

Parental collaboration in implementing the competency-based curriculum for learners with special needs in primary schools: A case of Thika West Sub County, Kenya

Joyce Kinyua

Karatina University, Nyeri, Kenya

jnjeri@karu.ac.ke

Abstract

Successful implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in primary schools requires effective collaboration between teachers and parents for learners with special needs. While several studies have been conducted on CBC implementation in Kenyan primary schools, most of these studies have primarily focused on children without disabilities. This study sought to explore how parental collaboration influences the implementation of the CBC for learners with special needs in primary schools in Thika West Sub-County. Epstein's Model of Parental Involvement guided the study. A descriptive survey design was employed to conduct the study. The participants were head teachers, deputy head teachers, members of the school board management and teachers. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data. SPSS Version 22 was utilised to analyse the gathered data, which were then presented in charts, graphs and tables. Findings indicated that both teachers and parents had limited knowledge on CBC implementation, which negatively impacted parent-teacher collaboration. A Chi-square test of independence ($\chi^2 = 9.24, p = 0.05$) revealed a statistically significant association between parental involvement in school programs and the perceived effectiveness in supporting learners with special needs. In other words, increased parental participation correlates with a higher perception of effectiveness. The Ministry of Education should mandate primary schools' heads to implement the CBC to establish parental support groups, for example, by integrating digital communication platforms with parents in their teaching. Additionally, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) should allocate resources for biannual parental training workshops, facilitate financial and material support for parental collaboration programs, and conduct awareness campaigns to educate both parents and teachers about their roles as caregivers.

Keywords: *Collaboration, competency-based curriculum, implementation, special schools, learners with special needs*

Introduction

The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) was initially introduced in the United States in 1957. Since then, CBC model of education has been

adopted across various countries of the world (Amunga, Were & Ashioya, 2020; Mulenga & Kabombwe, 2019; Muller, 2015). The CBC emphasises practical skills necessary for modern employability and lifelong learning (Godfrey, 2018; Otieno, 2020).

Kenya's education system has experienced significant reforms since independence. The Ominde Commission Report of 1963 promote national cohesion, replacing the racially stratified education structure (Muricho & Chang'ach, 2013). In 1985, the Mackay Commission recommended the adoption of the 8-4-4 education structure, aiming at promoting self-reliance (Murungi, 2019). However, the education structure encountered several significant challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure, poorly trained teachers, and high dropout rates (Makori & Onderi, 2013). Additionally, the education systems enhanced learners' ability to engage in economic development and thereby realise the country's visions and goals (Muricho & Chang'ach, 2013). These factors prompted a shift towards CBC.

The CBC marked a significant transition from 8-4-4 to a 2-6-3-3-3 education structure. Particular attention was placed on developing 21st-century skills such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity and digital literacy (Amutabi, 2019). According to Omariba (2022), the successful implementation of the CBC will depend on parental engagement. This enhances competency acquisition and promotes collaboration in terms of developing learners' practical skills for their academic and personal growth. Research from within the country has shown that parental engagement is essential for the CBC accomplishment, particularly for learners with special needs who require additional support and resources (Mwarari, Githui & Mwenje, 2020; Omariba, 2022). To achieve this, schools in Kenya have developed various mechanisms to engage parents, such as home visits by teachers, parental workshops, and the establishment of school governing bodies that include parent representatives. These strategies have been effective in promoting collaboration. Studies conducted in Kenyan schools found that actively involvement of parents in the education process tend to have better student performance, improved behaviour, and increased motivation (Titus, 2018; Muigai, 2018). This is particularly important for learners with special needs who require specialized interventions, individualized education plans, and enhanced parental support to navigate the CBC framework effectively. However, challenges such as resource constraints, lack of parental awareness, reluctance by teachers and cultural factors still compromise parental effective involvement (Akala, 2021).

While several studies have examined CBC implementation in primary schools (Sifuna & Obonyo, 2019; Cherotich, 2023), most have primarily focused on children without disabilities. In Thika West Sub County, where schools accommodate learners with diverse disabilities, the extent to which parents collaborate in implementing CBC remains unclear. Socio-economic status, lack of coordination teacher-parent activities, and limited awareness about special needs education further compromise parental involvement (Okumu, Werunga & Kirwok, 2023; Maina, Limo & Keter, 2023). If these gaps remain unaddressed, learners with special needs may not fully benefit from the CBC. This is likely to widen disparities in educational outcomes between them and their regular peers without disabilities. The study at hand, therefore, sought to gain insights into the multiple roles that parents played in implementing the CBC for learners with special needs in primary schools in Thika West Sub County.

Literature review

The origins of competency-based education (CBE) can be traced back to the United States in the 1960s and 1970s when policymakers and educators sought an alternative to the conventional time-based learning system, which often resulted in gaps in student achievement. The movement gained momentum as institutions began to focus on performance-based learning, emphasizing the demonstration of acquired competencies rather than time spent in classrooms (McClarty & Gaertner, 2015). The early adoption of CBE was mainly seen in vocational education and training programs, where students were assessed based on their ability to perform specific skills relevant to their chosen careers.

Over time, the CBC model evolved and was adopted in different educational systems worldwide. Countries such as USA, Bangladesh, Finland and South Korea have implemented the CBC to enhance educational outcomes and bridge the gap between school learning and workplace demands (Islam, Rahman, Paul & Khaleduzzaman, 2025; Muchira, Morris, Wawire & Oh, 2023). Finland's education system, which is globally recognized for its quality, incorporates a competency-based approach that emphasizes personalized learning and student autonomy (Sahlberg, 2015).

Rwanda, for instance, introduced CBC in 2015 to align education with national development goals by promoting creativity, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning (Ganyata, 2024). Similarly, Tanzania revised its curriculum to emphasize competence-based education, aiming to improve students' employability and problem-solving skills (Kitta & Tilya, 2010).

