allows for a manageable yet theoretically grounded analysis, with other influences potentially reflected in parents' responses and experiences during data collection.

The implementation of Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum relies strongly on building strong and sustained family support from parents. Unlike conventional curriculum models like the 8-4-4

system that placed responsibility primarily on teachers, CBC encourages active parental participation in learning activities that extend beyond the classroom. Therefore, parents' understanding of their role, directly affects whether and how they engage in critical areas such as learning at home, homework supervision, school participation, and communication with teachers (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). By adopting this model, the study was able to examine the specific beliefs that inform parental behaviors within the CBC context and how these beliefs influence engagement levels in public primary schools in Nakuru County. The model's structure supported the formulation and testing of hypotheses regarding the relationship between role construction and parental involvement in CBC implementation.

2.0 Literature Review

The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) was adopted in Kenya to align education with 21st-century needs, by focusing on teaching students to use what they learn in everyday practice. According to Jallow (2011), CBC encourages learners to work independently, be flexible and cooperate with others. Thus, CBC emphasis is placed on reducing rote learning, promoting creativity, encouraging learners to think critically and take responsibility for their learning (KICD, 2017; Ashioya et al., 2020). Similar reforms across Africa (e.g., South Africa, Tanzania, Rwanda) reflect a continental push toward more relevant and holistic education (Karani et al., 2021).

Successful CBC implementation relies heavily on learner-centered pedagogies, where the teacher becomes a facilitator and the learner an active participant (Mosha, 2012). However, Kenya's CBC framework also places considerable emphasis on the role of parents. KICD (2019) identifies parents as co-educators, responsible not only for providing learning resources but also for engaging in moral guidance, talent development, and educational decision-making. McNulty, Prosser and Beining, (2011) and Anyikwa and Obidike (2012) argue that effective parental engagement involves consistent collaboration between schools and families, grounded in mutual accountability and respect. Goodall and Montgomery (2014) expand on this by suggesting that engaged parents move beyond passive support to share ownership of their child's learning.

Despite these expectations, several studies suggest that meaningful parental involvement remains limited. Mogambi (2017) and Mwarari et al. (2020) found that many Kenyan parents view learning as the sole responsibility of teachers. This passive outlook is partly inherited from the 8-4-4 system, where the parent's role was largely peripheral. Even where engagement does occur, it is often reduced to logistical support, attending meetings or buying school supplies (Olibie, 2014). This narrow understanding contradicts the CBC's vision of parents as active partners in curriculum implementation.

A key concept in understanding parental engagement is parental role construction; the beliefs parents hold about what their role in their child's education should be (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). These beliefs shape not only the extent of involvement but also the nature of their participation. Yet, much of the existing literature treats parental involvement in general terms, overlooking how role construction may change in the face of a new, competency-based curriculum. Studies tend to highlight surface-level engagement (e.g., helping with homework or

attending events), with limited inquiry into how parents internalize and interpret their expected roles under CBC.

Context also plays a major role as Sekiwu and tamale (2019) observed that in many African settings, especially in low-income households, parents often view education as the school's responsibility. This is compounded by limited awareness of CBC, low literacy levels, and economic constraints. Guyo, Mwirichia, and Kibaara (2022) noted that many Kenyan parents still judge educational success through grades and exams, which clashes with the CBC's process-oriented, skills-based approach. Nyarko (2011) similarly found that socio-economic status and educational background influence parents' confidence and capacity to engage in meaningful ways.

Although studies such as Mwenje et al. (2020), Adhiambo (2020), and Ngozwana et al. (2024) have explored the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) from the perspective of parents, their focus has largely been on general attitudes and perceptions rather than a detailed analysis of how parents interpret and enact their roles in CBC implementation. While CBC policy documents outline key areas for parental engagement, including decision-making, communication, and home-based learning, few studies in Kenya explore how these roles are actually enacted in practice, particularly in public primary schools. Moreover, existing research rarely interrogates how parental role construction directly influences the implementation of CBC. This study seeks to address that empirical gap by investigating the relationship between parents' beliefs about their roles and their actual involvement in the CBC context.

