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The Forgotten Pillar: Resource and Policy Limitations of the School Library in Implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum in Uganda

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Abstract

Uganda's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) requires robust school library support, yet empirical data on secondary school library readiness remain scarce. This study assessed the library resource adequacy and challenges that hinder Library capacity to facilitate CBC in Secondary schools in Kabale Municipality, Uganda. A cross-sectional mixed methods design was used in 18 secondary schools in April-June 2024. A total of 218 students and 44 teachers were given questionnaires while 6 head teachers and 6 librarians were interviewed. Thematic analysis and SPSS were used to analyse the data. Although the overall level of staffing and availability of textbooks was found to be adequate, critical gaps were identified, namely: most librarians lacked CBC-specific training; teacher-librarian collaboration was poor; technology access was limited, and funding was insufficient. Qualitative data further revealed outdated collections, electricity supply was unreliable; and there was systematic exclusion of libraries from curriculum planning processes -- which underscored the marginalization of library services within school governance. Secondary school libraries in Kabale Municipality are insufficiently prepared to support CBC implementation, with systemic deficiencies in training, funding, technology, and institutional integration. The study recommends that Librarians should be included in CBC training programmes, and government should enforce a minimum library budget of 5%-7%. Formal teacher-librarian collaboration frameworks, investment in digital infrastructure with context-appropriate power solutions, and enforceable minimum standards for collections and staffing qualifications are urgently required.

Keywords

Competency-based curriculum, Library readiness, School libraries, Education, Kabale Municipality, Uganda

Article History

Received: 30 December 2025

Accepted: 17 August 2026

Revised: 30 June 2026

Available Online: 03 September 2026

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1. Introduction

The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) introduced by the Uganda National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDCC) in 2020 for reformed secondary education (S.1-4), signifies a major shift in the teaching approach from content memorization to a learner-centred focus which prioritises critical thinking, problem-solving and practical skills [1]. This curriculum change requires learners to engage in self-research, collaborative learning and project-based learning, which are information-intensive and significantly strain the infrastructure, resources and services of school libraries [2]. School libraries in developed countries are well-equipped and play an important role in enabling competency-based education by providing tailored collections of digital content, adaptive learning platforms, and environments for collaborative learning. In such settings, librarians play a proactive role of aligning learning resources with particular competencies, thereby facilitating targeted learning outcomes [3,4]. Despite this, school libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa continue to face challenges including inadequate funding, outdated collections, shortage of CBC-trained teaching personnel, and weak digital infrastructure; all of which adversely impact their capability to support curriculum modifications [5,6]. In Uganda, although, the Ministry of Education and Sports has started implementing CBC in a phased manner at the national level, secondary schools, particularly in rural areas, continue to face challenges with underdeveloped library systems that are inadequate to support this educational shift [7]. While several studies [8,9], have highlighted general infrastructure problems in libraries in Uganda, there is a notable absence of empirical research aimed at assessing the readiness of school libraries for implementing CBC. Lack of empirical research has negatively impacted on evidence-based decision-making regarding resource distribution, capacity enhancement and necessary strategic actions. This research thus evaluated the existing situation of library resources and the issues that affected the library facilities in secondary school as a way of supporting the implementation of CBC in Kabale Municipality. These dimensions are important to understand in order to inform policy development, resource allocation choices and institutional reorganizations to enhance library capacity to contribute to competency-based education within the Uganda secondary school system.

In Uganda secondary education framework has traditionally been characterized by a rigorous, examination-focused curriculum inherited from the colonialists and was adjusted through ongoing reforms after independence. Before the CBC, the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) structure oversaw lower secondary (S.1-4) and was marked by memorization, teacher-focused teaching and final exams conducted by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB). Critics of this approach such as Charles et al. [2], pointed out elevated levels of grade repetition and dropout rates, restricted growth of transferable skills and an ongoing gap between educational results and the requirements of the job market and higher education. The system had other challenges like infrastructural shortfalls sharply observed between rural and urban settings, overcrowded classrooms, big students to teacher ratio, inadequate-trained teachers, all of which undermine effective learning process and results. Amidst this background, the government of Uganda through the NCDCC, launched an education review programme with curriculum reforms aimed at implementation of the CBC in 2020.

