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Leadership Practices of School Heads in Fostering Creativity for Competency-Based Education Implementation in Kisii County, Kenya

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Abstract

The continuous reform of curriculum is critical in ensuring educational systems address the demands of society, the economy, and technology. The major educational shift aimed at fostering the acquisition of competencies, creativity, and innovation through learner-centred approaches is the implementation of Competency-Based Education (CBE) in public junior schools in Kenya. However, the significant investment made by the government in teacher training, instructional materials, and infrastructure development has seen the sustainability of CBE face challenges of leadership preparedness, resistance to change, and lack of supportive innovative teaching practices among School Heads (SHs). This formed the focus of the study. The study, examined Leadership Practices of School Heads in Fostering Creativity for Competency-Based Education Implementation in Kisii County, Kenya. The study utilized the mixed methods research design incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data was collected through questionnaires and interview guides. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The results revealed that fostering creativity by (SHs) was moderate. The mean score and standard deviation for fostering creativity was ($M = 3.87$, $Std\ Dev = 0.62$). The study established that the leadership practices of (SHs) are significant in fostering creativity and sustaining CBE implementation in public junior schools. The study proposed continuous building of leadership capacity, enhancement of supportive instructional systems, establishment of collaborative cultures in schools, and enhancement of innovation focused leadership practices among (SHs) to improve the sustainability of CBE.

Keywords: *Empowerment of teachers; implementation of curriculum; sustainability of curriculum; leadership in education; management of change; culture of schools; collaborative leadership*

1. Introduction

Educational reforms globally emphasize the need to develop practical skills, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving skills that are needed for the 21st century. As a result, many countries are moving away from traditional content-based curricula to Competency-Based Education (CBE) models that foster a learner-centered approach, and encourage the attainment of skills relevant for socio-economic advancement. The launch of CBE in Kenya signified a huge shift within the education system that seeks to transform educational outcomes to be in sync with the aspirations of national development and global education. The significant changes CBE brings to public junior schools in Kenya will require comprehensive restructuring of institutions, strong instructional leadership, and creativity from teachers and school administrators.

CBE's successful implementation and sustainability are influenced greatly by the leadership practices exhibited by (SHs). School leaders are key players in shaping the attitudes of the teachers, fostering creativity, and organizing the implementation of various methods and practices while also establishing favorable conditions for learning and reforming the education system. Leithwood et al. (2020) note that school leadership is important to fostering positive



student outcomes and enhancing the overall effectiveness of a school as a result of their impact on the culture of a school and on the productivity of teachers. Regarding this, Hallinger (2021), states that, effective education leadership is characterized by the ability to foster collaboration, promote a common purpose and strengthen the flexibility of the institution. These traits are vital for the continuous improvement of curriculum reform in ever-changing educational settings.

Within the scope of CBE, visionary leadership involves School heads in fostering teachers' and learners' creativity through the promotion of novel approaches in teaching, collaborative problem solving, and adaptable instructional methods. Competency-based learning involves the teaching of essential skills, and creativity is a vital skill as it enables learners to use their knowledge in practical scenarios and think for themselves to devise solutions to tangible problems. School Heads are therefore expected to create a school culture that values the teaching of experimentation and reflection, collaborative teaching, and technological integration in instruction. According to Bush and Glover (2021), the leadership style that encompasses advocacy for professional learning communities and teacher agency positions in empowerment roles is positively correlated with increased levels of innovation and efficacy of curriculum delivery in schools.

Moreover, the shift to CBE requires School Heads to practice participatory leadership styles that include teachers, parents, and other stakeholders in making decisions. This kind of collaboration reinforces an institution's conviction on the implementation of a curriculum and fosters a collective responsibility for attaining the objectives set for education. Recent research shows that in schools where leaders advocate teacher autonomy and innovative instruction, student engagement and curriculum results improve (OECD, 2022). Additionally, UNESCO (2023) states that flexible leadership that promotes the schooling system and facilitates improvement and innovation, while addressing the arising issues in education is essential for enduring changes to the curriculum.

Although the visionary leadership stake in nurturing creativity during CBE implementation is acknowledged, public junior schools in Kenya still face challenges such as lack of leadership preparedness, change resistance, instructional resource inadequacy, little teacher provision, and school leaders' role ambiguity in the CBE reform implementation. In Kisii County, these challenges have affected the effective integration of creativity and innovation in teaching and learning processes, thereby threatening the sustainability of CBE in public junior schools. While previous studies have extensively examined educational leadership and curriculum implementation, limited empirical attention has been given to how (SHs) leadership practices specifically foster creativity in the implementation of CBE in public junior schools within the Kenyan context. Most existing studies focus broadly on instructional leadership, teacher preparedness, or policy implementation without adequately addressing the creative and innovative dimensions of leadership practices necessary for sustaining CBE reforms. Therefore, this study sought to examine Leadership Practices of School Heads in Fostering Creativity for Competency-Based Education Implementation in Kisii County, Kenya. The study aimed to contribute to scholarly knowledge on educational leadership and curriculum sustainability by providing empirical insights into how visionary leadership practices influence creativity, innovation, and effective implementation of CBE at the school level guided by the study will be guided by transformational leadership theory.