Evidence indicates that CBC advocates for using Information and

Communication Technology (ICT) in the teaching and learning process, opening students to 21st-century skills in the modern workforce (Shedrack, 2023; Nyaga, 2018). Besides, the CBC has been a move towards addressing inclusivity in education including the disabled individuals and giving them opportunities to realise their potential. This differentiated learning approaches has facilitated the participation of students with different abilities (Andiema, 2020) and thereby encourage equity in education through ensuring that all children, regardless of their learning challenges. However, many teachers lack sufficient training on competency-based education methodologies, assessment strategies, and the integration of learner-centred pedagogies in their teaching (Munyao, Nduku & Ndanu, 2023). Shortage of learning resources and infrastructure to support CBC implementation were also among the identified challenges. Many schools, especially in rural areas have critically shortages of textbooks, digital tools, and practical equipment (Kamau, 2024). For this reason, learners and teachers hardly engage in meaningful and competency-driven activities. As earlier noted, while the curriculum emphasizes the role of community in supporting learners' education, many parents are either unaware of their responsibilities or lack the necessary knowledge and resources to contribute effectively (Mwarari, Githui & Mwenje, 2020). This is particularly evident in disadvantaged communities. The frequent curriculum changes and lack of clear communication from the government have led to confusion and resistance from stakeholders, further complicating the transition process.

Parent involvement in school is a key determinant of student achievement and health. These include more than just assisting with homework to active engagement in school life, making decisions, and working with teachers to enhance the learning process. Schools also benefit from enhanced parental involvement as it leads to improved teacher-parent relationships, increased community support, and development of effective school policies that cater to diverse students' needs (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). In CBC, parent involvement has a critical function to play in facilitating experiential skills developed in school. Through participation in experiential activities, project work, and extracurricular activities, parents are able to help learners transfer their competencies into different settings (KICD, 2019).

The CBC model of learning extends beyond traditional classroom instruction and offers opportunities for meaningful teacher-parent collaboration. Some parents struggle to understand how they can contribute effectively to their child's competency development. Most parents in Kenya, particularly those from urban and poor regions, work for numerous hours per day, leaving them with little time to attend school activities or support their children in learning (Kadenyi, Andambi & Oseko, 2024). Furthermore, poverty limits access to

learning materials, thus making it difficult for parents to provide their children with the necessary academic support (Okumu, Werunga & Kirwok, 2023; Maina, Limo & Keter, 2023). Some schools lack structured communication channels where parents get feedback about the performance of their children and their activities (Natasha, 2024).

Several case studies highlight the impact of effective parental collaboration in special education. For example, in the United States, the Parent Mentor Partnership program exemplifies successful parental collaboration in special education. This initiative focuses on family engagement and best practices in special education, operating on the principle that families are integral to educational success (Walker, Hicks, Johnson & Boone, 2022). In Finland, a collaborative model known as the “Team Around the Child” (TAC) approach was implemented in special education settings. This approach involved close cooperation between parents, teachers, therapists, and medical professionals to design and implement individualised learning plans for children with disabilities. The model led to significant improvements in the students’ learning experiences and overall well-being, demonstrating the effectiveness of multidisciplinary collaboration (Saloviita, 2020).

Adams, Harris and Jones (2018), who explored teacher-parent collaboration within inclusive education settings in primary and secondary schools in Malaysia, revealed that active parental involvement, facilitated through consistent communication and joint educational planning, significantly enhanced the learning experiences of students with disabilities. The study found that when schools actively engaged parents by providing training, offering regular progress updates, and involving them in decision-making, students with disabilities demonstrated higher levels of participation and achievement (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2016).

Theoretical framework

One of the most widely recognized theories supporting parental involvement in education is Epstein’s Model of Parental Involvement. Epstein (2001) proposed six key types of parental involvement that contribute to a child’s education: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Parenting involves creating a supportive home environment conducive to learning, while communication refers to effective dialogue between parents and schools. Volunteering includes parental participation in school activities, while learning at home encompasses parental support in reinforcing school lessons. Decision-making allows parents to be involved in school governance, and community collaboration ensures that external stakeholders support the education process. Epstein’s model emphasizes the interconnected roles of

families, schools, and communities in fostering student success. The study applied the theory to evaluate the practice of parental involvement in implementing CBC in special schools in Thika West Sub-County.

Another theory is Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Parental Involvement Model, which focuses on the psychological and motivational factors that drive parental engagement in education. According to this model, parental involvement is influenced by their beliefs about their role in their child's education, their perception of their ability to help, and invitations for involvement from the school or child (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). This theory points out the importance of promoting a welcoming school environment and encouraging parental confidence in their ability to support their children's education.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey design to investigate different approaches to parental collaboration in the implementation of school programs within the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). The design was chosen for its effectiveness in gathering detailed information that describes existing phenomena, identifies problems, and provides a clear understanding of the current state of parental involvement in primary schools (Siedlecki, 2020). The mixed methods approach was appropriate for this study because it allowed for a comprehensive understanding of parental collaboration in implementing the CBC by combining the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative data (Schoonenboom, 2023). Quantitative data, collected through structured questionnaires, provided measurable data into the extent and patterns of parental involvement, while qualitative data, gathered through interviews with head teachers, offered deeper contextual understanding of parents' experiences and perceptions.

Target Population and Sample Size

The target population of head teachers, deputy head teachers, school board management members, and special needs teachers in primary schools was selected because these stakeholders play key roles in implementing the CBC for learners with special needs. Head teachers and deputy head teachers provide leadership and policy direction, ensuring that inclusive education strategies are adopted at the school level. School board management members influence resource allocation and parental engagement policies, while special needs teachers possess hands-on experience adapting the curriculum. Therefore, a total 140 participants took part in the study (i.e., 10 head teachers, 10 deputy head teachers, 80 members of school board and 40 teachers. Since the target population was small enough to study in its

entirety, a census approach was adopted to include all participants, thereby eliminating sampling bias and ensuring complete representation of perspectives.