3.0 Methodology and Materials

3.1 Research design

The study adopted a mixed methods approach within the pragmatic paradigm. Pragmatism offers a flexible and problem-centered perspective that values practical solutions over strict allegiance to any one philosophical stance. It allows researchers to explore complex social phenomena using both numerical data and lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). The study employed a convergent parallel research design, which involves collecting quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, analyzing them separately, and then integrating by merging the results at the interpretation stage to generate a comprehensive conclusion (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

3.2 Sampling

The study targeted 688 parents, 86 teachers, and 86 PTA chairpersons from 86 public primary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. A stratified random sampling was used to select 248 parents, while 13 teachers with the most experience in CBC were purposively selected based on headteacher recommendations. Additionally, 10 PTA representatives were selected through convenience sampling for focus group discussion based on availability. This combination of sampling methods ensured that the study gathered balanced, relevant, and context-rich data from key stakeholders in CBC implementation in primary schools in Kenya.

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3.4 Validity and Reliability

A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from parents, while interviews and a focus group discussion were used to collect qualitative data from teachers and PTA chairpersons respectively. Experts evaluated the questionnaire scales for face and content validity after making modifications based on existing literature. Additionally, the reliability of CBC implementation items was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and indicated a value of 0.879, while the coefficient for parental role construction items was 0.778. Hair et al. (2019) contends that the questionnaire items displayed internal reliability as they surpassed the 0.7 threshold.

Alongside establishing validity and reliability for the quantitative tools, the researcher ensured trustworthiness in the qualitative strand by applying the standards of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007; Creswell, 2014). Credibility was enhanced through member checking, where preliminary findings were shared with participants for feedback (Lincoln & Guba, 1988). Transferability was addressed by providing a detailed description of the research context and methodology, allowing others to judge relevance to their own settings (Anney, 2014). Dependability was supported by maintaining an audit trail documenting all research procedures, enabling replication (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Confirmability was ensured by grounding findings in participant input, using audio recordings, transcripts, and transparent documentation to minimize researcher bias (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

3.5 Data collection

The researcher made initial visits to each school to get to know participants and ensure they felt comfortable sharing openly. At the same time, data were gathered using questionnaires, face-to-face interviews and a group discussion. Questionnaires were self-administered to parents. Prior to filling out consent forms, the participants were informed about the study's goal, were informed that their participation was voluntary and that their information would be kept confidential (McLeod, 2019). Face-to-face interviews and a group discussion were conducted with teachers and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) representatives respectively.

Data analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent characteristics, and regression analysis was applied to test relationships between variables (Field, 2018). Qualitative data from the interviews and FGD were analyzed thematically, following the six-step frameworks of Braun and Clarke (2006) and Creswell (2012). MAXQDA 24 software was used to support coding and theme development, improving the organization and interpretation of the data. The study used a convergent mixed-methods approach, with quantitative and qualitative data analyzed separately before comparing the results for areas of agreement and difference. A side-by-side narrative approach was employed to present the findings thematically and conceptually, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Throughout the research process, ethical standards were rigorously upheld. Participants were given clear information about the study's objectives, potential risks, and benefits, and were encouraged to ask questions before giving informed consent (Lambert & Glacken, 2011; McLeod,

2011). Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the use of pseudonyms and secure data storage. The study posed no harm to participants, and all participation was voluntary. Key ethical principles; including privacy, consent, and data protection, were consistently observed (Yin, 2018).

4.0 Results and discussion

4.1 CBC Implementation

Table 2 presents the quantitative results from parent respondents. To enrich these findings, qualitative insights from teachers and PTA members were also included. The section below is structured item by item, presenting parent responses first, followed by relevant qualitative perspectives from teachers and PTA members.