1.1 Research Objective

The study was guided by the following objective;

To examine Leadership Practices of School Heads in Fostering Creativity for Competency-Based Education Implementation in Kisii County, Kenya

1.2 Limitations of the study

Mixed methods research, while powerful, may present limitations including increased complexity, resource demands (time and expertise), potential for conflicting results, and challenges in data integration and interpretation. The researcher addressed these limitations in mixed methods research, by triangulating data, suggesting further research, and seeking feedback.

1.3 Visionary Leadership in Education

Leadership in educational institutions is not only acknowledged as important, it is seen as essential (Walker, 2018). The ever-changing nature of education with technological advancements, inequities and new curricula like Competency-Based Education (CBE) requires leaders with the ability and creativity to manage change. Visionary leaders are increasingly recognized as those who best articulate and guide such changes. Studies show that in



education, visionary leaders develop and communicate unambiguous and motivating visions that foster team cohesion. For staff and stakeholders, these leaders are seen as important sources of hope that the institution is capable of responding to contemporary challenges in education (Supriyadi et al., 2023).

Wahyuningtyas et al. (2024) notes that visionary leadership enhances an environment where there is ongoing improvement, continuous positivity, and planned risk taking within a difficult situation. Such leaders recognize that every activity involves an element of risk and, therefore, follow an approach that is responsible, and maybe even rational, to the extent that the entire group is willing to move in that direction (Supriyadi et al., 2023). Recent research documents the innovative and rationally risky environments that visionary school heads develop as they guide staff through change by demonstrating confidence and resilience (Candrasari et al., 2023). These leaders ensure a balance between thoughtful and imaginative solutions with reasoned and rational ground.

In addition, Moh (2024) highlights how empirical research shows that fostering leadership with the combination of strategic stakeholder planning and engagement can provide significant improvements in teacher productivity and overall school efficacy. Moh (2024) states that: “visionary principals are cultural stewards and encourage long-term improvements by consistently communicating the vision, empowering staff, and reiterating the collective goals.” The role of schooling leadership continues to evolve, and it pays to understand what the role entails. Barrett (2014) notes that a good vision has a few key goals which include to provide clarity to which direction a change to an organization’s policy might go, assist in motivating employees to undertake actions in the right direction, and aid in the coordination of actions across several different people. Therefore, visionary leadership is the sort of leadership that has a clear sight of the future and the opportunities that can be harnessed to increase the pace of growth in educational organizations. With the rapid changes in the education sector, such leadership is crucial in equipping organizations to tackle future challenges and maintain competitiveness. These leaders create opportunities and a space for the stakeholders to be more positive and proactive. According to Supriyadi et al. (2023), recent studies in education have been increasingly emphasizing the role of leaders in adopting a future-oriented approach, and suggest that visionary leaders encourage teachers to look beyond the status quo, anticipate future challenges, and elevate their performance in light of those challenges. These leaders aim to elevate their teams to the point where they strive to outperform their immediate community, and even their regional or national counterparts. Translated, this means that leaders with vision create institutions that are willing to invest in longitudinal improvements and innovations. They foster an environment where schools are continually preparing to advance to the next stage of educational development.

When leaders articulate a clear purpose and integrate all relevant parties around a common goal, collaborative, performance-focused improvement becomes possible in educational organizations. Visionary leadership is the most effective approach for addressing change and increasing the efficacy of educational organizations within the contemporary dynamic and competitive environment.

Recent research points out that visionary school leaders, in a decisive manner, describe future goals while channeling staff to focus their actions on institutional goals, as well as surpass the defined limits of institutional goals (Supriyadi et al., 2023). This approach encourages a shift in thinking among all stakeholders and the establishment of new high-performance goals.

Moreover, educational institutions that are led by adaptive and resilient leaders become more flexible and innovative. These leaders take a genuine interest in the future of the school by focusing on new ideas and fostering an environment of inspiration, respect, and ethics with a sense of collective mission, which are all vital components of substantive change and enduring positive development. The component of life outside educational institutions has developed rapidly and requires a responsive, accommodative, and appreciative attitude in solving the challenges of the times by utilizing strengths and opportunities in analysing weaknesses and threats, causing it to be strength in national education vision. For this reason, it was necessary for a study to investigate how Head Teachers Foster Creativity in the Sustainability of CBE in public Junior Schools in Kisii County.