1.1 Theoretical Context

The study was underpinned by three theories: constructivist learning theory advanced by Vygotsky and Piaget (1972-1978) which suggests that learners actively build knowledge through experiences, exploration and social engagement instead of passively absorbing information from an instructor. This theory and its constructs support CBC's focus on learning through projects, collaborative activities and problem-solving tasks that necessitate students' involvement with real-world situations. The second theory that shaped this study was outcomes-based education (OBE) (1930-1950) which structures teaching and evaluation around specific competencies including knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that learners should exhibit at the end of each learning cycle. This transition from inputs (syllabus content coverage) to outputs (exhibited learner competencies) condenses the conceptual essence of the reform. Thirdly, the CBC agrees with the lifelong learning framework promoted by UNESCO and IFLA [3,4]. This framework positions information literacy (skill to find, assess and utilize information effectively) as a fundamental competency for active participation in the knowledge economy. The lifelong learning framework is significant for school libraries by helping to transform them from inactive storage spaces into engaged educational collaborators that support students' independent research and information organization abilities.

1.2 Innovations Implemented

The CBC implemented various educational and organizational innovations that set it apart from the earlier content-focused framework. At the instructional level, it required the implementation of learner-centred approaches such as inquiry-based learning, project assignments, collaborative group activities and portfolio assessments, moving away from dependence on final written exams solely. Subject areas were rearranged to create integrated learning areas aimed at promoting cross-disciplinary thinking and the practical application of knowledge to real-world issues. Ongoing assessment was integrated into the curriculum to monitor the gradual advancement of skills instead of measuring performance at just one moment. For school libraries in particular, the CBC suggested a completely new function: librarians are expected to collaborate with classroom teachers in designing information literacy programmes, select resources aligned to particular competency strands, and offer personalized assistance for student-driven research

initiatives. The curriculum also envisioned libraries as collaborative learning centres enhanced by technology, featuring digital resources, internet access, and adaptive learning tools, which require a degree of infrastructure investment.

1.3 Research Gap

Despite the increasing empirical research on CBC reform in sub-Saharan Africa, there are still visible gaps in literature pertaining to Uganda--particularly, the function of school libraries. Initially, current research has primarily concentrated on classroom teaching and formulation of national policies; while the library aspect of CBC implementation remains grossly overlooked. Secondly, although there are broad evaluations of school library issues in developing nations, they fail to specifically examine library readiness within a competency-focused curricular framework and do not produce empirical data at the national level. Thirdly, the aspect of school library policy exclusion principally lacks the inclusion of librarians in national CBC training initiatives and the existence of mandatory library budget standards in secondary schools. This research fills these gaps by offering empirical evidence of secondary school library readiness for CBC implementation in Uganda.

2. Methods

The study employed a cross-sectional mixed-method design with a convergent parallel approach to evaluate library readiness. It was conducted from April to June 2024 across 18 diverse secondary schools (6 public, 12 private) in Kabale Municipality, South-Western Uganda. The study population comprised 756 individuals (630 students, 126 teachers, 18 librarians). Yamane's formula was used to determine the sample size [10]. A quantitative sample of 262, comprising 218 Senior Four students (randomly selected based on their lower secondary CBC experience) and 44 teachers was established. Purposive sampling targeted head teachers and librarians; data saturation was reached after six schools (3 public, 3 private), resulting in a qualitative sample of 6 principals and 6 library staff. Quantitative data regarding library resources, infrastructure and implementation issues was collected using self-administered 5-point Likert scale questionnaires. Qualitative insights into contextual experiences and stakeholder attitudes were collected through semi-structured interviews. Content validity was established by university experts, and a pilot test confirmed high internal reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87. Data was analysed using SPSS Version 20, to get descriptive statistics (means, percentages, standard deviations and frequencies). Qualitative transcripts underwent thematic analysis involving verbatim transcription and coding. Both datasets were integrated collectively to identify patterns of convergence, complementarity and divergence. It should be noted that the questionnaire covered a broader range of items than are reported here. For the purposes of this paper, the analysis and discussion focus on a selected subset of the data collected, corresponding to the themes most directly relevant to the study's objectives.

Ethical approval was obtained from Kabale University Research Ethics Committee (KAB-REC), and written informed consent was secured from participants. Participants' confidentiality was maintained through coded anonymity, protected data storage and aggregate reporting.

3. Results

A total of 262 questionnaires were distributed, of which 254 were returned by the respondents making a 97% response rate. The interviews were done with 6 head teachers and 6 librarians. The student-dominated sample was represented by the majority of the respondents (83.1%). There was 59.1% (males) and 40.9% (females) respectively. The prevalence of the sample was 66.7% public/government-aided schools, while it was 33.3% for private schools.

