



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

**HINDRANCES TO EFFECTIVE COMPETENCE-BASED ASSESSMENT IN
ENGLISH SUBJECT: A CASE OF LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN
RULINDO DISTRICT**

By: Eustache Hagenimana

Registration number: 220020009

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is truly my own work and where the contribution of others has been replicated, due acknowledgement has been made. It has also been passed through the anti-plagiarism system and found to be compliant and this is the approved final version of the Dissertation.

Eustache Hagenimana

Signature:

Date: 3rd October, 2023

APPROVAL

We acknowledge that this research entitled: “Hindrances to effective Competence-Based Assessment in English subject: A case of lower secondary school level in Rulindo District” is the original work of Eustache Hagenimana and has been done under our guidance and supervision.

Supervisors:

Dr. Cyprien Tabaro

Signature:

Date:

Dr. Philothere Ntawiha

Signature :

Date :

Dr. Jean Leonard Buhigiro

Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and beloved friends.

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research is to analyse barriers to effective implementation of Competence-Based Assessment in English subject. It was carried out in Rulindo District and was guided by the following specific objectives: to find out the extent to which teachers apply Competence-Based Assessment standards in English subject, to examine hindrances in implementing Competence-Based Assessment in English subject and to collect suggestions for effective Competence-Based Assessment in English subject. The research was qualitative in nature and used interview, classroom observation and document analysis as data collection methods. The study was conducted in O'Level schools in Rulindo District. A total number of 9 schools including 7 day and 2 boarding schools was selected using systematic random sampling. Participants were teachers of English in O'Level and Directors of studies in the selected schools. A total number of 26 respondents that include 17 teachers and 9 Directors of studies were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide. In addition, 9 classroom observations, one from each school, were conducted using an observation checklist. Furthermore, 9 summative assessment papers were analysed using a document analysis checklist elaborated in reference to Bloom's taxonomy. To present data, tables and figures were used and information was interpreted, analysed thematically and narratively. Findings revealed that respondents understand the concept of CBC/CBA. As observed during classroom observation, teachers vary questioning strategies but most of them assess lower levels of thinking and only few questions assess higher levels of thinking among students. It was also observed that some teachers do not provide timely and immediate feedback. During interview, respondents highlighted the main challenges to effective implementation of competence based assessment in English subject. These include: large classes, insufficient teaching and assessment materials, short teaching period and some teachers' resistance to changes. To respond to the above challenges, the following were suggested: classroom size to be reduced at least to 30 students, teaching materials to be provided, time for teaching period to be raised to 50 min and the CPD to be reinforced. Based on presented findings, the general observation was that CBA in English subject is not effectively implemented due to the above-mentioned challenges. Therefore, the following recommendations were made:

teachers should be flexible to abide by changes and implement CBA standards as required, school managers should provide regular support to teachers during assessment, and the government should provide schools with needed teaching materials and equipment to facilitate the effective CBA implementation in English subject at lower secondary school level.

Key words: hindrances, effective, Competence-Based Assessment

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CBA	: Competence –Based Assessment
CBC	: Competence -Based Curriculum
CPD	: Continuous Professional Development
ES	: Ecole Secondaire
G. S	: Group Scolaire
KBC	: Knowledge - Based Curriculum
NESA	: National Examination and School Inspection Authority
O’Level	: Ordinary Level
REB	: Rwanda Basic Education Board

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This provides information about the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, scope of the study, limitations of the study, significance of the study, research objectives, research questions and organisation of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

Worldwide, curriculum change is necessary to meet societal needs (Butova, 2015). According to this author, throughout history under the influence of globalisation, the education and professional competency have been given priority in order to enhance competency-based method which later helps in responding to social needs and shortage of professional manpower. Similarly, (Ambei, M., Nnam, & Ambei, R., 2020) claimed that due to quick changes in the global economy, countries have adopted reforms in education systems to train students and equip graduates with knowledge, skills and right attitudes to meet the social and economic changes. They added that Competency-Based Education and Training was identified as the best as it is a method to teaching and learning which focuses on concrete skills than abstract learning. In addition, through changing Curriculum, countries are ambitious to equip their citizens with the right knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to meet the needs of the individual citizens and the nation (David, 2017). This implies that curriculum change must respond to the country development goals and citizens welfare.

Ford (2014, cited in Nsengimana, 2021) claims that the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) started in the United States of America in 1970s and later on, some European countries also adopted it: The United Kingdom and Germany in 1980s, and Australia in 1990s. In addition, due to technological changes and advancement, many African countries that include Zambia, Tanzania, South Africa, Nigeria, Rwanda, Kenya and Ethiopia have also adopted the CBC which brings new trends on the leverage of African education with aim to attain competencies among the graduates (Ruth, 2019). Ruth added

that with the implementation of CBC, many African countries are now getting solutions to the local needs of their population through equipping students and school graduates with knowledge, skills and attitudes that are to be applied in their professional life.

Ndihokubwayo, Hashituky and Rukundo (2018) stated that since 2016, the current implemented curriculum in Rwanda primary and secondary school is known as Competence- Based Curriculum and was introduced to fill in the gaps observed in Knowledge-Based Curriculum (KBC). They added that in a Competence- Based Curriculum, students are equipped with knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to compete to the outside job-related market to respond to existing problems. As stated in the Curriculum framework elaborated by REB, the main concern to adopt CBC is to respond to gaps observed in the KBC (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). It has been noticed that KBC was teacher-centred and there was a lack of vocational skills and generic competences for school leavers of secondary schools (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). To respond to this challenge, the shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred method in curriculum delivery was put in place through moving from objective - based to Competence- Based Curriculum. Nsengimana (2021) also claimed that the main purpose of introducing CBC in schools is to enable students move from lower level of thinking that emphasized on memorization and recall of information to the higher level of thinking that contribute to deep and lasting learning which is demonstrated through practice in real life situations.

Moreover, Competence- Based Curriculum goes along with Competence-Based Assessment (CBA). Ngendahayo and Askill (2016) argued that assessment plays an important role in the Competence- Based Curriculum and teaching cannot be separated from assessing students' progress. They added that in Knowledge-Based Assessment (KBA), most classroom assessments are norm-referenced which intend to classify students and rank them at the end of every term and year based on the marks scored in all subjects. This shows that the assessment of learning (summative) is given little consideration and attention is put on the end results. They highlighted that assessment is

crucial in a Competence- Based Curriculum as it informs teachers about students' progress and contribute in decision making.

Hayton and Wagner (1998, cited in Pitman, Bell & Fyfe, 1999) defined Competence-Based Assessment as the assessment of evidence to determine a person's current abilities against a given set of competency standards. This implies that in a course of learning, students are assessed based on clearly pre-determined criteria that detail which competencies are to be acquired during learning. During assessment teachers do not rely on a single technique but use a variety of techniques. Besides, assessment is the practice of identifying, testing and deciding on the acquired knowledge and skills through understanding and proven abilities by students (Habib, 2016).He added that assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about undertaken educational programs with the aim of improving learning and development. From this definition, assessment is not a one way process but a circling one because based on the results from the assessment, the teacher can decide on whether to re-teach the lesson or proceed with the new lesson.

1.2 Statement of the problem

As stated in the Curriculum framework elaborated by REB in 2015, conducting quality assessment is one of the ways to ensure the success of CBC implementation and the good quality of education. Also teachers should ensure that all types of assessment are Competence-Based and students are able to apply acquired knowledge through a given complex situation related to their everyday life. In addition, during teaching teachers must ask various questions to check the students' understanding and these must be Competence-Based (REB/MINEDUC, 2015).Furthermore, individual evidences are collected, interpreted and used to judge progress and the students' achievement to pre-determined standards as per curriculum.

However, from the researcher's own teaching experience and observation through sampled English examination papers in some schools, it was found that questions asked by teachers were not in line with Competence-Based Assessment criteria. In addition, results obtained by students in O'Level English examination from 3 randomly selected schools in Rulindo District in three recently consecutive academic years 2018, 2019 and 2021(excluding 2020 due to Covid-19) showed that students do not perform well in O'Level English examination. This shows that students are not effectively assessed in classroom during teaching period, hence ineffective implementation of Competence-Based Assessment which results into poor performance and inability to acquire and demonstrate competences on the side of students.

Therefore, in this research the researcher's interest was to find out to the extent to which Competence-Based Assessment is implemented in classroom especially in English subject in Rulindo lower secondary school level, assessment strategies applied by teachers, challenges encountered by teachers in setting CBA standardized questions during exam and then collect their opinions about what should be done for effective implementation of CBA.

1.3 Purpose of the study

Since the introduction of CBC in Rwanda, schools adopted the new ways of teaching and assessing in all subjects including English subject. Therefore, this research was purposively conducted to examine the impediments to effective Competence-Based Assessment in English subject and suggest ways for a better implementation.

1.4 Scope of the study

This study was conducted in selected secondary schools located in Rulindo District. It involved teachers of English and Directors of Studies in the selected schools. Previous researches were conducted in other parts of the country (Habib, 2016; Ndiokubwayo et.al, 2018; Ngendahayo, 2016; Nsengimana, 2021), but excluding Rulindo District and

the researcher's interest was to work with schools in rural areas. Therefore, Rulindo District was chosen as one of rural areas to ensure how CBA is implemented in English subject.

1.5 Limitations and delimitations of the study

Limitations are the constraints which the researcher encountered when conducting the study. These included time and financial constraints. From the information provided by Rulindo District officer in charge of statistics, there are 78 schools with ordinary level which include 69-day schools and 9 boarding schools and it was not easy to work with all schools. To overcome these limitations, a representative sample was selected based on set criteria to avoid subjectivity.

1.6 Significance of the study

Findings from this research will be beneficial to all parties involved in education. It will inform the government through NESAs, Sector education officers, Headteachers, Directors of studies and teachers about the current situation in CBA implementation especially in assessing English. It will also contribute in further research.

1.7 Research objectives

The main purpose of this research was to analyse barriers to effective implementation of CBA in English subject. However, the following specific objectives were basis of this research:

- i. To find out the extent to which teachers apply Competence-Based Assessment standards in English subject.
- ii. To examine hindrances in implementing Competence-Based Assessment in English subject.

- iii. To collect suggestions for effective Competence-Based Assessment in English subject.

1.8 Research questions

From the above objectives, the following questions were formulated to facilitate the research:

- i. To what extent do teachers apply Competence-Based Assessment standards in English subject?
- ii. What are the hindrances to the effective implementation of Competence-Based Assessment in English subject
- iii. What should be done for effective Competence-Based Assessment in English subject?

1.9 Organization of the study

This research work is arranged into five chapters. Chapter one is the general introduction and gives information about: the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, scope of the study, limitations of the study, significance of the study, research objectives, research questions and organisation of the study. Chapter two is literature review. It involves theoretical literature which embodies the concept of Knowledge and Competence -Based Curriculum, the origin of Competence-Based Curriculum, the move from KBC to CBC in Rwanda; Competence-Based Assessment (CBA) method in teaching, assessment procedure in CBA, quality of questions in CBA, the role of feedback in Competence-Based Assessment and the use of assessment results in CBA. It also provides empirical studies related-information on the opportunity and challenges in implementing CBC. Lastly, it shows the critical review, research gaps and the theoretical framework. Chapter three is methodology. It gives details about: research design, target population, sampling techniques and sample size, data collection methods

and tools, trustworthiness of the instruments, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations and approval. Chapter four contains data presentation, analysis interpretation and discussion of the results. Lastly, chapter five provides summary of the study, summary of findings, the general conclusion, recommendations as well as suggestions for further studies.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter brings more information about Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) and Competence-Based Assessment (CBA). Numerous articles, books and journals that reflect on the ideal, implementation of CBA were referred to for gathering more information. The chapter brings ideas related to theoretical literature which embodies the concept of Knowledge and Competence -Based Curriculum, the origin of Competence-Based Curriculum, the move from Knowledge –Based to Competence-Based Curriculum in Rwanda; Competence-Based Assessment (CBA) method in teaching, assessment procedures in CBA, quality of questions in CBA, the role of feedback in Competence-Based Assessment and the use of assessment results in CBA. It also provides empirical studies related-information on the opportunity and challenges in implementing CBC. Lastly, it shows the critical review, research gaps and the theoretical framework.

2.2 Theoretical Literature

This part of literature brings ideas relevant to the concept of Knowledge and Competence -Based Curriculum. It also highlights the concept of Competence-Based Assessment, how it should be conducted and its role in teaching and learning processes.

2.2.1 The concept of Knowledge and Competence -Based Curriculum

Ruth (2019) stated that since independence, African countries adopted the same education system as their colonial regime which focused on equipping students with knowledge and memorization of theories but with a gap about how to apply the acquired knowledge. That Knowledge-Based Curriculum was criticised of not responding to the population social needs and not being applicable to workplace demands. Ambei et al., (2020) claimed that competencies are a combination of appropriate skills, knowledge and behaviours or right attitude that a person must have acquired to effectively accomplish different tasks,

perform jobs or activities in a work setting. Competence-Based Curriculum put emphasis on what students have acquired after learning. Makunja (2016, cited in Tabaro, 2018) also argued that in Competence-Based Curriculum method students master skills related to the acquired knowledge and become self-reliant in finding solution to encountered problem. In addition, Tabaro (2018) claimed that in designing a competency-based curriculum the key factor is what students can do in accomplishing tasks rather than the knowledge they acquired about the tasks. From the ability that a student has demonstrated while effectively accomplishing a certain task, one can determine that a student is competent or not yet competent.

Furthermore, knowledge, skills and behaviours demonstrated by students are competencies that determine their competency (Hodge, 2007). He added that teachers play a crucial role in setting criteria to base on while assessing competencies. These specified competencies should explicitly reach expected levels of mastery under clearly stated conditions to meet the anticipated outcomes. According to Tabaro (2018), a Competence-Based Curriculum should be designed in a way that it gives students ability to develop and master competences rather than simply giving knowledge. He added that in a Competence-Based Curriculum, students do not only acquire knowledge but also demonstrate the appropriate abilities (competences) to apply that knowledge. This implies that the theoretical acquired knowledge should be demonstrated in practice through the appropriate manners of performing tasks. From the Competence-Based Framework elaborated by REB in 2015, it is stated that through CBC, students will acquire generic competences that enable them to become creative and innovative; think critically, conduct research to respond to existing problems; to be able to communicate in official languages; enhance cooperation, develop inter personal management and life skills as well as acquire enduring learning (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). According to Sjoberg (2010), students acquire knowledge when they actively participate in the lesson to assimilate new knowledge and accommodate it into the old or existing one. In CBC, students play the

central role as they must be active and show enthusiasm and participation in all classroom activities to construct knowledge, demonstrate skills and show right attitudes.