Data Collection Instruments

Multiple methods were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Structured questionnaires were designed and administered to teachers and members of the school Board of Management gather quantitative data from the respondents. The questionnaires included both closed and open-ended questions to capture a wide range of information regarding the approaches to parental involvement, school policies on parental collaboration, and best practices in the all-round learning process. Interviews were conducted with selected head teachers and deputy head teachers were used to collect qualitative data. The interviews were conducted face-to-face at the participants' respective schools with each session lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Examples of interview schedule questions included; How would you describe the level of parental involvement in implementing the CBC in your school? What strategies has your school adopted to enhance parental collaboration? What challenges do you face in engaging parents of learners with special needs?

Pilot Study

Before the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted to test the reliability and validity of the research instruments. The pilot study involved a smaller sample of 10 respondents selected from a different but comparable population to those in the main study. This pre-testing phase aimed to identify any ambiguities or issues in the questionnaires and interview schedules, ensuring they were clear and effective in capturing the intended data. For example, some questions used technical terms related to the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) that were not uniformly understood by all participants, while others were too broad, leading to inconsistent interpretations. To address these issues, the wording of such items was revised for clarity and simplicity, ensuring that all terms were clearly defined and aligned with the local educational context

Validity

To ensure content validity, the questionnaires and interview schedules were reviewed by experts in education and curriculum development. Their feedback was used to refine the instruments, ensuring that they comprehensively covered all aspects of parental collaboration in CBC implementation. The research instruments were subjected to scrutiny by subject matter experts who provided feedback on the relevance and clarity of the items. The subject matter experts who reviewed the research instruments

included university lecturers specializing in education, curriculum studies, and special needs education, as well as senior officer from the Ministry of Education with experience in implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). These individuals were selected based on their academic qualifications, professional experience, and familiarity with the Kenyan education system, particularly in relation to CBC and inclusive education. Adjustments were made based on their recommendations to ensure that the instruments accurately reflected on the study's objectives. To ensure construct validity, the constructs were operationalized clearly to ensure that the instruments measured the intended concepts and not extraneous factors. Additionally, feedback from the subject matter experts helped refine the instruments to ensure that each item was directly related to the constructs of interest.

Reliability

The reliability of the questionnaires was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to measure internal consistency. A value of 0.85 was obtained, which exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.7 (Singh, 2017), indicating that the questionnaires had good internal consistency and were reliable for the study. The reliability analysis helped in identifying and revising any items that did not contribute to a reliable measure of the constructs being studied. For the qualitative data from interviews, inter-rater reliability was ensured by having multiple researchers independently code the data.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data from the questionnaires was processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize and present the data in a clear and interpretable format. For qualitative data obtained through interviews, thematic analysis was applied. First, audio recordings were transcribed verbatim to ensure accurate capture of participants' views. The transcripts were then read multiple times, and initial codes were assigned to relevant text segments based on recurring ideas or concepts, such as "parental involvement," "communication challenges," and "resource challenges." These codes were grouped into broader categories and then organized into key themes aligned with the study objectives. Findings from both data sets were integrated and presented using charts and graphs to enhance interpretation, support conclusions, and inform practical recommendations.

Results and discussion

The study employed descriptive research design employing a mixed-methods approach to analyze data, integrating quantitative (descriptive and inferential

statistics) and qualitative (thematic analysis) techniques. Quantitative data obtained through structured questionnaires were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means to identify patterns in parental involvement, school policies, and associated challenges. These were presented in tables and figures to enhance clarity. Qualitative data from open-ended responses and key informant interviews were thematically analyzed to complement and contextualize the quantitative findings. The major themes that emerged include: (1) Levels and Forms of Parental Involvement, (2) Perceived Effectiveness of Parental Engagement in Special Needs Education, (3) Influence of School Policies on Parental Collaboration, (4) Challenges Hindering Parental Involvement, and (5) Best Practices for Enhancing Collaboration.

Demographic Information

Collecting demographic information such as gender (Figure 1), age (Figure 2), role in school (Table 1), and the number of years involved with the school (Table 2) is key to contextualize the findings and understand how factors such as age, gender, and professional role within the school might influence perceptions and experiences related to parental collaboration in the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) for learners with special needs. Such background data allowed for the examination of patterns or differences across respondent groups and ensured that the analysis captured diverse perspectives relevant to the study objectives.