1.4 Theoretical framework

The study will be guided by transformational leadership theory. Visionary leadership is rooted in transformational leadership theory originally proposed by Downton (1973) and later advanced by Burns (1978) and later expanded by



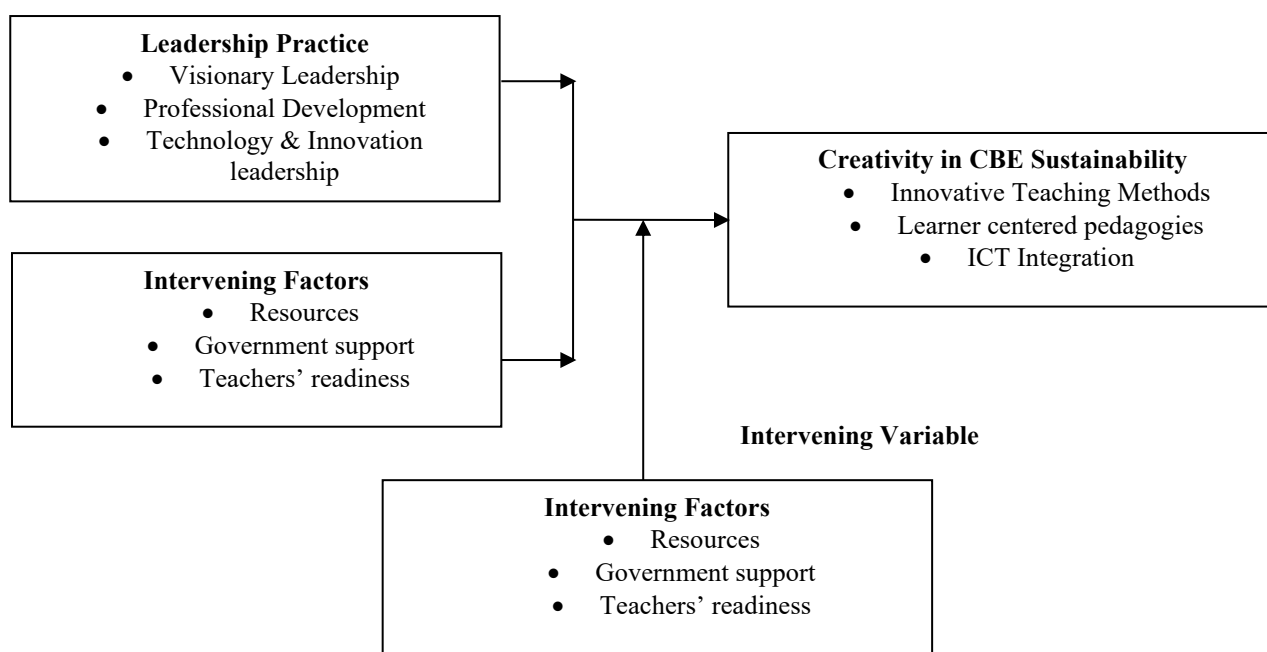
Bass and Avolio (1994). According to Somad, (2018), key traits of visionary leaders, including their commitment to long-term goals, their ability to motivate stakeholders, and their strategic approach to change management. Wahyudi and Setiawan (2019) further elaborate on the effectiveness of problem-based learning and critical thinking development under visionary leadership. This theoretical framework is further supported by practical evidence in the case of Hidayah (2019) who exemplifies the impact school principals have in fostering innovation and sustaining quality within an educational institution.

1.5 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is an illustration of the expected relationship between the independent, dependent and intervening variables (Bas & Tegan 2022). The Conceptual Framework illustrates the relationships between School Heads' visionary leadership practices and the sustainability of Competency-Based Education (CBE) in public Junior School in Kisii County, Kenya. It identifies the key visionary leadership dimensions being studied and how they potentially influence the long-term success of CBE in public junior schools.

Independent variables

Dependent Variable



2. Research Methods

Research design provides the overall framework that guides the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data in a study to ensure that the research objectives are adequately achieved (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study adopted a mixed methods research design, which combines both quantitative and qualitative research approaches within a single study to gain a broader and deeper understanding of the research problem. Bell et al. (2022) observe that mixed methods research has gained prominence because it enables researchers to gather statistical data while also obtaining detailed explanations and experiences from participants. The present study applied questionnaires for data collection pertaining to the quantitative dimensions of the study, whereas interview guides served for the qualitative data collection. The combination of both methods also improved triangulation and, therefore, the credibility, validity, and reliability of the results. Scholars further argue that mixed methods designs are particularly appropriate in educational research because they allow researchers to examine complex educational issues from diverse perspectives and contexts (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017; Shorten & Smith, 2017).

This study was conducted in Kisii County, Kenya, which is one of the 47 counties in the country. Kisii County is located in the former Nyanza Province in southwestern Kenya and shares borders with Nyamira County to the



northeast, Narok County to the south, and Homa Bay and Migori Counties to the west (Kisii County Government Office, 2024). Administratively, Kisii County is divided into eleven educational sub-counties: Nyamache, Sameta, Kitutu Central, Masaba, Kisii Central, Gucha South, Gucha, Etago, Kisii South, Kenyeny, and Marani (Kisii County Director of Education Office, 2024). The county lies between latitude 0°30' and 1°0' South and longitude 34°38' and 35°0' East (Kisii County Government Office, 2024).