2.2.2 Origin of Competence-Based Curriculum

Pitman et.al,(1999) argued that competence model used most extensively in education was developed by the American defence forces in the 1950s to respond to the ineffective programs delivery which also led to students poor achievement. He added that the Competence- Based Training model was based on the view that all students through analysis of demonstrated behaviours can be determined to be competent if their level of performance meet the set standardised training outcomes. Ruth, (2019) indicated that European countries including the United Kingdom adopted CBC to respond to the issue of the extensive joblessness among the youth due to the fact that the existing Education system was providing only skills but still the economic recession of the country. Ruth (2019) stated that in Africa, Tanzania introduced CBC to respond to the problem of unsatisfactory quality of graduates to the job market. She added that in Cameroon, the introduction of CBC was purposefully to produce graduates with required knowledge, skills, and attitudes to solve social and economic challenges within the country. David (2017) indicated that the education system in Kenya was accused of putting emphasis on acquisition of knowledge with no pedagogical emphasis on application. Henceforth, CBC was thought as an opportunity to empower students with 21st century skills to help them thrive rather than survive in this era.

2.2.3 Move from KBC to CBC in Rwanda

From the Competence-Based Curriculum Framework elaborated by REB in 2015, Rwanda has a vision to elaborate an inspiring 21st century curriculum, which optimize the potential of all students to equip them with adequate competencies to contribute to sustainable development of the country (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). To accomplish its mission, the government of Rwanda decided to move from KBC to CBC with the desire

to build an education system that trains and equips Rwandans with appropriate skills to compete at the global employment opportunities because KBC was accused of being too much focused on proving knowledge for further studies but failing to provide with school graduates ability to compete to the job market (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). In addition, through KBC, students rely much on given notes and it is totally theory- based rather than practical works- based. On the other hand, as stated by Ruth (2019 ,p.11), “CBC emphasizes on the paradigm shift of pedagogical practices from teacher-centred to learner-centred approach. This implies that the student has priority and plays a great role in learning. With CBC, emphasis is put on the outcomes rather than content. She added that in implementing CBC, teachers must change from the traditional methods of teaching to the use of CBC. This brings changes in methodology, classroom instructions and setting, instructional and teaching materials as well as in assessment patterns where formative assessment plays a great role in assessing students comparably to summative assessment.

As highlighted in the Curriculum framework, due to high demand of skilled labour and job competition, the government of Rwanda has decided to make transition from a Knowledge-Based Curriculum to a Competence- Based Curriculum to address the identified issue (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). Competence - Based Curriculum provides with students the chance to practice what they have learnt in day-to-day situation to solve problems. Ngendahayo and Askill-Williams (2016) indicated that Rwanda adopted CBC to move from only acquiring knowledge and skills but to creation and application of knowledge. This results into enhancing student’s independence in learning and responding to real life circumstances. With the implementation of CBC, students will get opportunity to practice learnt skills in their daily experiences and teacher’s role will change from transferring knowledge to coaching or facilitating learning (Ambei et al., 2020).

2.2.4 Competence - Based Assessment (CBA)

Assessment is a systematic way of collecting, measuring, analysing, synthesizing and interpreting students' results from a given test in comparison with pre-determined objectives (Ghaicha, 2016) . Based on specific standards or set criteria, each individual student's performance serves as an evidence of the attained level of knowledge, skills or abilities. Tabaro (2018) stated that Competence-Based Curriculum is a learner-centred and a criterion-referenced method. In CBA the focus is on learning outcomes and much emphasis is put on formative assessment. This means that the focal person in CBC is the student and it is for who the content is developed, the methods applied for and assessment carried upon. From the curriculum framework elaborated by REB in 2015, it is stated that in Competence- Based Assessment, students are exposed to a range of situations that require them to practice what has been learned (knowledge, skills and attitudes) to overcome their everyday challenges. It has been also mentioned in the curriculum framework that during assessment, all information about student's progress and performance is recorded day-to-day and students get immediately informed through constructive feedback.

In addition, Ambei et al. (2020) stated that teachers should use realistic assessment methods to collect all evidences that show acquired and mastered competences. These include portfolios, classroom or field observation, projects and oral presentations. They added that students must be assessed through interviews and peer-assessment based on a set of standards that every student must achieve and evaluated against them before moving on to other competences. All activities should be centred on students to avoid the traditional instructive method.

The curriculum framework established by REB in 2015 highlights two types of assessment in the CBC: Formative and Summative assessment. Formative assessment also known as continuous assessment or assessment for learning is used to check the student's learning progress to provide immediate feedback. It helps to identify student's strengths and weaknesses to know how to help them. In formative assessment,

constructive feedback is vital and should be timely provided. On the other hand, summative assessment or assessment of learning serves to test or measure the academic achievement of students at the end of a course, a module or a semester. The results give information on what extent the designed materials have been taught. Summative assessment also helps in decision making and is more evaluative, rather than diagnostic.

2.2.5 Assessment procedures in CBA

According to Sebasaza (2010) assessment activities should be in line with the curriculum. Each learning unit indicates necessary competences to be acquired by students during learning process. They added that through CBA, students are assessed, graded and their academic performance is reported based on acquired and demonstrated competences from what they were expected to learn. Osaki (2004, cited in Ambei et al., 2020) also emphasized that in CBC students should be assessed based on their ability to apply knowledge in real life situation not recalling what have been memorized. He added that theory and practice must go hand in hand and teaching must reflect real context in terms of provided examples by teachers and set activities to be accomplished by students. Students must also participate in the assessment of their learning through self-evaluation to enable them monitor the progress of their acquisition and development of expected competences. In CBA, the authentic assessment should be used whereby students are exposed to real-world tasks that require them to apply meaningful and essential acquired knowledge and skills (Mueller, 2018). For example, the actual use of simple past tense when describing an event is an authentic assessment while reciting simple past tenses through conjugation is not. Mueller (2018) added that in an authentic assessment, teachers should ensure that:

- ✓ A response to a question is created by students
- ✓ Real-life tasks are given during the test
- ✓ A list of Criteria for judgment is given to students before assessment
- ✓ Students apply what they have learnt in real life situations

- ✓ High order thinking skills are focused on

Paulo and Tilya (2014,cited in Ambei et al., 2020) highlighted that in competence -based education, students ‘ performance is assessed through a given and well defined task with an assessment rubric indicating criteria to base on during the assessment. They added that Competence-Based Assessment is a criterion-referenced test that measures student performance relatively to pre-established goals, standards or objectives rather than being a norm- referenced test that measure and compare the achievement of one student with other students.

2.2.6 Quality of questions in CBA

When setting assessment activities, teachers should ensure that they are not only assessing the lower levels of thinking (knowledge, understanding, application), but also consider higher levels of thinking like analysis, synthesis and evaluation or creation (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). For example, an English assessment may be composed of a text with reading and comprehension questions, summarizing the given text, analysing the text and evaluating or judging the characters’ behaviours. Teachers should ensure that questions asked to students are competence-based for any type of assessment used either informal or formal, being oral or written (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). To ensure that learning has taken place, there should be knowledge transfer from school to the large community or society where students speak English and become language users. In Competence-Based Assessment, students should be trained to move from rote memorization of learnt content to deep thinking and contextualization (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). As stated in the Rwandan Curriculum framework, when developing a question paper for a summative assessment, teachers must consider the following:

- ✓ Plan or specify what is to be tested (units or topics, learning outcomes to be measured, the number of questions in each level of Bloom’s taxonomy and the allocated marks for each question).

- ✓ Give more weight questions from higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy (analysing, evaluating and creating) than those from lower levels (remembering, understanding and applying).

Andreev (2023) indicated how assessment should be planned with reference to Bloom's taxonomy and examples of verbs used at each level:

Table 1: Bloom's taxonomy sample verbs and activities as presented by Andreev:

Levels	What to assess	Verb examples	Type of activities
Remembering	Is a student able to recall or remember the information?	Recall, recognize, identify	fill-in-the-blank, matching, or multiple-choice questions that require students to recall or recognize terms and facts
Understanding	Is a student able to explain ideas or concepts?	Interpret, exemplify, classify summarize, infer, compare, explain	summarize readings, compare and contrast paraphrase documents
Applying	Is a student able to use the information in a new way?	Apply, execute, use	use language to explain familiar or unfamiliar tasks
Analysing	Is a student able to distinguish between the different parts?	Analyse, differentiate, organize	Activities such as debates, or concept

				maps that require students to discriminate or select relevant and irrelevant information in a text
Evaluating	Is a student able to justify a stand or decision?	Evaluate, check, critique assess	Activities such as journals, diaries, critiques that require students to judge, or critique readings against established criteria or standards	
Creating	Is a student able to: create new product or point of view?	Create, compose, generate, plan, produce, design	Activities such as research projects, essays that require students to make, write, compose, build, design or generate something new.	

2.2.7 Role of feedback in Competence-Based Assessment

As stated in the Curriculum Framework elaborated by REB, in Competence-Based Assessment, students are assessed on each acquired competence as some competences are pre-requisite to others and teachers must provide feedback after assessment (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). In addition, feedback should be constructive not criticizing what students did but encouraging them to perform better. It should highlight what has

been done well, what one needs to improve and how to improve. Feedback should be timely and continuous. For example, when a student is asked to conjugate a given verb in past perfect tense and failed to add the past participle, he/she can be appreciated on having used the past tense correctly and reminded that the past participle should be added to make the correct tense.

2.2.8 Use of assessment results in CBA

Pitman et.al, (1999) indicated that in CBA each individual student is assessed on how he/she has acquired competencies. To report, all details of competencies are shown not the general results and students are not compared to one another based on the obtained results. Here, the purpose is not comparing or ranking students but support individual student to become competent. They added that Competence-Based Assessment emphasizes on use of formative assessment which involves a set of continuous and frequent activities on the prescribed competences in the curriculum. According to Ambei et al. (2020), progressive evaluation is given to students to help teachers know those mastering expected competences and plan remedial lessons to help those who have not yet achieved the predictable competences. During remedial process, students who have already demonstrated required competences are given supplementary tasks to avoid making them bored while supporting others. Similar instruction is given at different occasions to the students during remedial and it is repeated until all students acquire competences related to the particular leaning unit.

The Curriculum framework elaborated by REB in 2015 indicated that all information gathered during assessment must be kept in student's portfolio. The collected information serves for a number of purposes: they are evidences to judge the student's performance and contribute in decision taking to remedial actions and alternative instructional strategies; they help in providing feedback to individual student; inform parents on the learning progress of their children to provide advice, as well as contributing in decision taking at the end of the year (REB/MINEDUC, 2015).

2.3 Empirical Literature

This part of empirical literature demonstrates what other researchers have identified when conducting similar researches. It focuses on different studies in the area of competence-based curriculum and assessment implementation.

2.3.1 Opportunity in implementing CBC

According to the survey conducted by REB in 2018 about the implementation of CBC across the country (Rwanda), it has been shown that students' motivation to learn has raised up as students are now actively engaged in the learning activity (REB, 2018). From that survey, one respondent from Nyagatare District said; "Students enjoy exchanging ideas in groups, interacting with their peers and doing their own research, discovering new things and feel happy about studying" p.6). This really reinforces the value changes brought by CBC. In addition, Nsengimana conducted research about opportunities and challenges in CBC implementation in selected schools of Muhanga District. The results showed that using CBC offers opportunity to teachers to cater for individual learner differences and initiate among students the culture of collaboration and research doing (Nsengimana, 2021). He added that when teachers are planning for the teaching activities, they plan activities that enable students not to always depend on their colleagues but become self-independent. In addition, through group discussions, the use of CBC promotes the child-friendly school environment as no single student is left behind. The method itself enables teachers to cater for individual learner and informs them directly about their progress.

Ruth (2019) showed that in Cameroon, CBC helped graduates mastering skills, knowledge, and developing self-confidence in problem-solving and trained them to fit in the job market. She also mentioned that in Indonesia, the CBC increased the relationship between teachers and students hence raised motivation among students as they are

encouraged to set their own goals for learning and supported to achieve them. The CBC is an inclusive program as it strengthens positive emotions to fellow students. Students with disabilities are accepted and treated with respect, equality, and dignity. Students are trained and informed about human rights, mutual respect and kindness towards others (Ruth, 2019).

2.3.2 Challenges in implementing CBC

Since the introduction of CBC, different researchers across the world have studied the implementation of CBC to analyse its effectiveness and challenges. Tilya and Mafumiko (2010, cited in Ambei et al., 2020) claimed that CBC is a good method as it uses a variety of methods that involve all students though teachers complain that its implementation is inhibited by too much content to teach comparably to allocated time.

In different parts of the world where CBC was first introduced, a number of challenges in implementing CBC were identified. Globally, Pitman et.al.,(1999) argued that in Australia ten years later since the introduction of CBC, there were still challenges in assessing higher competencies because there were no pre-determined assessment schedules, especially to assess technical skills. In the research conducted in both Australia and New Zealand (Queensland) about challenges encountered by teachers in implementing CBC, most of teachers had difficulties in understanding what competency is and how to decide that a student is competent. Another challenge is setting competency standards on which competency testing can refer to while preparing assessment (Pitman et.al.,1999). Ruth (2019) showed that in the USA, the introduction of CBC was dreamed to uplift low student achievement and poor quality of teacher training. Yet, in USA the CBC is not practically used in primary schools.

Regionally, in Tanzania, with the introduction of CBC, teachers were challenged by having over crowded classes with between 80-90 students per class (Mosha, 2012). This had huge impact on implementing Competence - Based Assessment as the class

management is not easy. Due to having many students in one class, the teacher cannot assess each individual student to ensure he/she has acquired competences. Most of the time teachers pretend to return back to apply old teaching and assessing methods to ease their task. As stated by Ambei et al. (2020) since the introduction of Competency-Based Teaching in Cameroon in 2002 the main challenges were lack of enough and adequate resources, not having well trained teachers in the use of CBC and much content to be taught which become time consuming. The above-mentioned challenges also hindered the implementation of Competence-Based Assessment particularly during assessment preparation, administration and grading.