Table 2: CBC Implementation

Item Code	Statement	Mean	SD
CBC1	Teacher-parent collaboration is essential for CBC success	4.564	0.822
CBC2	Engagement supports child's holistic development	4.218	0.894
CBC3	Engagement improves academic and personal outcomes	4.265	0.86
CBC4	Collaboration ensures proper CBC implementation	4.204	0.89
CBC5	Engagement enhances retention and performance	4.36	0.77
CBC6	Engagement strengthens school attachment and climate	4.209	0.713
CBC7	Participation improves school decision-making	4.123	0.902
CBC8	Partnerships improve parent-teacher communication	4.332	0.771
	Grand Mean	4.284	0.828

The findings suggest that parents strongly support the core principles of CBC, particularly in areas such as collaboration with teachers, improving student performance, and enhancing communication between home and school. Teachers and PTA members generally echoed these views, reinforcing the belief that parental involvement significantly benefits learning. However, while both groups largely agreed on the importance of collaboration, some nuances emerged. For instance, teachers emphasized the importance of consistent reinforcement of learning at home, whereas parents were more focused on broader outcomes like performance and discipline. Furthermore, while most parents viewed their participation as beneficial for school climate and student retention, teachers expressed concern that engagement was often inconsistent or limited to a few active parents. Notably, item CBC7, regarding participation in school decision-making, reflected the greatest variability among parents, with some expressing uncertainty or lack of confidence. Teachers and PTA members similarly observed that not all parents feel equipped or empowered to contribute to governance discussions, pointing to a shared recognition of this gap. These contrasts highlight the need not only to strengthen overall parental engagement but also to create more inclusive and structured opportunities for parents to participate meaningfully in decision-making and other aspects of CBC implementation.

4.2 Parental role construction

Parental role construction was examined as an independent variable, measured by nine items on a five-point Likert scale. Table 3 summarizes the findings.

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Table 3: Parental role construction

Item Code	Statement	Mean	SD
PRC1	Actively guiding child's education regardless of socioeconomic status	4.441	0.878
PRC2	Attending meetings with teachers/school staff	4.469	0.812
PRC3	Attending school/class events	4.123	1.066
PRC4	Communicating regularly with teachers	4.351	0.926
PRC5	Engaging in CBC curriculum/school-related decisions	4.322	0.895
PRC6	Socializing the child academically for future self-sufficiency	4.346	0.883
PRC7	Responsibility for home-based learning (homework/projects)	4.275	1.028
PRC8	Providing required learning resources	4.327	0.947
PRC9	Responsibility to volunteer services/resources to the school	3.896	1.218
	Grand Mean	4.283	0.962

Parents affirmed their role in supporting education under the CBC, especially through communication, guidance, and participation in decision-making. Perspectives from teachers and PTA members helped contextualize these findings, highlighting challenges in the consistent fulfillment of certain roles like volunteering and event participation. These complementary views suggest that while parental role construction is well understood by most parents, institutional support may be needed to promote more equitable participation across all families.

4.4 Relationship between parental role construction and CBC implementation

To determine the extent to which parental role construction predicts CBC implementation, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. The aggregate mean scores for parental role construction items served as the independent variable, while aggregate scores for CBC implementation items constituted the dependent variable. The results are shown in Tables 5, 6 and 7.

Table 4 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig.
1	.548 ^a	0.301	0.297		0.38918	.000
<i>a Predictors: (Constant) Parental Role Construction</i>						
<i>b Dependent Variable: CBC Implementation</i>						

The findings on table 5 findings demonstrated a moderate positive correlation ($R^2=.548$, $p<0.05$) between Parental role construction and CBC implementation. The R^2 value of .301 indicates that parental role construction accounts for approximately 30.1% of the total variance in CBC implementation. This proportion of explained variance reflects a moderate effect size and underscores the relevance of parents' beliefs and expectations in shaping school-level curriculum outcomes. The adjusted R^2 value (.297) is slightly lower than the raw R^2 , reflecting a minor correction for model complexity. This small difference confirms that the model does not suffer from overfitting and remains generalizable to the broader population. The overall fit of the regression model was evaluated using ANOVA. The results are presented in Table 6.