Gender

Figure 1: The gender of the respondents

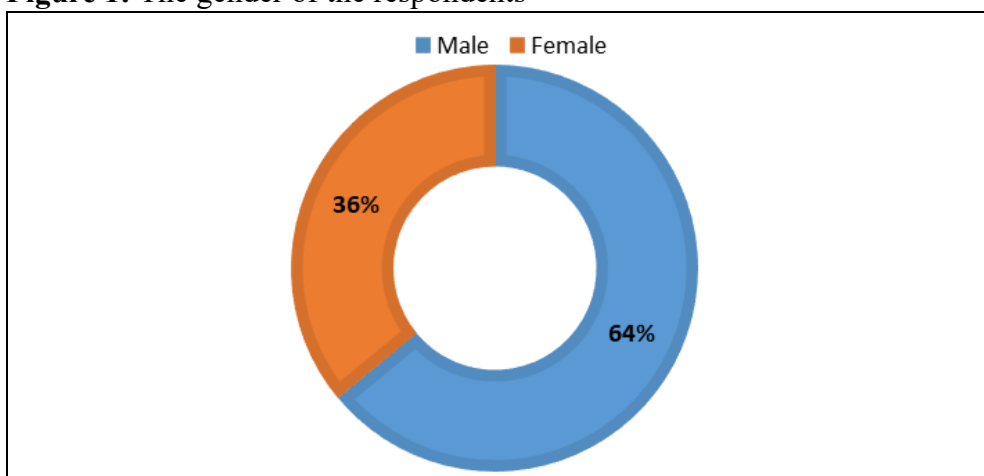
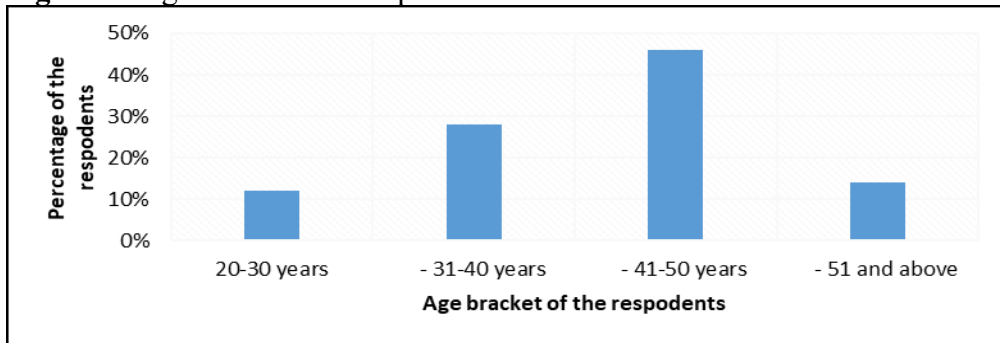


Figure 1 indicates that 64% were males and 36% were females.

Age

Figure 2: Age brackets of Respondents



The age of the respondents varied each other. The age group between 20 and 30 constitutes 12%, 28% of respondents were aged between 31 and 40, the 51 and above constituted 14%, and 46% ranged from 41 to 50. This indicates that the majority of the sample comprises individuals likely in their mid to late career stages.

Respondents Categories

The respondents were asked to specify their category in school, and the results are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1
Distribution of Respondents by Category

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Head Teachers	10	7
Deputy Head Teachers	10	7
Board members	80	57
Teachers	40	29
Total	140	100

The study findings indicate that the majority of respondents were board members, accounting for 57% (n=80) of the total sample. Teachers were 40 (29%), while head teachers and deputy head teachers constituted 7% each.

Number of years involved with the school

The respondents were asked to indicate the number of years they have been involved with their respective schools. The findings are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2
Number of Years Involved with the School

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 year	7	5
1-3 years	18	13
4-6 years	24	17
More than 6 years	91	65
Total	140	100

The majority of respondents 91 (65%) have been involved with the school for more than six years, indicating a high level of experience and familiarity with school operations. A smaller proportion (17%, n=24) have been engaged in for 4 to 6 years, while 13% (n=18) had experience ranging from 1 to 3 years. Only 5% (n=7) have been involved for less than a year

Parental Involvement in School Programs

The respondents were asked to indicate how often do parents participate in school activities and programs. The results are summarized in the Table 3

Table 3
Parental Involvement in School Programs

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Never	11	7.5%
Rarely	25	17.5%
Sometimes	77	55%
Often	21	15%
Always	7	5%
Total	140	100%

The findings indicate that the majority of parents (55%, n=77) are sometimes involved in school programs, suggesting occasional participation in their children's education. A notable proportion (17.5%, n=25) rarely engage in school activities, while 7.5% (n=11) never participate at all, indicating a significant involvement gap. On the other hand, 15% (n=21) often take part in school programs, and only 5% (n=7) are always actively involved. These results suggest that while some parents engage in school activities, a considerable number have limited participation, which could have adverse implications for CBC implementation for learners with special needs. A study by Mulinya and Kimotho (2024) conducted in the informal settlement in Nairobi found that a striking 67% of parents lacked a comprehensive understanding of CBC, which consequently limited their ability to support their children's education effectively.

Ways Parents Get Involved in School Programs

The study also explored the various ways parents engage in school programs (See Table 4).

Table 4
School Programs that Parents are involved with

Parental Involvement Activity	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)	Total
Attending parent-teacher meetings	7	10	18	40	65	140
Volunteering in school events	80	30	20	7	3	140
Communicating regularly with teachers	15	20	28	42	35	140
Participating in decision-making processes	40	25	32	25	18	140

Attending parent-teacher meetings had the highest level of participation, with 65 parents (46.4%) always attending and 40 (28.6%) often attending, indicating strong engagement in this area. Regular communication with teachers also showed notable involvement, with 35 parents (25%) always engaging and 42 (30%) often engaging. However, participation in decision-making processes was unsatisfactory. Only 18 parents (12.9%) always took part, while 40 (28.6%) never participated. The least common form of involvement was volunteering in school events, where 80 parents (57.1%) never participated, and only 3 (2.1%) always did. These results suggest that while parents are more involved in direct communication with teachers and meetings, their engagement in decision-making and school events remains limited. This negatively impact collaborative efforts in implementing the CBC for learners with special needs. Several existing studies support these findings. Lekli and Kaloti (2015) demonstrated that consistent parent-teacher communication contributes to improved learner outcomes. Similarly, Nyarko's (2011) Ghana-based research examining the impact of parental engagement in education found a statistically significant positive relationship between parental involvement and students' academic performance.

Effectiveness of parental involvement in supporting learners with special needs

The respondents were asked to rate how effective they believe various forms of parental involvement are in enhancing the educational experience and support for learners with special needs. Table 5 presents the findings.