Nationwide, as indicated in the curriculum framework established by REB in 2015, a number of factors may influence either positively or negatively the curriculum implementation. These include: the teaching content, the used methodology, the teaching resources, the nature of the curriculum, and even students or teachers' personal factors (REB/MINEDUC, 2015).

In the research conducted by Ndiokubwayo et.al. (2018) about Curriculum implementation and issues in selected primary and secondary schools around Rwanda, it has been shown that teachers face challenges that include: lack of enough English skills to communicate, resistance to change from their routine teaching to adopt CBC and negative attitude towards implementing CBC. Some believe that teachers remain the irreplaceable person in classroom. Similarly, the common challenge was identified in the research conducted by REB in 2018 around the country to investigate the implementation of CBC where it has been shown that although teachers in Rwandan schools have been trained about CBC, still some show resistance to change. They still rely on using knowledge-based curriculum during session delivery and assessment practices (REB, 2018). In addition, novice teachers haven't been trained in CBC. Other challenges include: insufficient teaching materials such as textbooks, lack of ICT facilities such as computers connected to internet, limited time to plan for effective competence-based activities and overcrowded classes where teachers cannot cater for individual student

progress. Similarly, as shown by Nsengimana in his research as mentioned earlier, teachers from selected schools in Muhanga District claimed that they are not involved in the planning and development of the new curriculum, hence the ineffective implementation as some content do not match with students' level and sometimes the allocated time is not appropriate to the content to teach (Nsengimana, 2021). They have suggested that it is crucial to engage teachers in planning as they are curriculum implementors.

Despite encountered challenges, teachers use improvisation strategy to solve the issue related to teaching aids. They use available resources in the surrounding environment to make teaching materials. A good example was proved from teacher-students at TTC Mururu in Rusizi District who make teaching materials from the old used bags of rice (REB, 2018).

2.4 Critical review

The Competence -Based Curriculum was introduced against the Knowledge-Based Curriculum to put emphasis on practical knowledge, skills and behaviours that students should demonstrate after learning (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). In addition, the government of Rwanda adopted the CBC to achieve its education mission through training Rwandans who are able to contribute to sustainable development of the country and compete at the global employment opportunities (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). Through CBA, to assess learning, both formative and summative assessment should be conducted and all information about student's progress and performance is recorded and analysed to inform the practice. Each assessment should indicate a set of standards that every student must achieve and evaluated against before moving on to other competences. The assessment items or questions in a Competence-Based Assessment should not only be assessing lower levels of thinking but also considering higher levels of thinking as elaborated in Bloom's taxonomy (Andreev, 2023). Teachers must provide immediate and constructive feedback after assessment by highlighting what students did well (glows) and showing

them areas for improvement (grows). In countries like Indonesia, Cameroon, Australia and New Zealand where CBC was well implemented, students were highly motivated and their performance has increased (Pitman et.al, 1999; Ruth, 2019; Ambei et.al, 2020). Despite great effort made by teachers, some challenges were encountered. These include but are not limited to: large content to be covered, lack of appropriate teaching materials, big classroom size and non- trained teachers in some areas (Mosha, 2012; Ambei et.al, 2020).

2.5 Research gap

Assessment is fundamental in the teaching-learning process as it informs both teachers and students about the teaching progress (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). From different researches conducted in different parts of the world where CBC was implemented (Faso, 2012 in Tanzania; Ambei et al.,2020 in Cameroon; Nsengimana, 2021 and Ndiokubwayo et.al.,2018 in Rwanda, its effectiveness was hindered by a number of factors that include but not limited to: lack of appropriate skills on the side of teachers, resistance to change from a knowledge-based method to some teachers, shortage of time on the side of teachers and big classroom size not easy to manage during planning and implementing an effective CBC.

Teaching cannot be separated from assessment, but most of the studies conducted about CBC did not in particular focus on the Competence-Based Assessment (Mosha, 2012; REB, 2018; Ruth, 2019; Nsengimana, 2021). Therefore, this study was conducted purposively to analyse barriers to CBA in English subject which lead to inadequate CBC implementation hence failure to achieve the intended subject competences as well as into unsatisfactory students' performance.

2.6 Theoretical framework

This research was guided by Piaget and Vygotsky's Constructivist Theories. Constructivism theory states that students must be actively involved in learning to

construct knowledge from the interaction between what they know and the new acquired concepts (Nesrine, 2018). To apply Constructivist theory in classroom, teachers must be aware that: every student's points of view is valued, a variety of answers is better than a single fixed answer, provided activities are challenging to enable students think big, students are exposed to complex and real-world problems that allow them engage with the material, students are trained to critically analyse given situations and encouraged to master these essential concepts or big ideas. In addition, the assessment activities should be authentic and in-the-moment to bring in discussion questions or collaborative projects (Mueller,2018;Ambei et al.,2020). Consequently, the constructivist theory is a contribution to this research to analyse types of assessment and activities that teachers give to students, and suggest ways to effective Competence- Based Assessment to meet the standards.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology describes the whole process through which research is conducted (Goundar, 2019). He added that needed information may be collected from real and natural environment, from past experience, witness, written documents such as books, journals and any other trustworthy resource. This chapter describes the research design, target population, sampling techniques and sample size, data collection tools, Trustworthiness of the research instruments, techniques for data analysis and ethical consideration.

3.2 Research design

As stated by Bhattacharjee (2012), research design is an elaborated plan about data collection methods, instrument or tools used, and the sampling strategies that are required for a research. The research design for this study is qualitative-oriented. This research relies on Constructivism research paradigm. According to Honebein (1996, cited in Dickson, Akwasi & Attah, 2016) constructivism paradigm is about the idea that knowledge is constructed from experience. This implies that reality is subjective and people acquire more from what they experience in their daily life. With this research paradigm, researchers should not be biased but collect information through understanding of the real world and information shared by those who lived the experience. Hence, qualitative method was used in this research.

According to Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtler (2006), qualitative research uses methods that help the researcher collect information from the real world environment by systematically observing the phenomena under investigation, searches for patterns or themes in the observations, and develops a generalization from the analysis of those themes. In qualitative research, the researcher uses an inductive mode to let the data speak themselves (Uprety, 2007). In this research, interview and observation were used to

collect data. The information provided by respondents was supplemented by document analysis of summative assessment that include past examination papers.

3.3 Target Population

The term population refers to all members that share common characteristics needed to be involved in the research (Datta, 2018). Sowell (1982, cited in Tabaro & Nyirandegeya, 2017) also defined population as a group of people sharing a number of similar features. In this research, the population includes teachers of English at lower secondary level in Rulindo District and Directors of Studies.

3.4 Sampling techniques and sample size

According to Bhattacharjee (2012), sampling refers to the process of selecting a subset of the target population and make an inference or generalization of provided responses. A good sample helps the researcher to attain the objectives in case the whole population cannot be reached (Tracy, 2013). From the information provided by Rulindo District officer in charge of statistics, there are 78 schools with ordinary level which include 69-day schools and 9 boarding schools. As stated by Vasileiou et.al, (2018), there is no fixed sample size for qualitative research. To respond to financial and time constraints, 10% of all schools was thought as a good and representative sample for qualitative research. The sample was selected using systematic random sampling. According to Datta (2018), in systematic random sampling, elements are selected at a regular interval which may be in terms of time, space or order. To select sample schools, both day and boarding schools were taken into consideration. For day schools, a 10% of 69 schools ($69 \times 10/100$) equivalent to 7 schools were selected using a 10 order- interval and for boarding schools ($9 \times 10/100$) equivalent to 1 school was the ideal. However, 2 boarding schools were considered for a variety of information and these were selected using a 5 order-interval. Therefore, a total of 9 schools which include 7 day schools and 2 boarding schools was used as a representative sample for this research. The total number of participants was 26

respondents which includes 17 teachers of English in lower secondary school and 9 Directors of Studies in the selected schools.

Formula: $k = \frac{N}{n}$

k: interval

N: total population

n:desired sample size

For day schools:

$$K = \frac{69}{7} = 9.8 \approx 10$$

For boarding schools:

$$K = \frac{9}{2} = 4.5 \approx 5$$

Table 2: Number of O' Level schools in Rulindo District and selected sample

Category of schools	Total	Selected Sample (10%)	Considered Sample size
Day schools	69	$69 \times 10\% = 7$	7
Boarding schools	9	$9 \times 10/100 = 0.9 = 1$	$1 + 1 = 2$
Total	78		9

Table 3: Number of teachers of English and Directors of studies in selected schools

Category of the school	Name of the school	Number of teachers	Director of Studies
Day schools	GS Shyorongi	5	1
	ES Gasiza	2	1
	GS Rusiga	3	1
	GS Rukore	1	1

	GS Gisiza	1	1
	GS Ngarama	1	1
	GS Tare	2	1
Boarding schools	Lycee Notre Dame de	1	1
	la Visitation Rulindo		
	College Fondation	1	1
	Sina Gerard Nyirangarama		
Total		17	9
Total(participants)		26	

3.5 Data collection methods

Selection of methods for data collection depends on the research type and these may include: observation, questioning, documents review or a combination of two or more (Karim, 2017). As this research was qualitative, to ensure the variety of information, the following methods were used: classroom observation, interview and document analysis.

3.6 Data Collection tools

Classroom observation was conducted using an observation checklist as a tool to identify strategies and questioning techniques that teachers use in assessing students. During observation checklist elaboration, Bloom's taxonomy and Assessment procedures manual were used as a reference. A total of 9 teaching classes, whereby one class from each selected school was observed. The common challenge to encounter would be that some teachers do not feel comfortable when teaching and being observed at the same time but to overcome the above challenge, I took time to explain to them the purpose of this observation to let them feel comfortable in their classes. As stated by Karim (2017), a structured interview enables the researcher to collect relevant information using ordered and scheduled questions. In addition, an individual interview helps the researcher to collect reliable information and enables respondents to freely provide their opinions than

in a group interview (Upreti, 2007). Therefore, in this research, a semi-structured interview with teachers of English and Directors of Studies using an interview checklist was used to collect information regarding challenges in assessing students and ways forward. Document analysis was also conducted to check if summative assessment questions that teachers set are Competence-Based. A total number of 9 recent summative assessment tests were purposively selected in each school and from different levels of study (Senior One, Senior Two and Senior Three).

Table 4: Selected classes for observation and document analysis

Name of the school	Classes observed	Tests analysed
GS Shyorongi	S3	S2
ES Gasiza	S2	S1
GS Rusiga	S1	S3
GS Rukore	S3	S1
GS Gisiza	S2	S3
GS Ngarama	S1	S2
GS Tare	S3	S2
Lycee Notre Dame de la Visitation Rulindo	S2	S1
College Fondation Sina Gerard Nyirangarama	S1	S3
Total	9	9

3.7 Trustworthiness of the research instruments

According to Sürücü et.al,(2020), validity of instruments is their ability to measure what is intended while reliability of instruments refers to trustworthiness of instruments. In addition, validity is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represent the phenomenon under study. To elaborate research instruments, the researcher sought opinion from colleagues, other researchers and supervisors on the

proposed instruments. In addition, a Competence-Based Assessment standards was referred to while setting question items

3.8 Data analysis techniques

As stated by Creswell (2009), in a qualitative research , information is collected from the real setting of individuals. Data were analysed thematically and reported narratively to make them meaningful. In this research, data collected from the lesson observations and interview were analysed by the use of thematic method. The analysis was initially done for each school before it was undertaken for the overall schools. The information collected from document analysis was analysed and reported using tables and figures hence, commentaries were added.

3.9 Ethical consideration and approval

Ethics in research refers to the acceptable moral and behaviours that an individual should demonstrate when conducting research (Huma &Nayeem, 2017). Before starting collecting data, a request letter approved by the University of Rwanda, College of Education was addressed to the Mayor of Rulindo District to seek permission to visit schools for gathering information. Participants were provided with information about the research and assured that their responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Moreover, they were voluntarily asked to sign in the consent form. Codes were also used to record responses for respondents' privacy.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This research was purposively conducted to examine the impediments to effective Competence-Based Assessment in English subject and suggest ways for a better implementation. In order to reach to the predetermined objectives, information was collected from selected sample of population. To collect data, interview with teachers of English and Director of Studies, classroom observation and document analysis were conducted. Therefore, this chapter presents, analyses, interprets and discusses the results on the Hindrances to effective Competence-Based Assessment in English subject: A case of lower secondary school level in Rulindo District.

The information collected from respondents was presented using figures (tables, charts and graphics). For interview, various responses from participants were grouped under themes and their responses were quoted then commented on. Data collected through document analysis was discussed in comparison with the Competence-Based Assessment standards. The interpretation was done in consideration of the research questions and objectives to come up with the appropriate conclusion and recommendations.

4.2. Respondents' rate

In this research, information was collected from 17 teachers of English at lower secondary school level and 9 Directors of Studies from selected schools. From each school, one classroom observation was conducted and one summative assessment paper was analysed.

4. 3. Findings

As presented above, this study involved teachers of English and Directors of studies in selected schools. To gather information for this research, a semi-structured interview was conducted with respondents. Data collected from interview was supplemented by classroom observation and document analysis. To gather information from respondents, specific questions were formulated based on the main research questions: (i) to what extent do teachers apply Competence-Based Assessment standards in English subject? (ii) What are the hindrances to effective implementation of Competence-Based Assessment in English subject and (iii) what should be done for effective implementation of Competence-Based Assessment in English subject?

4.3.1 Teaching experience of respondents

CBC/CBA implementation in Rwandan schools started in 2015. Teachers and Directors of studies teaching experience is an important factor as far as this research is concerned and information about respondents' teaching experience was gathered. A range of years of teaching experience was provided and respondents were asked to indicate their teaching experience from the range (below 5 years, between 6-10 years and beyond 10 years). The figure below indicates the teaching experience of respondents.