The target population consisted of public Junior School teachers, heads of public Junior Schools and Sub- County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs) in Kisii County, Kenya. As per the information obtained from Kisii County Teachers' Service Commission (TSC), the County has a total of 1,925 public junior school teachers, 686 public junior schools with a total population of 686 School heads of public junior schools and 11 Sub- County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers corresponding to the 11 Educational Administrative Sub-Counties (Kisii County TSC Director's Office, July, 2024). These groups were selected because of the crucial role they play in the implementation and sustainability of Competency-Based Education (CBE) in public Junior Schools.

This study used full census technique to sample all the 11 Sub-County SDQASOs since the population is small, accessible and eliminates sampling error so as to achieve a desirable level of precision. The Yamane's (1967) simplified formula for finite populations was used to calculate the sample for SHs and Junior School Teachers as shown below:

$$n = N / (1 + N * e^2)$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size

e = level of precision (sampling error, expressed as a decimal)

Given a total population (N) of 686 School Heads and a desired precision level of 7% (e = 0.07):

$$\begin{aligned} n &= 686 / (1 + 686 * 0.07^2) \\ &= 686 / (1 + 686 * 0.0049) \\ &= 686 / (1 + 3.3614) \\ &= 686 / 4.3614 \\ &\approx 157.3 \rightarrow 157 \end{aligned}$$

This sample size (n = 157) was proportionally distributed across the 11 sub-counties as shown on table 1.

Table 1: School Heads n = 157

Sub-county	School Heads (N)	Sample (n)
Etago	58	13
Gucha	47	11
Gucha South	47	11
Kenyenya	77	18
Kisii Central	76	17
Kisii South	61	14
Kitutu Central	66	15
Marani	70	16
Masaba South	80	18
Nyamache	69	16
Sameta	35	8
Total	686	157

Junior School Teachers Sample

Given a total population (N) of 1925 Junior School Teachers and a desired precision level of 7% (e = 0.07):

$$\begin{aligned} n &= 1,925 / (1 + 1,925 * 0.07^2) \\ &= 1,925 / (1 + 1,925 * 0.0049) \\ &= 1,925 / (1 + 9.4325) \\ &= 1,925 / 10.4325 \end{aligned}$$



$\approx 184.6 \rightarrow 185$

The sample size ($n = 185$) was proportionally distributed across the 11 sub-counties presented on table 2.

Table 2: Junior School Teachers $n = 185$

Sub-county	Teachers (N)	Sample (n)
Etogo	151	15
Gucha	137	13
Gucha South	145	14
Kenyena	213	20
Kisii Central	206	20
Kisii South	158	15
Kitutu Central	161	16
Marani	184	18
Masaba South	202	19
Nyamache	252	24
Sameta	116	11
Total	1,925	185

Overly, the sample comprised of 11 (SCQASOs), 157 School Heads and 185 Junior School teachers, hence, a total sample of 353.

According to Sukmawati (2023), research instruments are tools that are used for collecting various types of data. They further assert that the validity of the data obtained is largely depended on the quality of the instruments used. This study therefore, used questionnaire for JS teachers, school heads, and interview guide for Quality Assurance and Standards Officers.

The selection of participants for the piloting process adhered to scientifically accepted sampling principles to ensure representativeness and minimization of bias. Consistent with Canals (2017), piloting research instruments in a population similar to, but separate from, the main study population helps identify potential flaws and improve tool reliability. In this study, Nyamira County was purposively chosen for piloting due to its similarity in demographic, administrative, and educational characteristics to the main study area, Kisii County.

According to Mohajan (2017), validity and reliability are factors that concern the quality of research and the measurements of the quality data collection tools; in other words, how correct and consistent the tools are. These constructs are important when measuring whether the acquired data truly represent the reality of the object's investigation. For this research, the author used content validity and face validity to evaluate the research tools. Content validation involved an expert review, aligning with Zimmerly and Moulton's (2013) recommendation to include between two to six experts to determine an instrument's validity. Thus, the research instruments were created and improved with the guidance of two experienced academic supervisors with research methodology as well as Competency-Based Curriculum expertise. Their ongoing review and commentary improved the refinement of the instruments in relation to the study objectives and enhanced overall validity.

The study evaluated the reliability of the research instruments through internal consistency measures. Internal consistency analyzes the degree to which different items designed to measure the same construct correlate. This is particularly the case when several items are used to capture different aspects of a single concept, as it heightens the overall detail and reliability of the data obtained. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each Likert scale related to the research questions.

Cronbach's alpha originated from Cronbach (1951) and analyzes the degree of internal consistency and how related items are in a scale. The coefficient ranges from 0 to 1 and indicates how much of the variance among items is shared. The higher the alpha, the stronger the relationship among items, and they are probably measuring the same construct. The lower the value, the weaker the correlation and greater inconsistency. A coefficient of 0.70 and above is acceptable, 0.80 and above is good, and 0.90 and above is excellent (Kabir, 2018). Higher alpha values indicate higher reliability, greater inter-item correlation. Lower values signify reliability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In agreement with Mugenda and Mugenda (2012) they say, higher correlation coefficients are more reliable research instruments.