3.1 Current State of Library Resources

3.1.1 Resource Availability

The results of availability of library resources are reflected in Table 1. Although the majority of the respondents (87.8 %) had no problem with the adequate number of staff in libraries and 85.0% were sure that libraries had enough textbooks, it became clear that there were great gaps. Over eighty per cent (81.5%) of participants stated that they needed more funding, and 90.9% said that they needed more references (pamphlets, maps, atlases), as well as more digital resources (Table 1).

Table 1. Resource availability in secondary school libraries.

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
Our library has enough staff to provide us with what to read	19(7.5%)	9(3.5%)	3(1.2%)	95(37.4%)	128(50.4%)
We have enough textbooks we need in the library for class work.	11(4.3%)	5(2%)	22(8.7%)	139(54.7%)	77(30.3%)
Both video and audiovisual materials are always available for all learners	5(2%)	11(4.3%)	21(8.3%)	91(35.8%)	126(49.6%)
The library is spacious with reliable self-reported data.	14(5.5%)	5(2%)	3(1.2%)	69(27.2%)	163(64.1%)
The library resources align with the CBC.	8(3.1%)	12(4.6%)	28(11.1%)	66(26%)	140(55.1%)
More funding resource is required to equip library.	17(6.7%)	7(2.8%)	23(9.1%)	133(52.3%)	74(29.1%)
Need for more pamphlets, maps, atlases, and digital library resources.	5(2%)	9(3.5%)	9(3.5%)	105(41.4%)	126(49.6%)

Note: SD=Strongly disagree; D=Disagree; N=Neutral; A=Agree; SA=Strongly agree

Qualitative insights validated these patterns. A Head Teacher said: *"Our existing library spaces are indeed functional and have served us well. However, to ensure we continue to meet the evolving needs of our students under CBC, we must explore options for expansion or reconfiguration"* (Head Teacher 04, April 10, 2024). A Librarian emphasized: *"Despite availability of print resources, there is urgent need for audio-visual and video devices to elevate learning experiences. CBC requires students to engage with information through multiple modalities"* (Librarian 05, April 4, 2024).

3.1.2 Collection Currency and Alignment

Responses about library collections showed that 64.3% of the book collections were of materials published over 10 years before data collection and some of the materials were as old as the 1980s-1990s. *"There are lots of old books of old curriculum. We just simply do not have the relevant materials when students arrive seeking up-to-date information on some of their areas of interest such as climate change, the digital citizenship, or modern African economics"* (Librarian 02, April 15, 2024).

These trends were supported by qualitative insights. *"Our current library areas are in fact effective and have been effectively used. Nonetheless, in order to be able to cater to the changing demands of our students with CBC, we will have to consider expansion or reconfiguration"* (Head Teacher 04, April 10, 2024). Another librarian pointed out: *"We have got print resources at hand, but there is a pressing demand of audio-visual and video devices to enhance the learning experiences. Students are expected to learn with information using several modalities in CBC"* (Librarian 05, April 4, 2024).

3.2 Challenges Facing School Libraries in CBC Implementation

Table 2 presents comprehensive data on challenges constraining library effectiveness. The table provides detailed information on issues that limit the effectiveness of libraries. Barriers such as the lack of qualified library staff (92.9%), lack of technology access (84.2%), resource deficiency (81.9%), inadequate funding (76.8%), and lack of collaborative work by teachers and librarians (80.7%) were the most critical.

Table 2. Challenges of the implementation of secondary school libraries in CBC.

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
Resources in the library do not meet CBC.	17(6.6%)	7(2.8%)	22(8.7%)	147(57.9%)	61(24%)
Inadequate funding for school libraries affects ability to acquire and maintain up-to-date resources.	13(5.1%)	19(7.5%)	27(10.6%)	51(20.1%)	144(56.7%)
There is shortage of qualified library staff to implement CBC.	11(4.3%)	5(2%)	2(0.8%)	97(38.2%)	139(54.7%)
Limited access to technology and electronic resources.	25(9.8%)	11(4.3%)	4(1.6%)	75(29.6%)	139(54.7%)
Inadequate collaboration between teachers and librarians.	16(6.3%)	24(9.4%)	9(3.6%)	124(48.8%)	81(31.9%)

Note: SD=Strongly disagree; D=Disagree; N=Neutral; A=Agree; SA=Strongly agree

Personnel Capacity Gaps: *"The library and teaching staffs have lacked refresher courses on managing the new curriculum and its resources. Our employees still use the old management styles and some of them did not consider the need to avail library facilities to students to use as a group"* (Head Teacher 01, May 19, 2024).