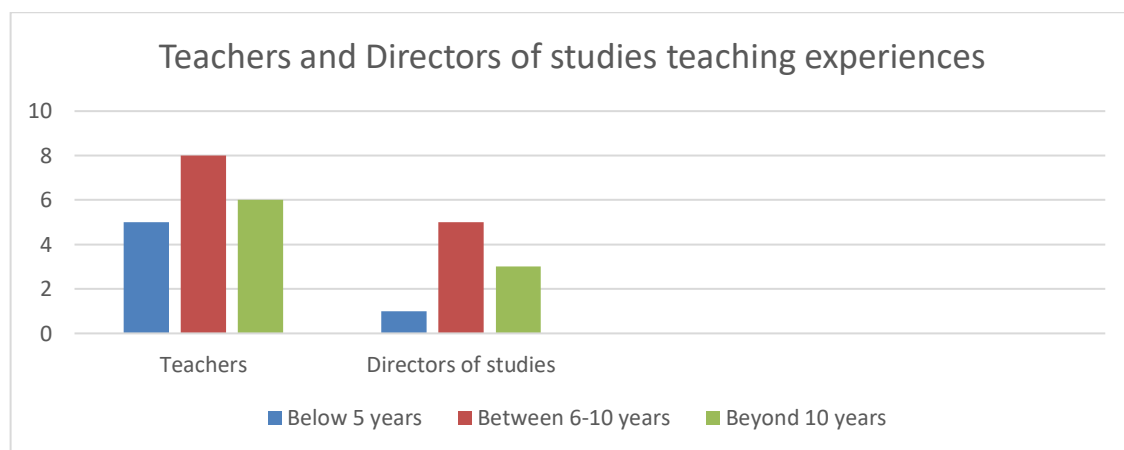


Figure 1: Teachers and Directors of studies teaching experiences

When asked about their teaching experiences, the majority of teachers indicated that they have been teaching for more than five years. Although it has been obvious that the majority of teachers are experienced, there are some teachers who have less than five years of teaching experience. To share their stories, one of these respondents said, *“It is now my fifth month of teaching. I didn’t teach anywhere before. So, I am learning from my colleagues who are more experienced”* (RUK01). Generally as shown by respondents, the majority of them have more than five years of teaching experience. This indicates their experience in conducting CBC lesson hence their good understanding of the CBA.

On the side of Directors of studies, the information collected about their teaching experience has shown that the majority are in the range of between six and ten years of work experience. Based on the above information, apart from one Director of studies who claimed to have less than five years of work experience, a numerous number of other directors of studies indicated that they have more than five years of work experience. Their experience shows that they are familiar with the CBC/CBA and have adequate knowledge on how to implement CBA in their respective schools.

4.3.2. Respondents’ understanding of CBC/CBA

To respond to the first research question which stated: *“To what extent do teachers apply Competence-Based Assessment standards in English subject?”* Respondents were asked if they understand the CBC/CBA. This information was crucial as having knowledge about this new teaching method should also indicate that they know strategies to implement it. During interview, the following question was asked to respondents: *“What do you understand by Competence-Based Curriculum and Assessment?”* In their own opinion, everybody explained what CBC/CBA is about. For easy analysis, the provided answers were grouped into two main themes based on their relatedness. These are: CBC as a learner-centred method and CBA is a practical and Competence - based method.

➤ **CBC involves learner-centred approach**

From their opinions, respondents defined CBC as a learner –centred method whereby the learner is placed at the centre of learning. Some of their responses were quoted as follow: *“In my understanding, CBC is an method which is learner-centred where the teacher plays a role of facilitator of learning and students use much of the time by discussing, doing research and after presenting findings”* (TAR01). In the same way, another respondent coded (NGA01) replied: *“CBC is a teaching strategy that prioritizes learners and reduce teacher talk time. In CBC, teachers prepare activities that engage all learners to let them find solutions to given tasks or situations. To add more, another teacher explained CBC as follow: “Competence-Based Curriculum is the way of teaching where learners participate more than teachers. For example the teacher may start by introducing the lesson but in the middle of teaching learners play a big role as they discuss given topics to construct knowledge”* (FSG01). Moreover, one of the Director of studies said: *“In my understanding, CBC is a method to teaching that focuses on developing knowledge, skills and attitudes among students”* (RUS01).

Based on various responses provided by respondents, it was clear that they understand the Competence –Based Curriculum. From the above quotes, responses were in line with what Ambei et al.,(2020) explained about CBC by saying that with CBC implementation, teachers’ role has changed from offering knowledge to students to facilitating learning and knowledge acquisition. Through learner-centred method, students actively participate in the lesson to assimilate new knowledge and accommodate it into the old or existing one.

➤ **CBA as a practical and Competence - based approach**

To check their understanding of CBA, respondents replied that Competence-Based Assessment is a practical- based method of assessing learners’ level of understanding and performing tasks. In his own views, one respondent coded (LND01) said: *“CBA is related*

to checking students' level of understanding in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, it is the way in which the teacher evaluates or assesses whether his/her instructional objectives have been successful". In addition, another respondent said, "*CBA is the assessment of acquired knowledge, skills and behaviours, it is related to how teachers assess learners focusing on knowledge, understanding and other levels*" (RUS03). Moreover, another teacher (TAR02) explained CBA as a kind of assessment that enables teachers to check the understanding and what students may do by focusing on three domains which are knowledge, skills and attitude. Similarly, one of the Directors of studies defined CBA as a strategic way of checking understanding among students focusing on Bloom's taxonomy and embodies both formative and summative assessment to check the level of competency on acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes (NGAR01).

From the quoted responses, it has been clearly indicated that respondents understand well the concept of CBC/CBA. It has been shown that this teaching –learning method being implemented is not new to them. Their common understanding of CBC/CBA is the fact that it involves learners and focuses on equipping them with the adequate knowledge, skills and right attitudes which is assessed and demonstrated through practice. The provided explanations go in line with the definition of Competence-Based Curriculum and Competence-Based Assessment provided by Ambei et al., (2020) who claimed that competencies are a combination of appropriate skills, knowledge and behaviours or right attitude that a person must have acquired to effectively accomplish different tasks, perform jobs or activities in a work setting.

4.3.3 Trained teachers and Directors of studies in the CBC/CBA

Since the implementation of CBC/CBA, different trainings were organised for teachers, Headteachers and Directors of studies. To respond to the first research question, it was better to know if they underwent any CBC/CBA training. To gather information regarding respondents' training in CBC/CBA this question was asked to respondents: "*Have you*

ever been trained in the CBC/CBA?” The figure below shows the training rate of teachers and directors of studies.

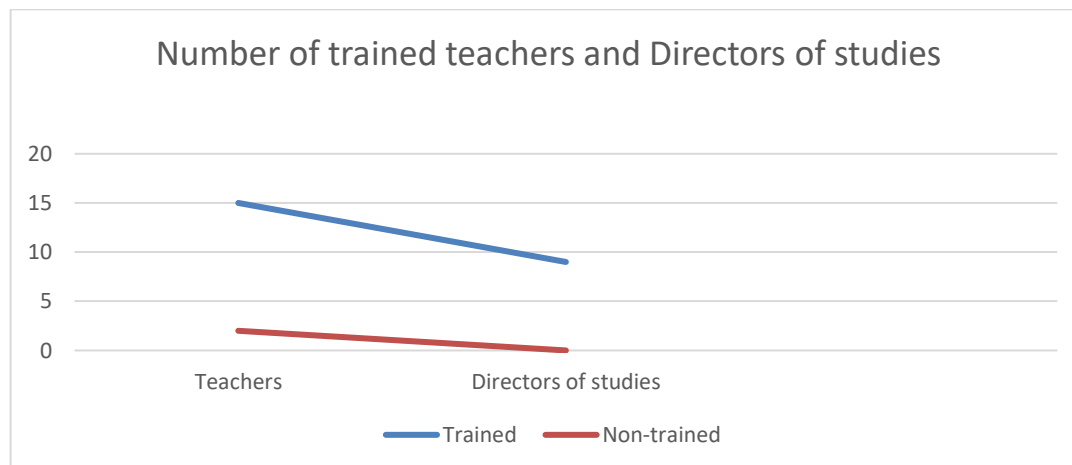


Figure 2: Trained teachers and Directors of studies in the CBC/CBA

As shown on the figure above, almost all teachers were trained and have knowledge about the CBC/CBA except two of them. For these two teachers, when asked about the reasons why they haven’t gone under any training in the CBC/CBA, one of them replied: *“About CBC/CBA training, I haven’t been trained because I am still new in this teaching career. This is my fifth month of teaching. So, you understand that I am still novice, however my colleagues support me and show me how I can manage the class”* (RUK01).

On the side of Directors of studies, from the interview responses, it has been found that they were all trained and this highlights the role they have to play in contributing to the effective implementation of CBC/CBA.

4.3.4. Strategies used by teachers to implement CBA in English subject

The first objective of the research was to find out the extent to which teachers apply Competence-Based Assessment standards in English subject. To respond to this

objective, various questions were asked to respondents, other items were observed in classroom and during document analysis.

- **Classroom questioning strategies**

To gather information from classroom observation, an observation checklist was used to identify questioning strategies that teachers apply in the classroom. A number of strategies were listed and during observation those that teachers apply were ticked. A total of nine classroom observation were conducted from all sampled schools and different classroom levels were visited (from senior one to senior three). The data collected from classroom observation are presented in the figure below:

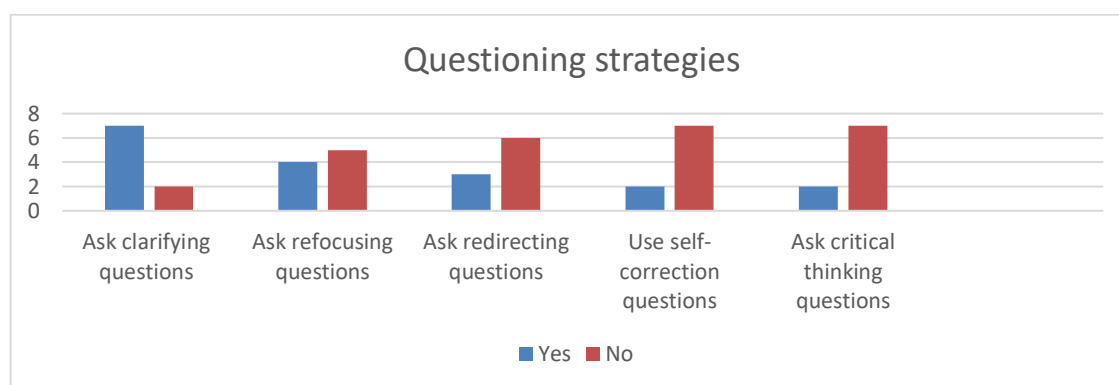


Figure 3: Questioning strategies used in classroom

As observed from different classes, most of teachers ask clarifying questions when teaching English. The sample questions that have been recorded are the following: (i) *Can you explain it again?* (ii) *What parts does an essay have?* (iii) *Who can clearly differentiate passive from active voice?*

Concerning other questioning strategies, it was observed that teachers use them occasionally. For example, only a few teachers ask refocusing questions such as: (i) *Is it really what you say the only way we define a verb?* (ii) *What do you think should be the synonym of the word in bold?*

Redirecting questioning strategy was also used by few teachers. With this strategy, teachers asked students to add or explain more about what their colleagues have answered. For example, they asked students these questions: *(i) Can someone else give another example of a common noun? (ii) Do you have anything to add from what she/he said? (iii) Do you have the same opinion as his/hers?*

In addition, self-correction and critical thinking questioning strategies were often used by teachers. Sample questions that used in classroom were: *:(i) Can you say it correctly?(ii) Do you think the man in the text was innocent? (iii) If you were the judge, how would you solve the issue?*

Generally, from various classroom observation, it was realized that teachers focused on some questioning strategies especially those assessing lower levels of thinking and do not care much for questions that reinforce critical thinking. However, most of these questions were not clearly formulated and might confuse students. During presentations, no more questioning strategies are used as students present individually. Furthermore, in some classes the lesson seems to be teacher-centred as teacher uses much talking although some teacher varied strategies to engage students. As stated by Hayton and Wagner (1998, cited in Pitman, 1999), when teaching, teachers should vary questioning strategies and avoid relying on a single technique. However, it was observed that some teachers do not follow this as most of the questions were clarifying questions.

- **Formative assessment questions based on Bloom's taxonomy**

Using a variety of questions during formative assessment is one of the ways to implement effectively the CBA. When asked about the assessment and how often they vary questions to reflect on Bloom's taxonomy levels of assessment that include knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, evaluation and creation, teachers expressed their views and the frequencies of each assessed level are presented below:

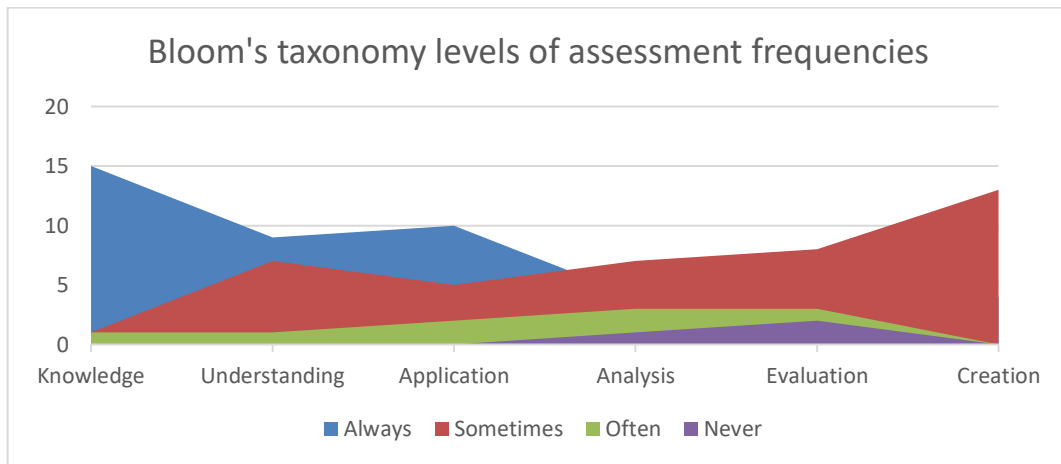


Figure 4: Bloom's taxonomy levels of assessment frequencies

To ensure the implementation of Competence-Based Assessment in teaching, teachers were asked about how often they set questions to assess different levels based on Bloom's taxonomy. From their responses, the majority of questions that teachers ask students assess the lower levels of thinking: knowledge, understanding and application. One of the teachers replied in this way: *"In my class, I ask questions without thinking much on which level I assess. For example, I can ask students to define, to explain or to give examples. I don't plan before and I ask questions spontaneously as they come in mind"* (GAS 02). Another interviewed teacher coded (GIS 01) said: *"When I teach, I mostly ask questions that are easy to be answered to facilitate learners understand the content. I don't like to ask those questions that require much thinking because I am sure they cannot answer them"*. On the other hand, other teachers replied that they vary questions and mix the items. They try to assess all levels though higher thinking levels are not easy to assess. Some of their replies are the following: *"I know that students must be asked questions that reflect on knowledge, skills and attitudes. So, in my class, when I prepare assessment, I mix all types of questions. For example, when I teach like composition or essay writing, I end up by asking students to write essays or letters. That time I am assessing their level of creation"* (SHY 05). To add more, another respondent said: *"Most of the questions I ask students reflect the level of knowledge and understanding. However, when I teach*

like a text, I ask them to analyse and even judge the behaviours of characters. That time I want them to think big and give their own opinions” (RUS02).