Table 5:
Perceived effectiveness of parental involvement in supporting learners with special needs

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean
1. Parents provide adequate learning support at home for children with special needs.	15	25	40	35	25	3.21
2. Parents actively collaborate with teachers to address the learning challenges of their children.	10	30	35	40	25	3.29
3. The school provides sufficient opportunities for parental engagement in special needs education.	20	35	30	30	25	3.04
4. Parental involvement positively impacts the academic performance of learners with special needs.	5	20	30	50	35	3.64
5. Parents receive adequate training and guidance on how to support children with special needs at home.	25	40	30	25	20	2.82

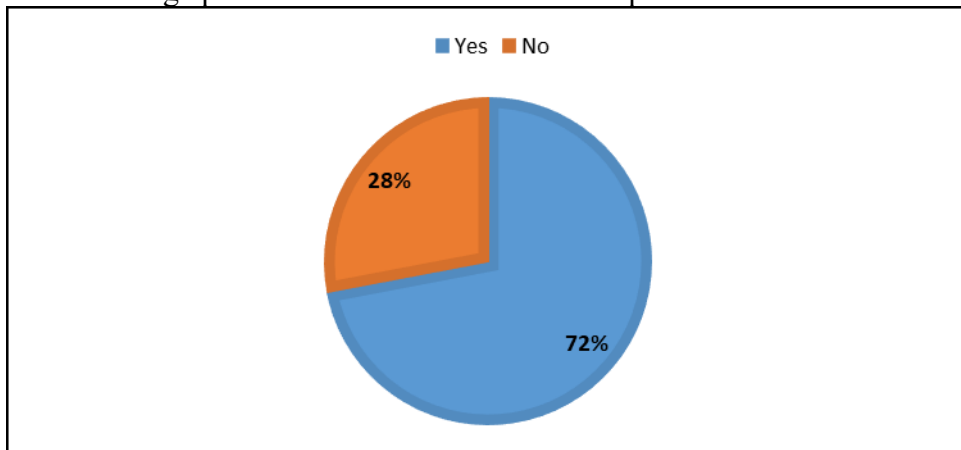
The findings reveal that while parental involvement is generally recognized as beneficial for learners with special needs, its effectiveness varies across different aspects. The highest-rated aspect was the positive impact of parental involvement on academic performance ($M = 3.64$), indicating that when parents engage in their children's education, their learning outcomes improve. However, the moderate scores for parental collaboration with teachers ($M = 3.29$) and the provision of adequate learning support at home ($M = 3.21$) suggest that while some parents are actively involved, others may face challenges in fully supporting their children. The availability of school-led opportunities for parental engagement ($M = 3.04$) also indicates that while schools attempt to involve parents, the effectiveness of these initiatives may need improvement. The lowest-rated aspect was parental training and guidance ($M = 2.82$), implying a critical gap where many parents lack the necessary skills and resources to support learners with special needs.

As noted by Participant HT-03 (Personal communication, June 15, 2024), "Parents are key in creating a supportive home environment and ensuring their children attend school regularly, which is fundamental for the academic progress of learners with intellectual disabilities."

Similarly, Participant DHT-07 (Personal communication, June 18, 2024) observed that *"While some parents are committed, many do not participate in school activities or communicate with teachers about their children's progress, which affects collaborative efforts."*

School Policies on Parental Collaboration

The respondents were further asked if they were aware of any school policies that encourage parental collaboration in CBC implementation



Majority of the respondents (72%) indicated that they are aware of school policies that encourage parental collaboration in CBC implementation, while 28% of them indicated that they are not aware.

The study investigated respondents' opinions on the extent to which school policies effectively promote parental collaboration. The results are shown in Table 5

Table 5
Respondents' Opinions on the Effectiveness of School Policies in Promoting Parental Collaboration

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean
1. The school's policies encourage frequent communication between parents and teachers.	10	20	35	45	30	3.46
2. The school has clear guidelines that support parental involvement in decision-making.	15	25	40	35	25	3.21
3. Policies in place make it easy for parents to participate in school activities.	12	18	38	45	27	3.45
4. The school provides adequate resources and support for parental collaboration.	20	30	30	35	25	3.04
5. The school administration actively seeks parental input when making key decisions.	18	28	32	40	22	3.14

The findings in table 5 indicated that school policies encourage frequent communication between parents and teachers ($M = 3.46$). Similarly, school policies making it easy for parents to participate in school activities scored 3.45, reflecting a relatively positive perceptions of parental involvement opportunities. However, the clarity of guidelines supporting parental involvement in decision-making received a moderate score ($M = 3.21$), implying that not sufficiently clear or accessible. The availability of resources and support for parental collaboration was rated lower ($M = 3.04$). This indicates that parents provide inadequate assistance in their engagement efforts. Lastly, parental input in key school decisions scored 3.14, suggesting that the room for improvement in actively seeking and implementing their contributions is still available. The results align with Desforges and Abouchaar's (2003) findings that while policies exist, their implementation and perceived effectiveness can vary greatly, often requiring more robust and consistent application.

Head teachers and their deputies expressed mixed views regarding the efficacy of existing school policies in promoting parental collaboration. One participant (HT-05, personal communication, June 17, 2024) noted, *"While our school policies explicitly emphasize parental involvement, translating*

these guidelines into practice remains challenging. Despite established structures like parent-teacher meetings and school boards, we consistently observe low participation rates particularly among parents of children with special needs."