In this study reliability of the research instruments was determined through a pilot study and assessed with Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The study recorded reliability threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$. For educational and social science research it is recommended this threshold is reached to ensure internal consistency of the Likert-scale items.

Data collection from Junior School Teachers (JSTs) and School Heads was conducted using questionnaires. In relation to data collection techniques, the questionnaire is among the most versatile and constructive approaches used in most fields of study. Its systematic layout allows for uniform collection, arrangement, and analysis of data, especially in the case of quantitative research (Kuphanga, 2024). The instrument was semi-structured with most items closed and a few open questions to provide a room for additional comments. It contained Part A: Demographic Information (For both School Heads and Junior School Teachers), PART B: School Heads Vision Communication to Sustain the (CBE) In Public Junior Schools, Part C: School Heads' leadership practices in Fostering of Creativity.

The study employed an interview guide to collect data from Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers who participated in the research. An interview guide is advantageous as it allows the researcher to obtain detailed, in-depth information while also enabling the observation of non-verbal cues, which may not be easily captured through other data collection methods (Parveen & Showkat, 2017).

After data collection, the researcher undertook data cleaning and preparation to ensure readiness for analysis. This process is critical for correcting errors and addressing anomalies before analysis, as data errors are common in human-collected datasets (Chai, 2020). Proper cleaning and preparation enhance data accuracy, improve data quality, and contribute to more reliable research results. This research utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Quantitative data will be analyzed using version 24 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations summarized the data. Results were presented through tables to enhance clarity and interpretation.

Qualitative data was subjected to content analysis with a thematic approach (Wutich, Beresford & Bernard, (2024). The steps in analyzing qualitative data included: Reading all research instruments to gather relevant qualitative data, organizing the data and developing an initial coding framework, coding transcripts while refining codes to accommodate emerging themes and eliminating insignificant codes, categorizing key transcript segments based on the codes, condensing categories into broad themes, both interactively during analysis and at the end of the process and obtaining feedback from participants and experts to ensure trustworthiness and authenticity of results.

Findings from qualitative data was reported narratively and through thematic models, summarizing codes into major emerging themes that reflect participants' perspectives and experiences regarding the implementation and sustainability of Competency-Based Education (CBE). Data analysis procedures employed in the study was summarized and presented as shown in table 3.1. Both quantitative and qualitative data were systematically analyzed using appropriate techniques to address the study objectives and enhance the credibility of the findings.

The protection of the participants in any research study is paramount, even before the study begins. Researchers must address ethical concerns of the study concerning the participant's rights and welfare (Creswell, 2009). Keeping this in mind, the researcher, in compliance with ethical regulations, took measures to ensure that all participant's rights, as well as the reliability of the research study's results, were maintained. In line with (Ndebele et al., 2014), before starting any research, the researcher received the necessary approvals from the Department of Postgraduate Studies and was granted research ethics approval by the Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (ISREC) at Kisii University. According to Creswell (2014), a research permit was also obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and the Ministry of Interior and National Administration, as well as the Kisii County Office and the Kisii County Director of Education.

Before taking part in the study, participants were made aware of the purpose of the study, the potential gains and risks, and how the information will be utilized. Moreover, taking part in the study was completely voluntary, and participants were made aware that they could decline and/or withdraw from the study at any point without any repercussions. Data collection occurred after researchers received signed consent forms to ensure that informed consent was obtained. Participants' identities were protected along with all research data to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.



Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by protecting participants' identities and securely storing all research data.

3. Result Analysis

The study targeted 353 respondents comprising 185 junior school teachers, 157 School Heads and 11 Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers. Out of these, 343 respondents participated, representing a response rate of 97.2%. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2021), response rates above 70% are considered sufficient for ensuring the reliability and representativeness of survey research findings. Similarly, Taherdoost (2020) asserts that high response rates reduce non-response bias and enhance the validity of conclusions drawn from both quantitative and qualitative data. Therefore, the response rate obtained in this study was deemed sufficient for addressing the study objectives and supporting credible interpretation of results.

The findings on vision communication practices of participants in relation to the implementation of Competency-Based Education (CBE), the analysis focused on respondents' ratings across seven statements measured on a five-point Likert scale, with the mean (M) used to determine the level of practice and the standard deviation (Std Dev) used to assess the degree of consensus among respondents. The results were recorded in table 3.