Based on the provided responses, frequencies as presented in the figure above and teachers’ own views, it is obvious that most of teachers assess lower levels of thinking and give little focus on higher levels which is contradicting the Competence-Based Assessment standards whereby it is stated that in a Competence- Based Assessment, higher levels of thinking questions should weight more than lower levels (REB,2015).

To add more on interview responses provided by teachers about the quality of questions they ask during assessment, the following were identified through classroom observation:

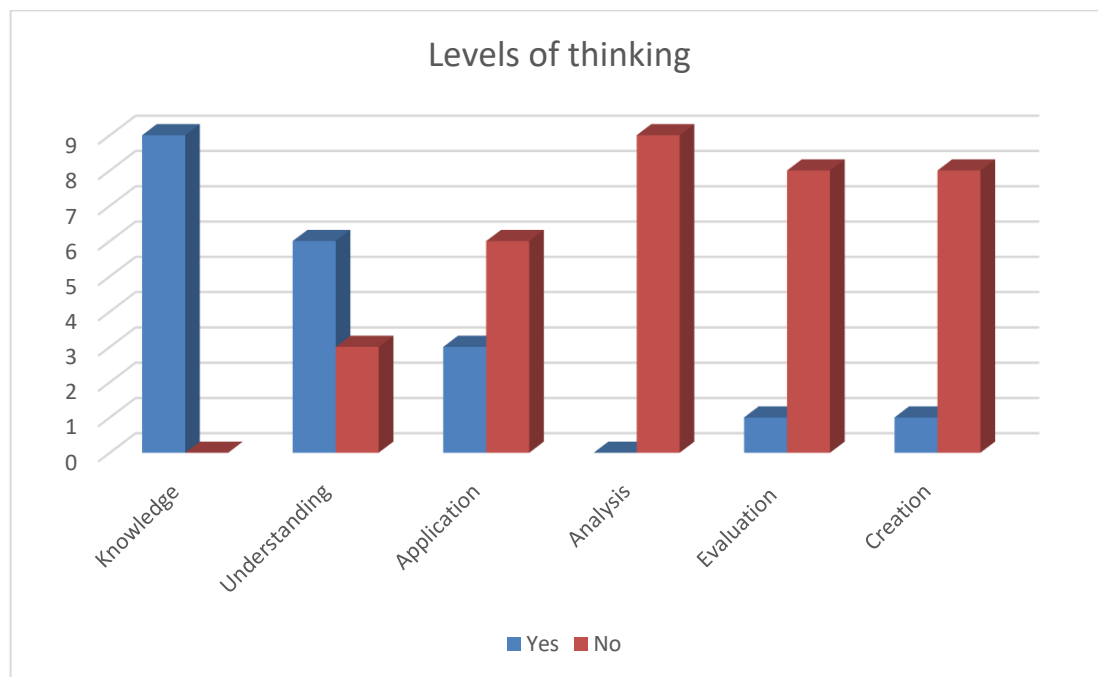


Figure 5: Assessed levels of thinking during classroom observation

From the observation, teachers mostly asked questions that assess knowledge, understanding and few questions to assess the application level. Some of the questions

were the following: (i) *what is a noun?* (ii) *What do you understand by an article?* (iii) *Change the given sentences into reported speech.*

On the other side, it was observed that few questions were asked to assess higher levels of thinking: analysis, evaluation and creation. The few sampled questions asked to assess these levels were: (i) *Analyse the given sentence and say whether it is complete;* (ii) *Do you agree with the taken decision?* (iii) *Write an essay of not more than one page on the given topic.*

In a nutshell, it was observed that most of teachers ask questions that limit students at the lower level. They do not help students to think bigger and express their own opinion to develop their critical thinking.

- **Summative assessment questions according to Bloom's taxonomy**

Checking the summative assessment was another way to respond to the first objective of this research. To analyse the types of questions set for examination, Bloom's taxonomy was referred to in order to check whether all levels of thinking are assessed. The gathered information was summarized as presented in the table below:

Table 5: Number of items for Summative assessment according to Bloom's taxonomy

Schools	Know ledge	Under standi ng	Applic ation	Analysis	Evaluat ion	Creation	Total number of items
GS Shyorongi	6	4	6	1	3	2	25
ES Gasiza	5	4	2	1	0	1	14
GS Rukore	5	7	3	1	0	1	16
GS Gisiza	5	6	5	1	0	1	18
GS Rusiga	7	5	5	0	0	2	20

GS Tare	6	4	5	0	0	2	17
GS	5	5	4	1	0	1	16
Ngarama							
Lycee	7	6	4	1	1	2	21
Notre							
Dame de la							
Visitation							
College	6	5	4	1	0	2	19
Fondation							
Sina							
Gerard							
Total	52	46	38	7	4	14	161
number of							
items							

From the table above, it was shown that most of questions teachers ask for summative assessment fall into the lower levels of thinking. Out of 161 items in nine analysed summative assessment, there were 52 items on the level of Knowledge, 46 items on Understanding and 38 items on application level. Few questions were asked to assess the higher level of thinking which include 7 items on the level of analysis, 4 items on evaluation and 14 items on the level of Creation. The table below presents sample questions picked from others to show how teachers set questions to assess various levels of thinking:

Table 6: Sample questions on each assessed level of thinking

Levels of thinking	Sample questions
Knowledge	(i)List three of the most common diseases in Rwanda. (ii)What is causative agent?

	(iii) Match the terms used in the article with their synonyms
Understanding	(i) What is meant by lifestyle diseases? (ii) Read the passage and summarize it in your own words. (iii) How can you avoid getting typhoid fever or amoebic dysentery
Application	(i) Classify the following words according to the pronunciation of their final “s” (ii) Use the correct tenses of the verbs in parentheses. (iii) Change the given sentences from active to passive voice.
Analysis	(i) Analyse the story to show Binego avenged his father’s death. (ii) Why did the writer almost cry? (iii) What reason does the passage give for saying that we would be lost?
Evaluation	(i) Which lesson did you learn from the story above? (ii) State whether the following sentences are correct or not (iii) What do we learn from this story?
Creation	(i) Write a story starting: one day..... and ending: from that day I learnt that.... (ii) As a senior three student write an essay with title “My future business plan.” (iii) Write a composition of 500 words discussing the contribution of tourism on the economic development of Rwanda.

As stated in the Curriculum Framework, when setting exams, much focus should be put on assessing higher levels of thinking than lower levels (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). From the observation, it is indicated that teachers do not apply accordingly the Competence-Based Assessment because lower levels of thinking weigh more than higher levels of thinking which in turn contradicts with what Andreev (2023) indicated on summative assessment by stating that when planning for summative assessment Bloom's taxonomy should be referred to. Therefore, teachers should plan assessment to ensure higher levels of thinking are given more weight than lower levels of thinking when assessing students.

- **Type of examination: theory, practical or both**

In normal way, a Competence-Based Assessment test should embrace both theory and practice. An analysis of past examination papers was conducted to find whether they are theory based, practice based or a combination of both. The collected information is presented in the figure below:

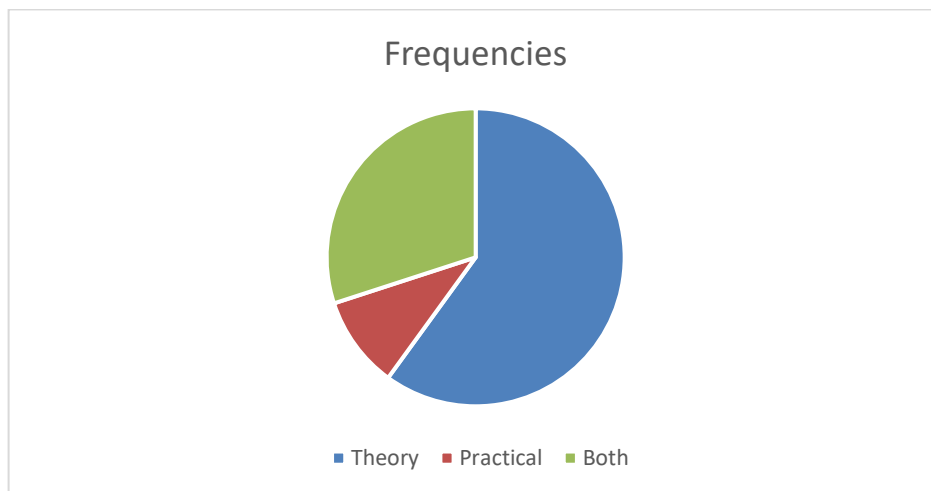


Figure 6: Type of examination (theory, practical or both)

From the figure above, the information collected indicated that during summative assessment, most of the items are theory based although some few teachers mix questions

to assess both theory and practice. As analysed from selected question papers, the practical part was limited to the skills of writing and other language skills were not assessed. As stated by Tabaro (2018), during assessment, teachers should let students demonstrate in practice the theoretical acquired knowledge through the appropriate manners of performing tasks and assessment should cater for all the language skills. Therefore, as observed and presented above, the summative assessment that teachers prepare are not fully in line with the CBA.

- **Provision of feedback to students**

Feedback is crucial in teaching and learning activities. Teachers were asked how long it takes to provide feedback after assessment. The figure below indicates what teachers have replied in terms of feedback provision.

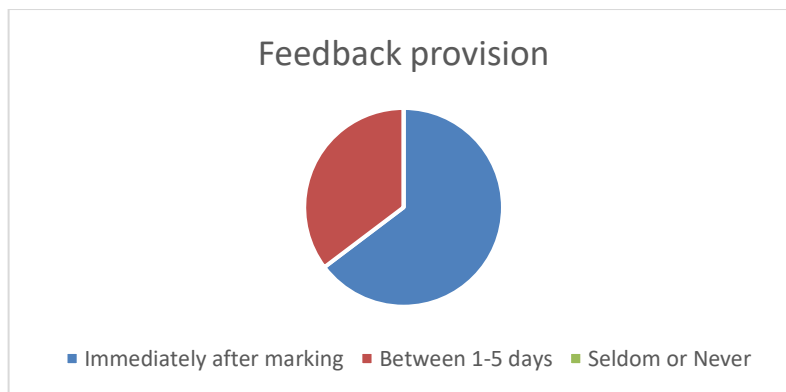


Figure 7: Feedback provision rate after marking

Based on the information provided by teachers, feedback is mostly provided immediately after marking. One of the teachers said: *“After administering a test to my students, I try to mark it as soon as possible and give them feedback without delaying because when they get marks while the mind is still fresh they can check the responses and correct what has been wrong on their answer sheets”* (FSG01). In the same way, another teacher (RUK01) claimed: *“Feedback is very necessary as it gives students the opportunity to*

judge themselves and do self-evaluation. For us, teachers, when you have marked copies of your class, you get a general picture of how the lesson was delivered to direct you to the next step. So, I don't delay giving feedback instead I manage to mark all copies quickly to give students an immediate feedback."

However, there were some of the teachers who said that they provide feedback after a certain period of time. Teacher coded (RUS03) said *"I know that we should provide immediate feedback to our students to show them their progress. But, considering the big number of students we have in one class and other related teaching activities, it can take me like three or five days to mark and provide feedback to students.* Another teacher coded (LND01) also replied: *"For me, for the formative assessment that is done in class, we correct questions together, then I take copies to mark them outside the classroom. I make sure that I bring their copies in the next session to let them check and claim where necessary."*

Moreover, during classroom observation, it was realized that most of the teachers provide constructive feedback. The table below shows the kind of feedback that were provide by teachers during teaching time. In every observed class, the focus was on observing whether teachers provide constructive feedback.

Table 7: Feedback provision during teaching

Schools	Observed classes	Constructive feedback	Comments /observation
GS Shyorongi	S3	Provided	Feedback is provided as students are given time to comment on what colleagues have presented.
ES Gasiza	S2	Provided	Teacher provides constructive feedback and also appreciates students 'effort

GS Rukore	S3	Rarely provided	Feedback is rarely provided. The teacher does not use words to encourage more participation.
GS Gisiza	S2	Not provided	Teacher does not provide feedback
GS Rusiga	S1	Provided	Teacher encourages students to participate however, constructive feedback is not timely given.
GS Tare	S3	Provided	Teacher provides feedback but does not involve students in providing feedback to their colleagues
GS Ngarama	S1	Rarely provided	Feedback is rarely provided. The teacher gives feedback to some students but not all.
Lycee Notre Dame de la Visitation	S2	Not provided	Constructive feedback is not provided especially to those who need self-correction
College Fondation Sina Gerard	S1	Provided	Feedback is provided and the teacher let students participate in providing feedback to their colleagues

As presented in the table above, from observed classes, the majority of teachers provide constructive feedback to the students. From there, you find that students are very active and engaged in learning activities. In some classes, it has been observed that teachers sometimes forget to give feedback while others involve students in providing constructive feedback to their colleagues. However, in those classes where teachers do not provide constructive feedback, students are not actively participating and in some cases they are laughed at by colleagues for providing incorrect responses. Therefore, teachers should

remember to provide feedback as stated in the Competence-Based Curriculum framework that feedback should be constructive and timely (REB, 2015).

- **Elaboration of assessment rubrics**

An assessment rubric indicates the marking criteria and conditions under which marks will be allocated to each item. The figure below shows the frequencies of teachers who elaborate the assessment rubrics before administering the assessment.