Another deputy head teacher (DHT-09, personal communication, June 20, 2024) explained, *"Many parents are unaware of school policies regarding their involvement because communication channels are not always effective. Some parents assume their role is limited to paying school fees, while others face literacy barriers that hinder their engagement with written policy documents."*

Challenges in Implementing School Policies for Effective Parental Collaboration

The study examined the challenges encountered in implementing school policies designed to enhance parental collaboration. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6
Challenges in Implementing School Policies for Effective Parental Collaboration

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean
1. Lack of clear communication between schools and parents hinders collaboration.	8	15	30	50	37	3.68
2. Parents' busy schedules make it difficult for them to participate in school programs.	5	12	28	55	40	3.86
3. Limited school resources affect the effective implementation of parental collaboration policies.	10	20	35	45	30	3.50
4. Cultural and socio-economic factors create barriers to parental involvement in schools.	12	18	32	50	28	3.51
5. School administrators do not sufficiently involve parents in decision-making.	15	25	38	40	22	3.21

The highest-rated challenge was parental participation in school programs was limited by tight schedule ($M = 3.86$). This means that time was a major barrier to parental involvement. Lack of clear communication between schools and parents was also a significant challenge ($M = 3.68$). This

suggests that better communication strategies are needed. Limited school resources ($M = 3.50$) and cultural and socio-economic barriers ($M = 3.51$) were moderately rated. The assumption here was that both financial constraints and diverse family backgrounds had a far impacted on parental engagement. The lowest-rated challenge was insufficient involvement of parents in school decision-making ($M = 3.21$), suggesting that while parental participation exists, it may not be fully optimized. These findings point out the need for flexible engagement strategies, improved communication channels, and increased resource allocation to enhance parental collaboration in schools. Achoka *et al.* (2015) conducted a study in Nandi Central Sub-County, Kenya revealed that many parents struggle to balance work commitments with involvement in their children's education, leading to minimal participation in school functions and academic support at home.

As one head teacher (HT-06, personal communication, June 22, 2024) explained, *"Many parents do not fully understand their role in their children's education. Despite having policies in place to encourage participation, some parents assume that education is solely the school's responsibility."* This misunderstanding has several critical implications: it undermines home-school continuity in CBC implementation, limits the transfer of learning between school and home environments, and reduces the effectiveness of individualized education plans (IEPs) that require active parental input. These findings align with Odongo (2018) research on role perception gaps in Kenyan primary education, which found that parents of children with special needs often feel inadequately prepared to support pedagogical activities at home.

Deputy head teacher (DHT-02, personal communication, June 25, 2024) further noted, *"We lack the financial and human resources to implement some of the policies effectively. Organizing regular parental workshops, follow-ups, and home visits requires funding that many schools do not have."* This resource limitation helps explain several observed phenomena: the persistent gap between policy aspirations and practical implementation, the ways socioeconomic factors challenge collaborative models and the variations in parental engagement levels across different schools. These challenges are not unique to the study context; UNESCO (2020) reports on inclusive education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa found that 78% of schools lacked dedicated budget lines for parental engagement activities, suggesting a regional pattern of underfunding in this critical area.

Best Practices in Collaborating with Parents

The study explored the best practices implemented by schools to enhance parental collaboration. Table 7 identifies several strategies that have been effective in promoting better engagement between schools and parents.

Table 7
Best Practices for Enhancing Parental Collaboration

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean
1. Regular parent-teacher meetings improve parental engagement in school activities.	5	10	25	55	45	3.96
2. Schools should provide training programs to equip parents with skills for supporting their children's education.	7	15	30	50	38	3.77
3. Open communication between teachers and parents enhances collaboration.	4	12	28	58	38	3.91
4. Flexible school engagement programs encourage more parents to participate in school activities.	6	14	35	50	35	3.74
5. Schools should involve parents in decision-making to strengthen their commitment to their children's education.	8	18	32	48	34	3.63

The highest-rated strategy was regular parent-teacher meetings ($M = 3.96$), indicating that frequent interactions between teachers and parents significantly enhance engagement. Open communication between teachers and parents ($M = 3.91$) was also highly rated, emphasizing the importance of maintaining transparent and consistent dialogue. Providing training programs for parents ($M = 3.77$) and flexible school engagement programs ($M = 3.74$) were moderately rated, suggesting that capacitating parents with skills and accommodating their schedules can improve collaboration. The lowest-rated but still significant strategy was involving parents in school decision-making ($M = 3.63$). This means that while parental input is valued, it may not always be fully implemented. Home visits provide a personalized approach to engaging with parents and addressing their specific concerns. These strategies align with Epstein's (2001) framework, which emphasizes multiple forms of parental engagement to build strong school-family partnerships.

Relationship between parental involvement and the perceived effectiveness in supporting learners with special needs

Chi-square test of independence was conducted to determine if there is a significant association between the frequency of parental involvement in

school programs and the perceived effectiveness of this involvement in supporting learners with special needs. The finding is presented in Table 8

Table 8
Parental Involvement and Perceived Support

	Parental involvement	Perceived Effectiveness
Chi-Square	9.24 ^a	.560 ^a
df	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.016	.756

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5

The test results ($\chi^2 = 9.24$, $p = 0.05$) indicate a statistically significant association, suggesting that more frequent parental involvement is associated with a higher perception of effectiveness in supporting learners with special needs.

Conclusion

Findings revealed that parents seldom participated in school programs. The primary modes of involvement include attending parent-teacher meetings, regular communication with teachers, decision-making processes and some parents volunteer in school events. Furthermore, despite awareness of school policies promoting parental collaboration, many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their effectiveness. The study also established a significant association between the frequency of parental involvement and its perceived effectiveness in enhancing learning outcomes for special needs learners.

Recommendations

To enhance parental involvement, schools should implement the following recommendations. The Ministry of Education should mandate primary schools implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) for learners with special needs to establish parental support groups and integrate digital communication platforms such as school portals and WhatsApp groups to enhance engagement with parents. Additionally, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) should allocate resources for biannual parental training workshops, facilitate financial and material support for parental collaboration programs, and conduct awareness campaigns to educate both parents and educators on the critical role of parental involvement in special needs education.