Table 3: *Participants Response on Communication a Clear Vision*

Statement	1 f (%)	2 f (%)	3 f (%)	4 f (%)	5 f (%)	M	Std Dev
The head teacher regularly shares the school's vision related to CBE with staff and learners	2 (1.3)	6 (4.0)	16 (10.7)	81 (54.0)	45 (30.0)	4.07	0.86
The school's vision for CBE is clearly documented and visibly displayed	4 (2.7)	12 (8.0)	45 (30.0)	42 (28.0)	47 (31.3)	3.77	1.02
Teachers and learners are involved in refining the school vision related to CBE	1 (0.7)	12 (8.0)	38 (25.3)	61 (40.7)	38 (25.3)	3.82	0.93
The head teacher effectively communicates long-term goals of CBE to all stakeholders	1 (0.7)	12 (8.0)	27 (18.0)	68 (45.3)	42 (28.0)	3.92	0.94
A clear vision provides direction and helps align efforts towards a common goal	0 (0.0)	3 (2.0)	30 (20.0)	67 (44.7)	50 (33.3)	4.09	0.78
The vision is realistic, achievable, and motivating for all stakeholders	0 (0.0)	10 (6.7)	21 (14.0)	76 (50.7)	43 (28.7)	4.02	0.88
Actively listens to learners', teachers', and parents' issues related to CBE implementation	0 (0.0)	6 (4.0)	20 (13.3)	84 (56.0)	40 (26.7)	4.06	0.81

The results in table 3, reveals that participants demonstrated a high to very high level of vision communication practices. The current finding that a clear vision aligns efforts (M = 4.09) supports this connection, revealing that vision clarity is pivotal in managing CBE implementation. Oduro and Andoh (2020) state that although leaders may be good at speaking about the vision, they may not pay attention to the formal institutionalization of things, like documentation, or visual aids. One of the interviews spoke about the different strategies employed by School Heads to express and convey their vision regarding the Competency-Based Education (CBE) implementation to the different stakeholders. In line with Braun and Clarke (2006) and Creswell and Poth (2018) regarding the guidelines for thematic



analysis, three themes were identified: formal communications, parent and community involvement, and a deficit in the articulation of the vision.

Most of the schools reported the use of formal channels of communication. Some respondents mentioned that the Senior Head(s) (SHs) convey their vision via strategically placed vision statements, newsletters, WhatsApp groups, and Annual General Meetings (R2, R5). Others mentioned that SHs convey their vision at Board of Management (BOM) meetings, staff meetings, as well as during institutional assessments (R3, R6). Such practices demonstrate the recommended leadership practices whereby school leaders are encouraged to utilize a range of communication channels to promote the strategic goals of the school (Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

A second theme focused on the engagement of parents and stakeholders. The participants noted that School heads naively presented parts of their CBE vision in parent meetings, class meetings, or parent engagement forums (R3, R6, R7, R8, R9). Others stated that CBE principles like hands-on learning were integrated in some schools as activities in the classrooms during school visits making the vision observable to stakeholders (R2). This corresponds with literature that highlights the relevance of parent and community engagement for the success of curriculum reforms (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018).

A third theme illustrated the gaps in articulating a vision. Respondents noted that several schools did not have a vision displayed, or did not have their statements aligned with the CBE principles, or did not have sufficiently clear values to guide the implementation (R1, R4). Some School heads were said to have “no vision to communicate,” which was often attributed to a lack of leadership or a lack of understanding of CBE (R6, R9). In some instances, external assistance was sought by schools; for example, some school leaders stated that they had to rely on the Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (SCQASO) to help them articulate or communicate their vision (R10). These findings correlate with studies which show that the lack of leadership is a key factor in determining whether the school vision is communicated and implemented (Hall & Hord, 2020; Fullan, 2016).

The interview data showed varied perceptions about the effectiveness of School Heads communication strategies. As an example, communication is considered central to instructional leadership, collaboration with stakeholders and the improvement of schools (Bush & Glover, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2020). Participants in this study, however, noted that many public Junior Schools had poor and in some instances no communication.

Most participants criticized SH's communication strategies as ineffective due to issues with clarity, consistency, and alignment with stakeholder concerns. R3, for example, said that communication was “not very effective,” and R4 said there was “confusion” as a result of the communication practice. This is consistent with Mugambi (2018), who states that in Kenyan schools, poor communication is attributed to unclear communication channels and inadequate leadership training.

Several respondents noted the gaps between SHs and Junior School teachers, which relate to the weak relational dynamics and feedback loops. R5 articulated that he is “not aware of how effective it is” and mentioned “gaps between SHs and teachers” which mirrors the concerns of the literature where leader-teacher relationships are strained and influencer communication is less effective (Oduro, 2016). R8 stated that even though some of the school heads reports claimed to be effective, “in reality, it is, not effective.” He described the situation, among other things, as having low digital literacy, something Wamukoya and Kieti (2021) also pointed out in their research on ICT readiness in the Kenyan schools.

A few respondents acknowledged effectiveness in parts or situationally. R1 stated that the effectiveness of the communication was different across the groups of stakeholders, stating that learners were given updates consistently, while communication to teachers was effective “to some level.” R6 supported this by stating that communication was effective “to some extent,” yet was still insufficient to make sure parents understood Competency-Based Education (CBE). This underscores Mbiti's (2020) claim that stakeholder involvement in the implementation of CBE is still uneven as a result of communication silences within the school system.