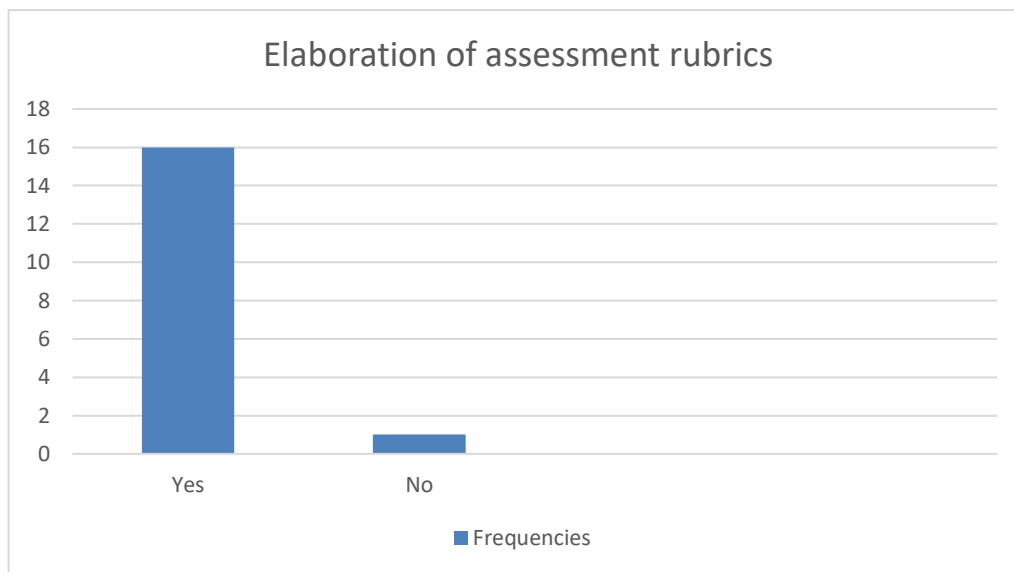


Figure 8: Assessment rubrics elaboration rate

As presented on the figure above, the majority of teachers elaborate an assessment rubrics. In common, teachers said that when students get involved in the assessment activity, it raises their motivation. Nonetheless, one teacher claimed that he does not have any idea about the assessment rubrics. In his proper words, he said: *“the word assessment rubrics sound new into my ears. I don’t have any idea about it .I am totally lost”* (RUK01).

From the above views about assessment rubrics, it was observed that almost all teachers set the assessment criteria before administering the test though they do not share it with students. Therefore, teachers should ensure that an assessment rubric that contains criteria for judgment of competencies to be acquired is well prepared and shared with students during assessment as demonstrated by (Mueller, 2018; Pitman, 1999).

- **Instructions set for summative assessment**

To collect information about how clearly teachers set instructions for summative assessment, a sample of examination papers from schools was considered. One past examination was selected from each school and from different levels: senior one to senior three. On the document analysis checklist, the following items was checked on each question paper: clarity of instructions.

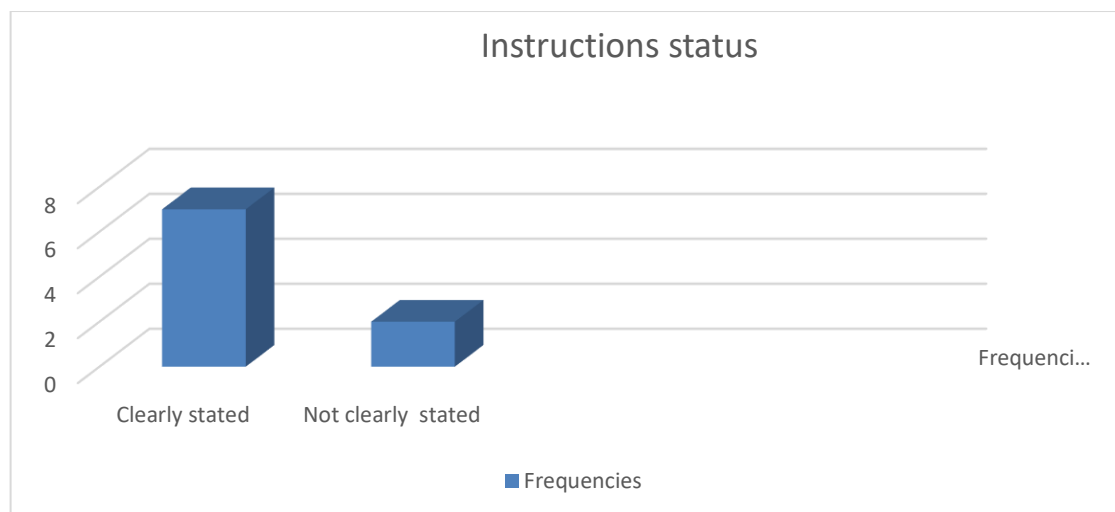


Figure 9: Summative assessment instructions status

As presented above, for selected examination papers to be analysed, most of the instructions were clearly stated and students were aware of how to do the set questions. However, on some question papers, teachers have not set instructions on how to respond to given questions.

- **Moderation of summative assessment**

To ensure that Directors of studies support teachers during the assessment preparation to meet the standards, this question was addressed to them: *“How often do you check the Summative assessment questions before being administered?”* The figure below shows how frequently they support teachers and some of their quotes to add meaning to frequencies were provided.

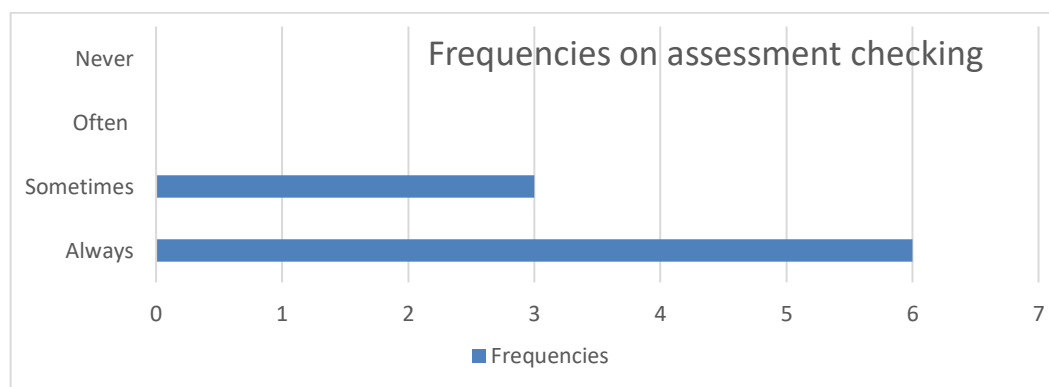


Figure 10: Directors of studies provided frequencies on assessment checking

When asked about how often they check the assessment questions before being administered to students, Directors of studies replied that it is under their responsibilities to check the quality of set examinations especially for summative assessment. Here below are some of their proper sayings. One of the Directors of studies coded (TAR01) said: *“In our school, we have a good culture of asking teachers to prepare the summative assessment questions earlier so that I can get time to go through them and see if they fulfil all requirements. However, due to many responsibilities, I sometimes do not get enough time to examine each item but I try my best”*. Another interviewed Director of studies replied: *“When it comes time for final assessment, we encourage our teachers to prepare the questions and give them to a colleague for moderation. I cannot say I may check all examination papers because this is a big school with more than 56 teachers. However, I sometimes pick samples and leave the rest to moderators”* (SHY01).

On the other hand, one Director of studies said that he asked teachers to support their colleagues through moderation activity by saying: *“Because our teachers were all trained in CBC/CBA, we try to do cross-check. When the teacher has already set questions for a test, I ask other teachers who have similar knowledge in the subject to come and help me to moderate the examination. I found this a good strategy because we share opinions and learn from one another about how to set competence-based questions”* (GAS01).

Based on the views of interviewed Directors of studies, it is clear that none of the summative assessment is administered without being moderated. This shows that they implement the assessment guidelines regarding examination moderation as stated in the Curriculum Framework (REB, 2015).

- **Students’ portfolios**

As stated in the competence based curriculum Framework, student’s personal information and school performance evidences should be recorded and kept in a single file, hence the need for student’s portfolio. The information collected about students’ portfolio in selected schools is summarized in the figure below:

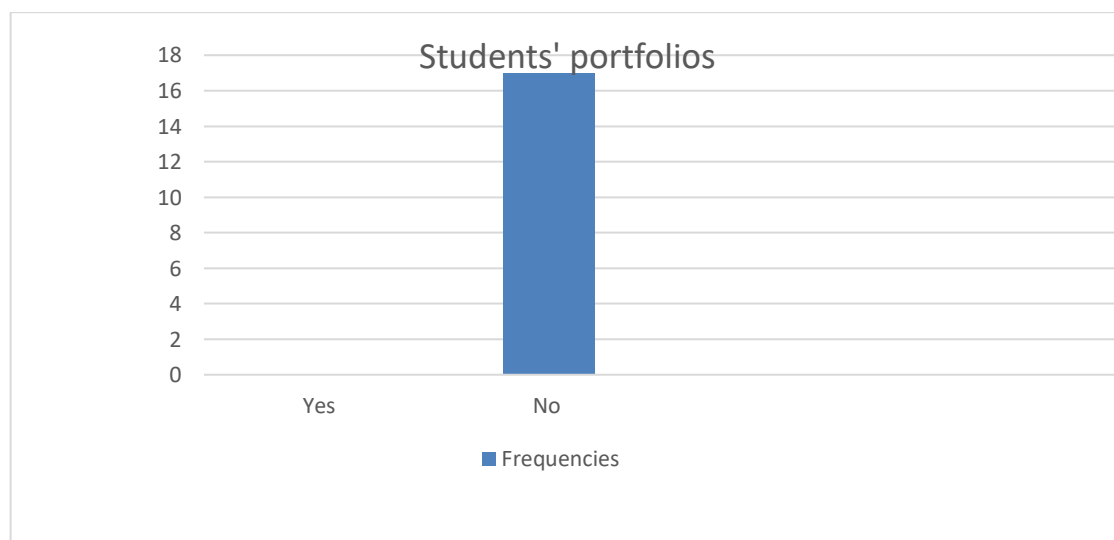


Figure 11: Students’ portfolios availed

When asked whether students have their own portfolios, all teachers responded that they do not have any idea about what portfolio is. One of them said: *“I do not know what you mean by portfolio. When we assess students, we record only marks but we do not keep their copies because we think marks are enough to justify whether a student attended the course”* (SHY04). Similarly, another teacher replied: *“I have heard teachers in technical schools talking about portfolio but I have not seen it”* (TAR02).

Based on the above responses, it is clear that teachers do not understand what a student’s portfolio is, how it is built and its importance. Palomba and Banta (1999, cited in Habib, 2016), (REB,2015) stated that all information about student ‘s progress and performance should be recorded and kept as evidences to judge the student’s performance. So, teachers should be trained about the role of student’s portfolio in the Competence-Based Curriculum and assessment.

4.3.5. Challenges encountered in implementing CBA in English subject

To respond to the second objective of this research which was to identify challenges that prevent the effective implementation of CBA, teachers and directors of studies were interviewed to gather needed information.

- **Number of students in observed classes**

The figure below presents the classroom size as observed from different schools.

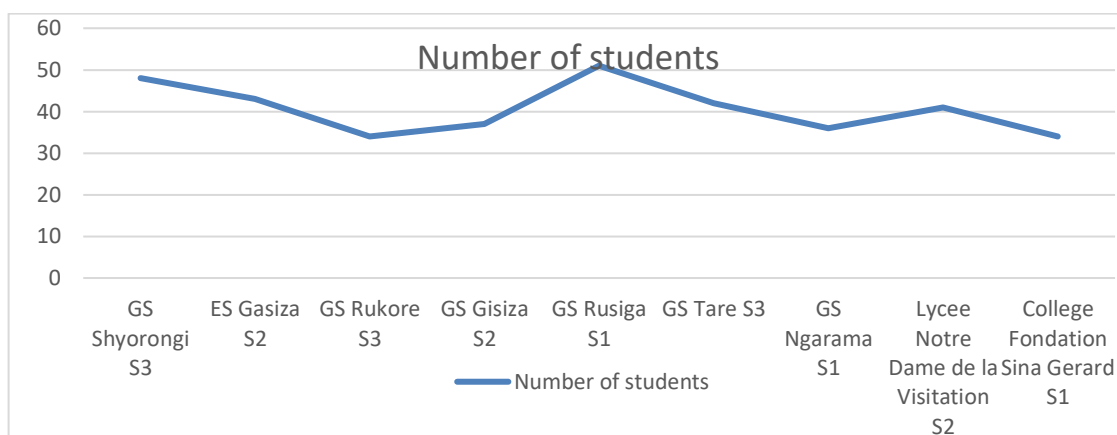


Figure 12: Number of students per observed class

From the figure above, it was indicated that the number of students per class is beyond 30 students and in some schools is above 50 students per class. Considering the effective implementation of CBA, it cannot be easy for teachers to cater for individual student.

- **Teachers' encountered challenges in implementing CBA in English subject**

To ensure the effective implementation of CBA, teachers were asked about the challenges that they encounter in conducting Competence-Based Assessment in English subject. The mentioned challenges were later grouped into themes for easy discussion. Responses were grouped into four themes as follow: having large classes (many students in one class), shortage of teaching resources, time constraint and students' low level of competence in English.

- **Large classes (many students in one class)**

When teachers were asked about the challenges they face while implementing CBA, all respondents said that the major challenge is having large classes with a big number of students not easy to manage. Here are some of their quotes:

The first interviewed teacher said: *“The class size is the biggest challenge I face. In my class of Senior 2, there are 47 students. When I give an assessment, it takes much time to mark and give feedback to learners”* (RUS03). In the same way, another teacher coded (GAS01) said: *“Conducting CBA in our classrooms is not an easy task due to large classes. For example, in my class of Senior 1 I have 40 students and in senior 3 there are 45 students. This big number cannot enable me assess effectively and most of the time I assess the lower level of thinking as I find it easy to mark.”* To mention the same challenge, another interviewed teacher replied: *“When you look at the requirements for a good Competence -Based test, you find that it only fits within small classes. Unfortunately, we have classes of more than 45 students and you can imagine how long it may take to assess skills like speaking and reading”* (TAR01).