The study recommends further research to explore how socioeconomic status, parental education levels and availability of school resources intersect to influence patterns of parental involvement, which may help explain why

some parents actively engage while others remain disengaged. Additionally, given the current reliance on traditional forms of communication such as meetings and face-to-face interactions, future studies could examine the effectiveness of digital alternatives such as SMS updates or virtual Individualized Education Program (IEP) sessions in addressing challenges like limited time or mobility, particularly for parents of learners with physical disabilities.

References

- Achoka, J. S. K., Chepsiror, E., Odoyo, F. S., & Chepchirchir, G. (2015). Parents' Extent In and Challenges to Academic Support to Their Children in Kenyan Public Primary Schools in Nandi Central Sub-County. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 2(11). 68-76. <https://journals.scholarpublishing.org/index.php/ASSRJ/article/view/1425>
- Adams, D., Harris, A., & Jones, M. S. (2018). Teacher-parent collaboration for an inclusive classroom: Success for every child. *MOJES: Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 4(3), 58-72.
- Akala, B. M. M. (2021). Revisiting education reform in Kenya: A case of Competency Based Curriculum (CBC). *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 3(1), 100107.
- Amunga, J., Were, D., & Ashioya, I. (2020). The Teacher-Parent Nexus in the Competency Based Curriculum Success Equation in Kenya. *International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies*, 12(1), 60-76.
- Amutabi, M. N. (2019). Competency based curriculum (CBC) and the end of an era in Kenya's education sector and implications for development: Some empirical reflections. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*, 3(10), 45-66.
- Andiema, N. C. (2020). Teachers' competencies in evaluation of competency-based curriculum among special needs learners in Kenya. *Global Journal of Educational Research*, 19(2), 135-145.
- Bennington, A. (2004). Science and pre-school children with special educational needs: Aspects of home-based teaching sessions. *British Journal of Special Education*, 31(4), 191-198.
- Brigman, G., Villares, E., Mullis, F., Webb, L. D., & White, J. F. (2021). *School counselor consultation: Skills for working effectively with parents, teachers, and other school personnel*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Cherotich, N. (2023). *Influence of Teachers' Preparedness on Implementation of Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) In Public Primary Schools In Bomet East Sub-County, Bomet County, Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Kabianga). <http://197.136.17.126/handle/123456789/742>

- Desforges, C., & Abouchaar, A. (2003). *The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: A literature review* (Vol. 433). Queen's Printer, London.
[https://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/3644/1/Impact%20of%20Parental%20Involvement Desforges.pdf](https://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/3644/1/Impact%20of%20Parental%20Involvement%20Desforges.pdf)
- Engelbrecht, P., Savolainen, H., Nel, M., Koskela, T., & Okkolin, M.-A. (2016). Making meaning of inclusive education: Classroom practices in Finnish and South African classrooms. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 46(5), 691-710.
- Epstein, J. L. (2001). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Westview Press.
- Fleming, K. B. (2024). *Parent Perspective: How Raising a Child With a Disability Shapes Involvement in Early Childhood Special Education Programs*. [Unpublished Doctoral dissertation] Concordia University Chicago.
- Ganyata, O. (2024). Challenges of internship in Rwanda Teacher Education and mitigating solutions; A case of one Teacher Training College. *Rwandan Journal of Education*, 7(3), 111-128.
- Godfrey, N. (2018). *Examining the Practice of Competence-based Curriculum (CBC). on the Provision of Quality Education in Tanzania: A Case of Selected Secondary Schools in Tabora and Nzega Districts* [Unpublished Doctoral dissertation], The Open University of Tanzania).
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1997). Why do parents become involved in their children's education?. *Review of educational research*, 67(1), 3-42.
- Islam, S., Rahman, A., Paul, U. C., & Khaleduzzaman, M. (2025). Teachers' perceptions of and adaptations to implementing a competency-based curriculum at the secondary level in Bangladesh. *Oxford Review of Education*, 1-19.
- Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., & Smith, K. A. (1998). Cooperative learning returns to college what evidence is there that it works?. *Change: The magazine of higher learning*, 30(4), 26-35.
- Kadenyi, J. A., Andambi, R. I., & Oseko, A. (2024). The effect of socio-economic factors on student engagement in Christian religious education in public secondary schools in Hamisi Sub County, Vihiga County, Kenya. *International Journal of Education, Science and Social Sciences*, 3(2), 129–137.
- Kamau, C. W. (2024). *Institutional Factors Influencing Implementation of Competency Based Curriculum in Public Primary Schools in Kigumo Sub-county, Murang'a County Kenya* [Doctoral dissertation], University of Nairobi.

- Kitta, S., & Tilya, F. (2010). The status of learner-centered learning and competency-based education in Tanzania. *Journal of Education and Development*, 30(1), 45-58.
- Lalvani, P. (2019). *Constructing the (M) other: Narratives of disabled motherhood*. Peter Lang Publishing.
- Lekli, L., & Kaloti, E. (2015). Building parent-teacher partnerships as an effective means of fostering pupils' success. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 4(1), 101-104.
- Maina, E. J., Limo, A., & Keter, J. (2023). Effects of Socio-Political and Economic Marginalization on Education Management in Kerio Valley Region of Marakwet East-Sub County, Elgeyo Marakwet County. *Journal of Research in Education and Technology*, 1(2), 12-22.
- Makori, A., & Onderi, H. (2013). Challenges in achieving effective recruitment of secondary school teachers in Kenya. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences*. 2(3), 40-63
- McClarty, K. L., & Gaertner, M. N. (2015). Measuring mastery: Best practices for assessment in competency-based education. *American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research*. 1-16. <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Measuring-Mastery.pdf>
- Muchira, J. M., Morris, R. J., Wawire, B. A., & Oh, C. (2023). Implementing Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) in Kenya: Challenges and Lessons from South Korea and USA. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 12(3), 62-77.
- Muigai, J. W. (2018). Parental Involvement in Primary Schools in Kenya as a major strategy for academic success. *European Journal of Education Studies*.4(2). 1-10.
- Mulenga, I. M., & Kabombwe, Y. M. (2019). A competency-based curriculum for Zambian primary and secondary schools: learning from theory and some countries around the world. *International Journal of Education and Research*. 7(2), 117-130
- Mulinya, S. J., & Kimotho, S. K. (2024). Parental Perceptions and Challenges in Supporting the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Deep Sea Informal Settlement, Loresho, Nairobi County. *African Journal of Education and Practice*, 9(2), 15-30.
- Munyao, A., Nduku, E., & Ndanu, C. (2023). Teacher Instructional Preparedness on the Implementation of Competency Based Curriculum in Public Primary Schools in Lamu-West Sub-County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*, 7(7), 20-32.
- Muricho, W. P., & Chang'ach, J. K. (2013). Education reforms in Kenya for Innovation. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 3(9) 123-149.