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Table 6 Model Fit

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.608	1	13.608	89.847	.000 ^b
	Residual	31.655	209	0.151		
	Total	45.263	210			

a Dependent Variable: CBC Implementation
b Predictors: (Constant), Parental Role Construction

The ANOVA results ($F(1, 209) = 89.847, p < 0.05$) in Table 5, show that the regression model was robust enough to predict CBC implementation. This indicated that parental role construction had a significant impact on the implementation of CBC in primary schools. The regression coefficient output was examined to determine its contribution to the overall model. The results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7 Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B		Beta (β)		
(Constant)	2.327	0.212		10.953	.000
Parental Role Construction	0.462	0.049	0.548	9.479	.000

a Dependent Variable: CBC Implementation

Results in Table 6 showed that parental role construction had a positive and statistically significant effect on CBC implementation ($\beta = 0.548, p < 0.05$). The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.462$) indicates that for every one-unit increase in parental role construction, CBC implementation increased by a predicted 0.462 units, holding other factors constant. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected. The study concluded that CBC implementation in primary schools is positively influenced by how parents perceive their role in supporting their children's education under the CBC framework.

These findings are consistent with Langputeh, Embong, and Mansor (2023), who argued that parents who construct an active role for themselves are more likely to take initiative in both home- and school-based learning contexts. The observed effect also aligns with findings by Kim, Sheridan, Kwon, and Koziol (2013), who reported that active parental role construction correlates with positive school outcomes, including higher teacher ratings of students' adaptive behavior and fewer behavioral problems. Similarly, Gonzalez-DeHass et al. (2022) add that the decision for parents to engage is influenced by their own beliefs about their duties and abilities as well as factors in the environment where they live in.

These insights support the current study's conclusion that parents who see themselves as responsible co-educators in the education process of their children are more likely to contribute positively to the implementation of curriculum initiatives such as CBC. However, the results also highlight that while parental role construction is a significant predictor, it is not the only factor influencing CBC implementation. According to Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013), parents

tend to respond to messages from staff at school, meaning that their role as a parent is formed in part by what the school expects. This implies that effective CBC implementation may depend not only on parental attitudes but also on how schools communicate and encourage parental engagement.

5.0 Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the influence of parental role construction on the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in public primary schools, drawing on quantitative data from parents and qualitative insights from teachers and PTA representatives. The findings showed that parents generally recognize and value their role in supporting their children's education under the CBC framework, particularly through attending meetings, guiding home-based learning, maintaining communication with teachers, and providing learning resources. A moderately strong, statistically significant relationship was found between parental role construction and CBC implementation, with role construction accounting for 30.1% of the variance. This means that the more parents perceive themselves as active partners in their children's education, the more effectively CBC is implemented at the school level. Consequently, the null hypothesis that parental role construction has no significant effect on CBC implementation, was rejected. However, the study also revealed that role construction does not operate in isolation; it is shaped by both internal beliefs and external influences such as school environment, teacher communication, and institutional support. While parents expressed a strong sense of responsibility, perspectives from teachers and PTA representative's highlighted challenges like inconsistent levels of participation and varying confidence among parents. The study concludes that parents' perceptions and enactment of their educational responsibilities play a critical role in the success of curriculum reforms like CBC. Therefore, strengthening CBC implementation requires that schools go beyond inviting parental involvement to actively supporting and clarifying parental roles through structured communication, ongoing sensitization, and inclusive engagement strategies. Such efforts can foster collaborative partnerships that are essential for the effective and sustained implementation of CBC.

5.2 Recommendation

To support effective CBC implementation, the study recommends that school management teams, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), and the Ministry of Education prioritize building parental understanding and ownership of their roles. This can be achieved by developing targeted sensitization programs that clearly outline what CBC expects from parents. Such programs should communicate these expectations in practical terms and offer guidance on how parents can support learning at home and collaborate constructively with teachers. Moreover, these platforms should create avenues for collecting regular parental feedback to identify and address concerns, barriers, and misconceptions. Building parents' capacity through training sessions and provision of relevant resources is essential to empower them to participate meaningfully in their children's education. Finally, sustained, two-way communication between schools and families is critical for maintaining parental engagement and ensuring the long-term success of CBC implementation.

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Acknowledgement

This research was supported by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the East and South African-German Centre of Excellence for Educational Research Methodologies and Management (CERM-ESA) project.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal interests that may have inappropriately influenced the results of this paper.

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