From the quotes above, it is evident that large classes hinder the effective competence – based assessment implementation as teachers cannot cater for individual student in order to ensure that they have acquired the necessary competences. Not only did the issue of large classes occur in this research but was also presented in other previous studies. An example was given by Faso (2012) who claimed that in Tanzania, teachers were challenged by having over crowded classes with between 80-90 students per class , a number which was not easy to manage and it had impacts on the implementation of Competence - Based Assessment.

➤ **Shortage of teaching resources**

The issue of not having enough and adequate teaching resources was also mentioned by all interviewed teachers. Some of their quotes were as follow:

Teacher coded (NGA01) said: *“When you look around in our school, you find that there is not enough teaching resources to facilitate us teachers during teaching and assessment activities. For example, to assess the reading skills, teaching materials like books is also*

a hindrance.” Another teacher said: *“The teaching materials are not always provided and it is not easy to find them like in teaching listening”* (GIS 01).

The same issue was raised by another teacher (SHY 02) by saying: *“The challenge I face during assessment is not having materials such as videos, audio-visual, books, recorders and many others. When teaching like listening, we do not have materials and it also becomes a challenge during assessment as there is no material to give to students for listening activity. In addition, a proper way of teaching and assessing speaking is recording student’s voice. This can’t be practiced because there are no recorders. Lack of all these materials make us teachers only assess theoretical part and ignore the practice.”* In the same vein, another quoted teacher replied: *“The challenge in CBA is teaching materials. For example, in the way of listening there are no materials that can help you like radio”* (GIS01).

As discussed above, the scarcity of materials to teach and assess English subject is a big challenge to all teachers. This shortage of resources affect the implementation of Competence-Based Assessment as it is not possible to assess effectively all the four language skills. The same challenge of teaching materials was identified in Cameroon as stated by Ambei et al. (2020) asserting that lack of enough and adequate resources was an impediment to the Competency-Based Teaching implementation in Cameroon.

- **Time constraint**

As mentioned by teachers, in all classes, one teaching period is equivalent to 40 min which is too short for teaching and assessing students especially in big classes. To highlight the issue, some of their responses were recorded as follow: One of the respondents said: *“Time is a very big problem because 40 min is not enough to teach and assess students. Imagine when you have more than 45 students in one class and set assessment which requires students to present one by one. Frankly speaking, you can’t manage this”* (FSG01). Similarly, another teacher coded (SHY04) said: *“The challenge*

that I meet when assessing the level of learners is time. This is a barrier because it is very difficult to assess all learners during 40 minutes”.

From the teachers’ views, it was shown that the time allocated to one period of teaching is shorter compared to activities to be undertaken in classroom, thus, ineffective Competence-Based Assessment. Similarly, to the previous studies, as shown by Nsengimana (2021) in his research, teachers from selected schools in Muhanga District claimed that the allocated time was not appropriate to the content to teach.

- **Students’ low level of competence in English subject**

English being both a medium of instruction and a course subject, is still a barrier to some students. Some teachers have highlighted that students’ low level of competence in English is a challenge to the effective Competence-Based Assessment in English subject. From their own views, teachers mentioned the following:

From one school, a teacher code (RUS02) said: *“We cannot forget to mention the issue of English language barrier that our students are facing. English is difficult to learners and especially for us teaching in rural areas, our students do not get facilities to improve their language. This affect us during teaching and assessment because when you give them a test some of them are unable to read and understand the questions. Finally, they submit papers without answering to questions.”* A teacher from another school said: *“When I am teaching, I try my best to use English and encourage students to practice the same. However, it is still challenging as their level of English is too low. Sometimes, I tend to translate what I have said in English into Kinyarwanda to make them understand. When it comes to examination, most of students fail to answer the given questions due to language difficulties”* (RUK01).

From the information provided above, language barrier affects the effective Competence-Based Assessment as students get confused with what to answer due to their low level of English language leading to not understanding the questions.

A part from the common mentioned challenges that teachers encounter during CBA, there are other challenges that were also shown by some teachers. These include: *some students' laziness and low motivation to learn, students' family background such as having illiterate parents, poverty in families, lack of encouragement, students' additional responsibility in their homes which cause them not attending school regularly and revise when at home* (TAR02, NGA01&SHY02). All mentioned challenges affect the implementation of CBA and sometimes teachers pretend to use Knowledge -Based teaching and assessment strategies.

- **Directors of studies' viewpoints on challenges in implementing CBA in English subject**

Directors of studies were asked to mention challenges that are preventing the effective Competence-Based Assessment implementation. The provided responses were categorized into themes and their own opinions were recorded. These themes are the following: large classes, lack of appropriate tools and teachers' resistance to change.

- **Large classes**

As explained by most of interviewed Directors of studies, the main challenge they face in their schools is large classes whereby you may find more than 40 students in one class. The first interviewed Director of Studies said: *"The main challenge we face here is having large classes whereby one class may have over 47 students. This is a challenge because teaching languages requires having a limited number of students. So, when the class is overpopulated, it can't be easy for teachers to assess all students"* (RUS01). In similar way, another respondent coded (TAR01) said: *"the problem of overcrowded classes is a big challenge for us. We have many students in class and even more than 50 students and this affects the assessment."*

➤ **Lack of appropriate tools**

Teaching languages skills require having specific tools or materials to engage all students. However, in the visited schools, the issue of insufficient materials was identified and mentioned by respondents. One of them said: *“Teaching languages requires having specific tools such as video, speakers and we do not have them in our school. The absence of those materials affects the assessment”* (LND01). Another respondent said the following: *“Implementing CBC /CBA requires having enough materials but we do not have them. There are not enough books for reading activities, no computers and speakers, no internet for doing research and so on”* (TAR01). To add more, another Director of studies coded (NGA01) said that the main challenge they face at school is lack of materials needed for teaching and assessing students such as speakers and textbooks.

➤ **Teachers’ resistance to change**

Apart from having large classes which are not easy to manage and lacking appropriate teaching materials, directors of studies mentioned that some teachers are resistant to changes and still use the Knowledge-Based strategies to assess students.

One respondent said: *“Another challenge is teachers’ resistance to change. CBC/CBA require having time to teach, prepare assessment and mark students. Some teachers do not want things that stress them”* (GIS01). Another Director of studies raised the same issue by saying: *“Many of our teachers have been trained but still there is misunderstanding of the role of using CBC/CBA in teaching. Some teachers do not implement well the CBC/CBA, they do not want to attend the organized CPD (Continuous Professional Development) and are reluctant to adopt CBC /CBA. However, we always keep on reminding them of their responsibilities”* (NGA01).

Although it has been shown before that almost all teachers were trained in the use of CBC/CBA, this challenge of resistance to abide by changes has a huge impact on the effective implementation of CBA as mentioned by Directors of studies. The same issue

was also observed in other conducted researches like in the research conducted by Ndiokubwayo et.al, (2018) about Curriculum implementation and issues in selected primary and secondary schools around Rwanda, where findings revealed that teachers demonstrated resistance to change from their routine teaching to adopt CBC and negative attitude towards implementing CBC.

4.3.6. Respondents' proposed solutions for effective implementation of CBA in English subject

To respond to the third research question where respondents were asked to provide or suggest solutions for a better implementation of CBA in English, teachers and directors of studies provided responses which were grouped into themes according to the sameness as follow: Provision of enough teaching materials, reduce the number of students per class, increase time for teaching period, reinforce the CPD about CBC/CBA.

- **Provision of enough teaching materials**

Lack of enough and adequate teaching materials was mentioned as a big challenge to CBA implementation. Respondents suggested that these should be availed. One teacher was quoted as follow: *“In my understanding, I suggest that the school should provide materials that help teachers to teach and assess students. For example, the teaching listening materials should be available to help learners do practice”* (LND01). Similarly, another teacher also proposed to the Government to equip schools with needed materials to ensure that CBC/CBA is well implemented. He said, *“We cannot assess our students effectively in case we don't have appropriate materials. So, the government must provide sufficient materials in learning and teaching process”* (SHY02). In addition, the scarcity of materials was identified in all schools and respondents suggested that REB may solve the problem by providing books and other electronic tools such as computers and radios (FSG01, RUS01&NGA01).

Although many teachers mentioned the unavailability of teaching and assessment materials as a big challenge, some teachers said that even the few available materials are not shared equitably. One of them was quoted as follow: *“We know that there is a need of materials but when you look around, you see that there is no equity in sharing teaching materials in all schools. For example, boarding schools are more equipped than day schools. They are the one having computers, provided with internet, having good libraries with enough books and other facilities. So, nobody is to blame us from day schools that we do not teach and asses effectively”* (RUS03).

The same suggestion of providing needed teaching materials was provided by Directors of studies. They said that REB should provide needed materials to teach languages but teachers should also be resourcefulness and use the available resources to effectively teach and assess students for example their smartphones (SHY01, LND01,RUS01&NGA01).

- **Reduce the number of students per class**

The issue of overpopulated classes was raised by almost all participants as one of the challenges to effective implementation of CBA. One of the teachers suggested: *“Some schools still have a big number of students in a single class. For example, I have 45 students in senior one, 48 in senior two and 39 students in Senior three. I cannot give an assessment which require students to provide their own ideas because I can’t manage to mark all these copies. So, I mostly set multiple choice questions because they are easy to mark. Then, I may recommend to the Government to increase the number of schools and reduce the number of students per class”* (TAR01). The same suggestion was provided by another teacher who claimed: *“The issue of having many students in a single class always prevent me from assessing by setting questions that tackle all levels of thinking especially higher levels. Imagine when you ask 53 students in one class to write an essay, how long may it take to correct and mark these copies when you also have other classes to teach? So, I can propose that class size should be reduced to 25 students per class”*

(GIS01). In the same way, teachers proposed to the government to increase number of classrooms and also recruit other teachers. One of the interviewees said: *“the Government must increase the number of classrooms and even teachers in schools. More teachers of English should be recruited at least 3 teachers at school and more classroom are needed to reduce the number of students per class. I may suggest that an English class should not accommodate more than 30 students to ensure individual participation and follow up”* (SHY05).

On the side of directors of studies, they suggested that the number of classrooms should be increased to reduce the overpopulation in classrooms. One of the directors of studies said: *“To solve the issue of having many students in one class, more classes should be built to reduce the size to at least 30 students per class”* (NGA01). Another director came up with similar opinion by saying: *“For effective competence-based assessment, I can say that we should have small classes of at least 25-30 students. This can be a good number to cater for. For that reason, more classrooms are needed”* (LND01).

- **Increase time for teaching period**

The issue of having 40 min as one single teaching period was mentioned by teachers as an impediment to effective Competence-Based Assessment. In their suggestions, teachers wish that this period may be increased. One teacher said: *“If it was possible, the time should be increased by REB/NESA from 40 min to 50 min to enable us teach and asses effectively.”* Another teacher also said: *“Normally the time for teaching that we have for a single period is 40 min which I find not enough. I may suggest that the time should be increased and raised to 60min to have more time to assess student”* (FSG01).

- **Reinforce the CPD about CBC/CBA**

Although most of interviewed respondents have been trained in CBC/CBA, they suggested that training should be continuously given to keep them refreshed. They mentioned that this can also help novice teachers or fresh graduates as well as they enter

the job. As quoted, one respondent coded (RUS 01) said: *“To enable us implement the CBC/CBA in effective way, I may suggest to reinforce on-job trainings known as CPD to keep our mind refreshed. The Ministry of Education should plan how the existing CPD can be reinforced and encourage all teachers to attend.”* In the same way, another teacher claimed: *“Some of us do not have information regarding students’ portfolio. We need to be trained in building students’ portfolio and our schools should provide all facilities”* (GAS02).

Equally, one of the directors of studies said: *“We are thankful to the Government for organizing CPD in all schools to support teachers. However, some of our teachers do not value this. Therefore, some serious majors must be applied to ensure everybody attends”* (SHY01). To add more, another Director of studies suggested: *“We have School –Based Mentors who facilitate teachers to implement the CBC/CBA. What we need is to apply CBA procedures as required and find solutions wherever we encounter difficulties”* (TAR01).

In addition to the above proposed solutions, one of the directors of studies suggested the following to respond to the reluctance of some teachers. He said: *“We know that always changes are not easy to accommodate but teachers should accept changes and adopt the new curriculum to implement the CBA”* (NGA01).

Apart from the common proposed solutions to overcome the cited challenges, some teachers have mentioned other suggestions which should also be acknowledged. These include reminding parents of their responsibilities and setting national examination which are in line with CBC/CBA. In his own words, one teacher said: *“We can’t say that CBC/CBA is successfully implemented in case parents do not fulfil some of their responsibilities. Parents should be educated and reminded of their responsibilities in supporting schools by giving their children needed materials such as notebooks and others. They should also let them attend the school every day and support them in all given assessment”* (RUS 02). Similarly, another teacher coded (TAR 02) replied: *“When*

you look at the way national examinations are prepared, you find that they are still Knowledge-Based. So, I can suggest that the government should also abide the same standards as required in the CBA. Otherwise, we can't assess in one way and let our students be assessed in another way at National Level."

4.3.7. Conclusion

This chapter presented, analysed, interpreted and discussed all collected information regarding the current implementation of CBA in English in lower secondary school level, hindrances and proposed solutions to its effectiveness. Findings of this study revealed that a significant number of teachers and Directors of studies in the selected schools are qualified, experienced and trained in the CBC/CBA. Teachers vary assessment strategies while teaching however, frequently set questions are limited to the lower levels of thinking. Directors of studies showed that they support teachers during assessment by checking on the types of questions set by teachers especially during summative assessment. Respondents indicated that they face challenges such as large classes, time constraint and lack of adequate teaching materials while assessing students in English. They ended by proposing that needed materials should be availed, classes reduced and time increase to ease the implementation of effective Competence-Based Assessment in English subject.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, GENERAL CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents information about the summary of study, summary of findings, provides a general conclusion, recommendations for a better Competence - Based Assessment implementation and suggestions for further studies.

5.2. Summary of findings

The first objective of this research was to find out the extent to which teachers apply Competence-Based Assessment standards in English subject. To respond to this, respondents were asked about their understanding of CBC/CBA. From their own views, they said that CBC is a teaching method that focuses on developing among students the knowledge, skills and appropriate behaviours whereas CBA is a kind of assessment that proves whether students are able to competently apply the acquired knowledge and skills in a positive manner.