Some respondents noticed moderate positive changes in certain aspects of communication. R2 stated that communication was effective because changes like increased discipline and lower absenteeism were visible. This



aligns with studies showing that the strategic communication of leaders improves school climate and alters learner behaviours (Day et al., 2016). R7 characterized communication as “averagely” effective and noted the lack of purposeful involvement of parents in the CBE and the ICT skill deficiency of some teachers. Finally, R10 emphasized that communication strategies were “*very important*,” yet acknowledged that such strategies were “*missing in some schools*,” reinforcing the literature’s argument that consistent, strategic communication is essential for effective school leadership (Harris & Jones, 2018b).

The respondents were asked to respond to whether the school heads foster creativity in the implementation of the CBE. The analysis was based on respondents’ ratings on a five-point Likert scale, with mean (M) and standard deviation (Std Dev) used to determine the level and consistency of the leadership practices exhibited by JS Heads of Institutions. A five-point Likert scale was used where 1= Strongly Disagree 2 =Disagree = 3= Not sure 4= Agree 5=Strongly Agree. The results were reported in table 4.

Table 4: Participants' Response on Fostering Creativity

	SD f (%)	D f (%)	N f (%)	A f (%)	SA f (%)	M	Std Dev
Fosters a culture that promotes innovation, creativity, and commitment for excellence in implementing CBE	14 (7.7)	40 (21.9)	10 (5.5)	83 (45.4)	36 (19.7)	3.47	1.24
Implements new educational initiatives and technologies while addressing resistance	14 (7.7)	44 (24.0)	25 (13.7)	63 (34.4)	37 (20.2)	3.35	1.28
Creates a culture of innovation for continuous CBE improvement	14 (7.7)	20 (10.9)	28 (15.3)	81 (44.3)	40 (21.9)	3.54	1.18
Harnesses technology for CBE advancements by staying updated on emerging trends	14 (7.7)	51 (27.9)	24 (13.1)	56 (30.6)	38 (20.8)	3.29	1.31
Is committed to continuous improvement and innovation in CBE implementation	10 (5.5)	20 (10.9)	35 (19.1)	72 (39.3)	46 (25.1)	3.68	1.15
Encourages teachers to experiment with new teaching methods	10 (5.5)	22 (12.0)	19 (10.4)	80 (43.7)	52 (28.4)	3.77	1.14
Encourages teachers to utilize technology effectively to meet the diverse needs of learners	12 (6.6)	46 (25.1)	17 (9.3)	66 (36.1)	42 (23.0)	3.44	1.27

According to table 3, the results indicated that junior school teachers in Kisii County generally perceived visionary leadership practices of School heads in the implementation of (CBE) positively.

4. Discussion

The highest score (M = 3.77, Std Dev = 1.14) was reported for encouraging teachers to try out new ways of teaching. This shows that several School heads encourage teaching innovations. In addition, these school heads provide teaching environments in which teachers feel they can shift to more learner-centred instructional practices that align with the CBE standards. This practice demonstrates the dimension of transformational leadership of intellectual stimulation, where leaders motivate followers to exercise creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. This finding supports



Nguyen et al. (2022) who found that transformational leadership positively influences the implementation of teaching innovations and the attainment of learning goals. Given the CBE framework that prioritizes active learning, the acquisition of competencies, and the engagement of learners, the school heads support of instructional experimentation is likely to positively influence the implementation of the curriculum.

Likewise, the result that school heads are also passionate about the on-going improvement and innovation of CBE implementation ($M = 3.68$, $Std\ Dev = 1.15$) further illustrates the existence of visionary leadership for organizational and educational growth. In transformational leadership, on-going improvement is an essential component as it allows the organization to respond to new educational requirements and shift in learning contexts. This is consistent with Komba et al. (2022) who noted that school leaders who advocate for the innovative and adaptable way of doing things in the organization find it easy to implement competency-based curricula. This also supports Burns' (1978) view that transformational leaders drive sustained change in an organization.

The chestnut positive scores for fostering a culture of innovation for ongoing improvement in CBE ($M = 3.54$, $Std\ Dev = 1.18$) and fostering innovation, creativity, and excellence commitment ($M = 3.47$, $Std\ Dev = 1.24$) indicate that most of the school heads are encouraging school culture that supports professional development and attainment of excellence in education. Such practices are linked to the transformational leadership styles of idealized influence and inspirational motivation, where leaders exemplify and motivate their subordinates to achieve the purpose of the organization. This is in line with the findings of Wanjala and Odhiambo (2023), where a school arrangement characterized by collaboration, creativity, and innovation increases teacher commitment and effective implementation of the curriculum. Nevertheless, the higher standard deviations imply that such leadership practices are experienced differently in different schools, showing varying degrees of leadership effectiveness across schools.