- Murungi, J. M. (2019). *Kenyan Education System and Self-Reliance: A Decolonizing Perspective* [Doctoral dissertation], Chuka University.
- Mwaisaka, A. M. (2019). Investigating how parental involvement influences learning outcomes of their children in early childhood education in Taita Taveta County. Unpublished Masters Thesis). Dar es salaam: Aga Khan University
- Mwarari, C. N., Githui, P., & Mwenje, M. (2020). Parental involvement in the implementation of competency-based curriculum in Kenya: Perceived challenges and opportunities. *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR)*, 4(3), 201-208.
- Mwarari, C. N., Githui, P., & Mwenje, M. (2020). Parental involvement in the implementation of competency-based curriculum in Kenya: Perceived challenges and opportunities. *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR)*, 4(3), 201-208.
- Natasha, F. (2024). Influence Of Parental Involvement on Implementation of The Competency Based Curriculum in Public Primary Schools in Likuyani Sub-County, Kenya. {Unpublished Degree Project}. Greta University.
- Nyaga, F. (2018). *Assessment of public primary school teachers' preparedness in the implementation of digital literacy programme in public primary schools in Imenti north sub-county, Kenya* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation], University of Nairobi).
- Nyarko, K. (2011). Parental school involvement: The case of Ghana. *Journal of emerging trends in educational research and policy studies*, 2(5), 378-381.
- Odongo, G. (2018). Barriers to parental/family participation in the education of a child with disabilities in Kenya. *International journal of special education*, 33(1), 21-33.
- Okumu, Z. Y., Werunga, R. K., & Kirwok, E. (2023). Influence of Single Parents' Economic Status on Pupil's Academic Performance in Primary Schools in Bondo Sub County, Kenya. *Journal of Research in Education and Technology*, 1(2), 47-57.
- Omariba, A. (2022). Challenges faced by parents in implementing competence-based curriculum in primary schools: Kenyan perspective. *International Journal of Education and Research*. 10(5), 1-12.
- Otieno, D. (2020). Integrating digital literacy in competency-based curriculum. In *Handbook of Research on Literacy and Digital Technology Integration in Teacher Education* (pp. 142-155). IGI Global.
- Rakap, S., Balikci, S., Aydin, B., & Kalkan, S. (2024). Promoting inclusion through embedded instruction: Enhancing preschool teachers' implementation of learning opportunities for children with disabilities. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*, 36(6), 995-1018.

- Sahlberg, P. (2015). *Finnish Lessons 2.0: What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland?* Teachers College Press.
- Saloviita, T. (2020). Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Finland. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 64(3), 332-345.
- Schoonenboom, J. (2023, January). The fundamental difference between qualitative and quantitative data in mixed methods research. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (Vol. 24, No. 1).
- Shedrack, K. (2023). *Competency based curriculum and creativity learning outcomes among grade four pupils in Makueni county, Kenya* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation), Mount Kenya University Press).
- Siedlecki, S. L. (2020). Understanding descriptive research designs and methods. *Clinical Nurse Specialist*, 34(1), 8-12.
- Sifuna, D. N., & Obonyo, M. M. (2019). Competency based curriculum in primary schools in Kenya-prospects and challenges of implementation. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*, 3(7), 39-50.
- Singh, A. S. (2017). Common procedures for development, validity and reliability of a questionnaire. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, 5(5), 790-801.
- Titus, R. W. (2018). *Parental involvement and their influence on academic achievement in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education: A Case of public primary schools in Soy-Turbo Sub-Counties, Uasin Gishu County* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation), University of Eldoret
- Turnbull, A. P., Turnbull, H. R., Erwin, E. J., & Soodak, L. C. (2015). *Families, professionals, and exceptionality: Positive outcomes through partnerships and trust*. Pearson.
- UNESCO. (2020). *Global education monitoring report: Inclusion and education – All means all*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- Wairimu, N. L. (2022). *Parental involvement in the formation of school and family partnerships in the implementation of Competency Based Curriculum: A study of public primary schools in Lang'ata Sub County* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation), Strathmore University.
- Walker, K., Hicks, G., Johnson, K., & Boone, B. (2022). *Partnering with Families through Special Education*. The Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center. Retrieved from https://cete.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Special-Education-Research-Brief-2022.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Winsler, A., Diaz, R. M., & Montero, I. (1997). The role of private speech in the transition from collaborative to independent task performance in young children. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 12(1), 59-79.

- Wong, R. S. M., Ho, F. K. W., Wong, W. H. S., Tung, K. T. S., Chow, C. B., Rao, N., ... & Ip, P. (2018). Parental involvement in primary school education: Its relationship with children's academic performance and psychosocial competence through engaging children with school. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 27, 1544-1555.
- Wood, D., Bruner, J. S., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry*, 17(2), 89-100.
- .