From the classroom observation, it was realized that teachers mostly ask clarifying questions to check on understanding, occasionally few refocusing questions to emphasis on proved answers, use redirecting questioning strategy to encourage active participation by letting students add or explain more about what their colleagues have answered. In addition, self-correction and critical thinking questioning strategies were often used among others.

Through classroom observation, it was noticed that numerous teachers provide constructive feedback to students. It was also observed that some teachers involve colleague-students in proving feedback to their peers which stimulate and arouse their learning motivation. As observed, in some classes where teachers ignore and failed to provide feedback, students were passive and felling low motivated. When asked about

how long it may take to provide feedback after the assessment most of the teachers responded that after marking a given test, they immediately give feedback to students. Oppositely to others, some teachers said that they delay in providing feedback because marking activity took them time due to having large classes.

Regarding summative assessment, it was observed that sometimes instructions are clearly set for summative assessment and moderation of examination is done by the Directors of studies or peer teachers. Collected information indicated that teachers prepare assessment rubrics before administering the test but most of the time it is not shared with students. It was also observed that most of the summative assessment are theory-based and practice is not worth considered.

In addition, from the classroom observation, teachers mostly ask questions that assess knowledge, understanding and few questions to assess the application level. Such questions do not help students to think big and express their own opinion to develop critical thinking. Only, few questions are asked to assess higher levels of thinking: analysis, evaluation and creation. The same issue was identified during interview with teachers and also through document analysis whereby most of assessment questions assess lower levels of thinking and give little focus on higher levels. Nevertheless, the information proved that some teachers set questions which assess all levels. They showed that a mixed type of questions is a good strategy to ensure students are not only acquiring knowledge but also able to apply it in different situations. When asked if students have their own portfolios, all interviewed teachers said that they do not have any and even do not have an idea about what portfolio is about.

The second objective of this research was to examine hindrances in implementing Competence-Based Assessment in English subject and suggestions for its effectiveness.

Although teachers and directors of studies stated good practices to implement CBA, they highlighted a number of challenges that hinder the effective implementation of CBA in

English. The most commonly stated challenges are: having large classes, lack of appropriate teaching resources, shortage of teaching resources, time constraint, students' low level of competency in English and teachers' resistance to change. From the observation, it was shown that the class size is beyond 30 students and in some schools it reaches to 50 students. This large number of students was indicated as an obstacle to the effective CBA implementation. Another main challenge as mentioned by respondents is lack of appropriate tools for teaching and assessing all the four language skills. For example, teachers indicated that it is not easy to assess listening skills due to not having audio and visual materials. They also mentioned the issue of lacking recorders and even loud speakers to facilitate assessment of listening skills and speaking skills. The shortage of teaching resources was also mentioned by both teachers and directors of studies as another challenge. They said that even where materials can be availed, still they are not enough comparably to the number of students per class and cannot be shared equitably. The given example was few textbooks for reading practices. As Competence-Based Curriculum requires students to work hard through their own research, the issue of internet and lack of computers was also highlighted by respondents. As explained, they showed that students cannot accomplish the given assignment especially tasks that require them using internet for searching and this prevent teachers from assessing some levels especially the higher levels of thinking.

Furthermore, time constraint was mentioned as a challenge to effectively implement the CBA. In their own views, teachers showed that the normal teaching period is 40 min which they claimed to be few compared to activities to be conducted in classroom. They said that it is not easy to teach and assess students within a period of 40 min which they claimed to be increased. Students' low level of competence in English was also indicated as an impediment to effective CBA implementation. In their own opinions, teachers showed that some students especially those in rural areas do not have a good background in English and this affect their understanding of questions during assessment.

In addition to the above common challenges, Directors of studies indicated that some teachers are reluctant to changes. An effective CBA implementation requires teachers to work hard especially in setting tasks that evaluate all levels of thinking from lower to higher levels. So, teachers make less effort in preparing and setting Competence-Based Assessment and keep using the Knowledge-Based method to teaching and assessing students.

The third research objective was to collect suggestions for effective implementation of Competence-Based Assessment in English subject. The proposed solutions include: provision of enough teaching materials, reduce the number of students per class, increase time for teaching period and reinforce the CPD about CBC/CBA. As suggested by teachers, schools must be equipped with adequate and enough teaching and assessment materials that include books, audio-visual, computers with internet and other necessary resources to facilitate teachers and students. Another proposed solution was to reduce the number of students per class. Respondents suggested that the class size should be reduced to 30 students to enable teachers assess all individual students and ensure learning has taken place. To add more, increasing the teaching period to 50 min was proposed by teachers as another way to effective CBA implementation.

The last but not the least proposed solution was to reinforce teachers' Continuous Professional Development training about CBC/CBA. Respondents indicated that although they have School-Based mentors who facilitate them, there should be an appropriate way of delivering trainings in order to ensure that all teachers are facilitated and regularly attend the CPD training.

5.3. General conclusion

This research was purposively conducted to examine the impediments to effective Competence-Based Assessment in English subject in lower secondary school level located in Rulindo District, and suggest ways for a better implementation. Data were

collected using classroom observation, interview with teachers and Directors of studies. Document analysis of previous examination papers was done to supplement other collected information. Referring to observation, document analysis and respondents' own views, it was realized that there are a number of factors that prevent the effective implementation of CBA among selected schools. The most identified factors were classified into two categories: teacher related and non- teacher related factors.

Although teachers showed that they vary questioning strategy, still the implementation is questionable. A general classroom observation was that during teaching, teachers mainly assess lower levels of thinking and a little consideration is given to questions that develop higher levels of thinking. This contradicts the CBA standards whereby questions that assess higher levels of thinking should weight more than those assessing lower levels (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). Feedback provision is another strategy to effectively implement CBA. A positive and timely feedback motivates students and encourage active participation. However, it was observed that some teachers do not provide timely and immediate feedback. The CBA requires teachers to build each and individual student's portfolio to record all information about their progress. Unfortunately, all interviewed teachers said they do not have any idea about what portfolio is and how it is built.

Therefore, as almost all teachers have been trained in CBC/CBA, they should avoid being reluctant and abide with the Competence-Based Assessment standards to ensure their effective implementation.

From the observation it was evident that the class size is beyond 30 and in some schools, it is beyond 50 students. This number of students was indicated as an impediment to effective CBA in English implementation. In addition, the issue of not having enough and adequate teaching and assessment materials, short teaching period of time should also be addressed to ensure CBA practices are well implemented.

To sum up, as stated in the Competence-Based Curriculum Framework, in CBA students should be exposed to a range of situations that reflect their daily basis challenges and be

asked to apply the acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes to respond to them. In addition, students' collected evidences on assessment are based on to judge their progress towards attainment of set performance criteria (REB/MINEDUC, 2015). Based on collected information from respondents, conducted classroom observations and document analysis, it has been evident that the CBA is not well implemented in teaching English among selected lower secondary school level despite all the identified preventions. Consequently, teachers should be reminded that they are still the pivot to looking for solutions and should be innovative to respond to existing challenges particularly those classified as teacher- related factors to ensure there is effective implementation of Competence-Based Assessment in English subject.

5.4. Recommendations

From the findings, it was stated that the effective CBA implementation is hindered by a number of factors. To respond to these barriers, here below are recommendations addressed to: teachers, school administrators and the Government.

Teachers:

- They should vary questioning strategies and focus much on higher levels of thinking
- They should be flexible to abide changes
- They should be innovative and use locally available resources
- They should vary strategies in assessment
- They should make a good teaching and assessment plan to be used in the classroom.

School administrators

Headteachers and Directors of studies should:

- Support continuously teachers in setting Competence-Based Assessment questions
- Collaborate with parents to remind them of their responsibilities in providing with their children needed resources
- Encourage teachers to attend CPD

The Government

- Should provide with schools adequate teaching materials to facilitate teaching and assessment
- Should increase the number of classroom to reduce the overpopulation
- Should equitably share resources among schools
- Should encourage collaboration among neighbouring schools and request them to share available resources. For example, computers, library and others.

5.5. Suggestions for further studies

This research was conducted in Rulindo District. Participants were teachers of English and directors of studies in nine selected schools. To widen the research, the following were suggested for further researches:

- To broaden the research across the country and analyse how Competence -Based Assessment is implemented in schools.
- To conduct comparative research on classroom assessment and national examination assessment
- To conduct research on how teachers cope with encountered challenges while conducting Competence-Based Assessment in English subject.
- To carry out similar research and involve students to hear from their views on Competence-Based Assessment as the beneficiaries.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Introductory letter to the respondents

Dear Participant,

My name is Eustache Hagenimana, a student at University of Rwanda, College of Education in Masters' program. I am conducting a research (Dissertation) on **HINDRANCES TO EFFECTIVE COMPETENCE BASED ASSESSMENT IN ENGLISH SUBJECT: A CASE OF LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN RULINDO DISTRICT**. Please, kindly accept to provide all necessary and accurate information for the completion of this research. I promise that your responses will be kept confidential and provided information serves for no other purpose except what explained above. Thank you for the time dedicated to this activity.

Yours faithfully,



Eustache Hagenimana

APPENDIX 2: Consent form for participating in research project

Consent form for participating in Research project

Study title: Hindrances to effective Competence-Based Assessment in English subject:
A case of lower secondary school level in Rulindo District.

Investigator: Eustache Hagenimana

Reg.No. 220020009

MED-ENGLISH

E-mail: hageneusta26@yahoo.fr

Tel: 0788833084

Participant

I.....Director of studies/ teacher of
English from (school name).....accept
to participate freely in the research entitled: Hindrances to effective Competence-Based
Assessment in English subject: A case of lower secondary school level in Rulindo
District.

I will provide willingly the information without basing on my personal interest, emotion
and feelings. The information will be true, sincere and related to real situation and
research purpose.

Name and signature of participant.....

Phone number of participant.....

APPENDIX 3: Interview guide with teachers

A. IDENTIFICATION:

Name of the school:Interviewee's code:

B. EDUCATION, FIELD OF STUDY and TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Degree			Field of study			Teaching experience		
A2	A1	A0	Education - English	Langu ages	Others	< 5 years	6-10 years	>10 years

C. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by Competence based Curriculum and assessment?

2. Have you ever been trained in Competence Based Curriculum?

Yes	No

3. Have you ever been trained in Competence Based Assessment?

4. How often do you ask questions to assess the following levels:

Levels	Frequency			
	Always	Sometimes	Often	Never
Knowledge				
Understanding				
Application				
Analysis				
Evaluation				
Creation				

5. When do you provide feedback after assessment?

Immediately	some days (1-5 days) after marking	Seldom or Never

6. Do you elaborate assessment rubrics before administering the assessment?

Yes	No

7. Do students have their own portfolios?

Yes	No

8. What challenges do you encounter in conducting competence-based assessment?

9. What do you think should be done for effective Competence-Based Assessment implementation?

APPENDIX 4: Interview guide with Directors of studies

A. IDENTIFICATION:

Name of the school:Interviewee's code:

A. EDUCATION and WORK EXPERIENCE

Academic qualification				Work experience		
A2	A1	A0	Masters	< 5 years	6-10 years	>10 years

B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by Competence -based curriculum?

2. What do you understand by Competence -based assessment? -----

3. Have you ever been trained in Competence Based Curriculum /Assessment?

4. How often do you check the Summative assessment questions before
being administered to students?

Yes	No

Frequency	Always	Sometimes	Often	Never
Response				

5. What challenges do you encounter in implementing Competence-Based Assessment in English subject?

6. What do you suggest for effective Competence-Based Assessment in English subject implementation?-----

APPENDIX 5: Classroom observation checklist

1. Does the teacher use the following questioning strategies to facilitate learning?

Strategies	Yes	No	Types of questions(Yes/No)
Ask clarifying questions			
Ask refocusing questions			
Ask redirecting questions			
Use self-correction questions			
Ask critical thinking questions			
Others			

2. Does the teacher ask questions to assess these levels?

Levels	Yes	No	Sample questions
Knowledge			
Understanding			
Application			
Analysis			
Evaluation			
Creation			

3. Types of activities that engage students set by teachers within classroom

4. Other comments (E.g. feedback provided to students) -----

APPENDIX 6: Document analysis checklist for Summative assessment

School name:

Class/level:

Number of items (Questions):

1. Are the instructions for the test clearly stated?

Yes	No

2. Assessed levels according to Bloom 's taxonomy

Lower levels of thinking	Levels	Is there any item used to assess the level (yes/no)?
	Knowledge	
	Understanding	
	Application	
Higher levels of thinking	Analysis	
	Evaluation	
	Creation	

3. Do assessment questions focus on theory, practice or both?

Assessment focus	Theory	Practice	Both theory and practice
Response			

4. Other observations:

APPENDIX 7: Research recommendation letter



UNIVERSITY of
RWANDA

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION UNIT

RULINDO DISTRICT
RWANDA

08 MAY 2023

FOR RECEPTION

Rukara, 8th May 2023

03/DRICE/069/bj/EN/gj/2023

The Mayor
Rulindo District
Northern Province
Rwanda

Re: Research recommendation letter for Mr Eustache HAGENIMANA

On behalf of the University of Rwanda-College of Education (UR-CE), I introduce Mr Eustache Hagenimana, a postgraduate student at the School of Education of UR-CE. Mr Hagenimana is writing his thesis entitled: "Hindrances to effective competence-based assessment in English in lower secondary schools: a case of Rulindo district" to complete his Master of Education in English Education.

He wishes to find out what prevents the effectiveness of competence-based assessment in English and collect information about teachers' perspectives for better implementation. His research will involve English teachers from the selected secondary schools of the district. Therefore, we kindly request your permission for him to collect data for this study.

We very much hope to get your usual cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Assoc. Prof. Eugene NDIABAGA

Director of Research and Innovation

University of Rwanda-College of Education

E-mail: ndiabaga@ur.ac.rw

Mob: +250788308862

Cel:

Principal, UR-CE

Postgraduate Program Coordinator, School of Education

Dr Cyriaque Tugabo, Supervisor

EMAIL: ndiabaga@ur.ac.rw

P.O. Box: 50 Rulindima

WEBSITE: www.ur.ac.rw