Although the findings show mostly positive perceptions, there are still significant issues with the practices involved in technology-related leadership. The mean scores describing the remaining practices (encouraging the effective use of technology to address the needs of the diverse learners ($M = 3.44$, $Std\ Dev = 1.27$), the use of new educational technologies and how to handle resistance to change ($M = 3.35$, $Std\ Dev = 1.28$), and the use of technology to promote and advance CBE through the awareness of emerging trends ($M = 3.29$, $Std\ Dev = 1.31$)) indicate that the leadership gap concerning technology remains an issue. As CBE implementation involves the use of digital technologies to provide personalized and competency-based learning, these results suggest that some school head may be lacking the skills, available resources, or support needed to adequately facilitate the technological change needed in the school.

The difficulties noted with integrating technology are consistent with Muli and Kimathi's (2021) findings, which suggest that school leaders encounter challenges in the implementation of educational technologies because there is poor infrastructure and little training, coupled with staff pushback. Oduro and Andoh (2020) also argue that in a developing context, educational leaders, despite holding a strong visionary disposition, are still confronted with barriers towards digital transformation. The high standard deviation for items linked to technology also points out the high variability in schools, and indicates that while some schools manage to adopt technology-enhanced learning, some schools are still struggling with resource and capability constraints.

The qualitative results offer additional understanding regarding the aspects concerning the implementation of CBE. Respondents noted teacher retooling and capacity-building efforts as significant and successful implementations. Training programs sponsored by the government and ongoing professional development were reported to improve teachers' comprehension and buy-in to CBE. This supports Darling-Hammond et al. (2019), who state that ongoing professional learning is critical to successful curriculum reforms. Trained teachers are more likely to embrace and practice innovative teaching and to be competent in the use of CBA.

Resource availability was also identified as a key factor regarding the implementation of competency-based education (CBE). Some schools noted a sufficient supply of teaching materials, textbooks, and ICT infrastructure, while others reported insufficient availability of teaching materials, technology, and laboratories. This finding is consistent with the findings of UNESCO (2020), which stated that sufficient resources are a primary factor needed for successful reforms of competency-based education. Respondents' disparities indicate that equitable resources may be fundamental to addressing the differences in curriculum implementation outcomes among schools.



Another key aspect of the qualitative data was the dynamics of leadership. Inadequately handling the supportive role of the school heads, difficulties with the Junior school Teachers and school administrators, and the lack of administrative follow-through were described by the respondents. These results support Hall and Hord (2020) who posits that for educational change, there is need for constructive leadership and relational support among the stakeholders. In the same way, Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) posits that for innovative and reformatory processes in education to be sustained, relational trust and collaborative professionalism ought to exist. It is therefore deducible that the leadership challenges in this research may result to underachievement of the desired full incorporation of CBE.

The findings also showed the impact of larger systemic issues, such as political will, government funding, staff numbers, and transitional issues related to the shift from the 8-4-4 system to CBE. Some respondents worried about staff shortages and the placement of junior secondary schools within primary school structures. These thoughts mirror those of the OECD (2020) report, which states that extensive curriculum changes need alignment between policy, funding, infrastructure, and support from stakeholders to be implemented successfully. The systemic issues demonstrate that meaningful curriculum reform requires coordinated actions beyond the school level.

5. Conclusions

The study concludes that;

1. Supporting creativity in teaching and learning significantly promotes effective CBE implementation.
2. The competency-based curriculum emphasizes learner-centered approaches, innovation in pedagogy, and the development of practical skills.
3. Despite the recognized importance of creativity, several constraints limit its full realization. Inadequate teaching resources, insufficient professional development opportunities, and limited training on competency-based methodologies hinder teachers from fully embracing innovative practices.
4. While creativity is vital for successful CBE implementation, addressing these challenges is necessary for its optimal application.
5. Empowerment of teachers and learners are essential for sustaining the competency-based curriculum.
6. When teachers are empowered through professional development, decision-making opportunities, and supportive leadership, they demonstrate greater commitment to curriculum implementation.
7. When learners are given opportunities to actively participate in the learning process, they become more motivated and engaged. Empowerment fosters a sense of responsibility and accountability among both teachers and learners, which ultimately strengthens the sustainability of CBE in schools.

6. Recommendations

The study made the following recommendations;

1. Schools should invest in adequate resources and continuous professional development programs to enhance creativity in the implementation of the competency-based curriculum. Since CBE emphasizes learner-centered approaches and the development of practical competencies, teachers need access to appropriate teaching materials, modern learning technologies, and innovative instructional strategies.
2. Professional development initiatives should be organized regularly to train teachers on innovative teaching methods such as project-based learning, collaborative learning, and inquiry-based instruction. Integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into teaching and learning processes should also be encouraged, as it enhances creativity and broadens instructional possibilities.
3. School Heads should institutionalize systems that promote continuous professional development and empowerment of both teachers and learners.
4. Participatory decision-making should be encouraged within schools so that teachers feel valued and actively

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