Findings showed that of the six sampled schools, one had a librarian who was formally qualified with a certificate of Library and Information Science as per requirements of the Ministry of Education. Four schools had over-qualified staff some with diploma and others Bachelor of Library & Information Science. The other school had delegated library duties to a classroom teacher who was not trained in library science. However, no single Librarian confirmed to have been trained on the new approaches of CBC.

Financial Constraints: *"The funding that our libraries lack puts them behind in everything from buying modern books and resources for CBC to acquiring visual aids that teachers should use while teaching. We run short of competent guidelines for librarians, if we can't afford professional development, we can't maintain our technology"* (Librarian 05, May 16, 2024).

The analysis of the budget allocation showed that libraries obtain 1.8%-4.2% of the total school budgets, which is much lower than the 10 per cent minimum that the National Council of Higher Education in Uganda suggests to tertiary institutions.

Lack of Technology Infrastructure: *"There are only eight working computers in the school at a student population of 620. Internet connectivity is unreliable, cutting out frequently during lessons. The students will be unable to gain digital research ability and e-resources accessibility"* (Librarian 01, April 12, 2024). The ratio of computers to students per institution was between 1:58 and 1:124 which was way below the recommended ratio of 1:5 to ensure effective use of technology in education.

Challenges in Collaboration: A deputy teacher described it in the following manner: *"I honestly don't know what resources are available in the library or how the librarian could support my teaching. We don't have scheduled planning time together, no one has explained how to integrate library resources with my lessons"* (Deputy Head Teacher interview, May 8, 2024). A librarian expressed similar disappointments: *"Teachers don't involve me in curriculum planning. I learn about upcoming topics from students rather than advance consultation with teachers. Without knowing instructional plans, I can't prepare appropriate resources"* (Librarian 03, April 20, 2024).

4. Discussion

4.1 Lack of Resources

The study assessed the library resources for supporting the implementation of Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) in secondary schools in Kabale Municipality in Uganda. The results show an alarming paradox: on the surface, most libraries seem to be functioning normally, but a detailed qualitative analysis shows that there are important shortcomings. Most library resources are outdated and do not reflect the curriculum goal of providing current resources that reflect real world needs, and are in need of updating to reflect post-CBC needs. This has a direct impact on learning-centred teaching where access to current and real-time information is necessary to facilitate inquiry, project work and build competency [11]. The continued use of outdated collections is a bigger problem as reported by Kukundakwe [12] in Ugandan secondary schools where limited acquisition budgets and poor collection development policies hinder the collection to keep abreast of curriculum changes. The consequences of this are clear: school libraries still lack sufficient up-to-date, curriculum-relevant resources; this means that school libraries can no longer act as the learning centre that CBC envisioned, and this means that learners do not have access to the support structures that CBC requires.

There is apparent lack of clear and CBC-specific benchmarks to measure library readiness as stakeholders feel that staffing and basic operations are sufficient. This is contrary to the situation in tertiary institutions where the National Council for Higher Education lays down enforceable requirements on libraries [13]. There is a lack of an equivalent secondary-level regulatory framework and resource allocation is largely left to the discretion of individual school principals, resulting in significant inequities and a general under-provision of support that will have a negative impact on CBC implementation across the board.

Perceived sufficiency and real inadequacy suggest that stakeholders may be missing some concrete criteria for what some might consider specific demands for resources of CBC. The observation points to the need to have minimum standards of libraries for secondary schools in line with those developed by the National Council on Higher Education of Uganda in tertiary schools [14].

4.2 Staffing Qualification Crisis

In this study it was found that almost all the secondary school libraries sampled in Kabale Municipality did not have formally trained librarians, which indicated the basic problem of staffing that was both quantitative and qualitative in nature. The majority of schools had library staff that had a generic educational background or, oddly, a library science background but were locked into poorly paid jobs without opportunities for professional growth or career progression. This demoralizing situation brought down institutional capacity and actually deterred skilled professionals from taking up the position. This was consistent with the results of the study of Ogunniyi et al. [15] on the effects of the shortage of professionally qualified librarians in secondary schools in Nigeria which revealed the lack of professionally trained

librarians as one of the strongest limiting factors of the performance of the library and support to the learner in secondary schools. The implication for CBC implementation was dire: if the library was not staffed with qualified librarians that were able to understand the competency frameworks, curate resources aligned with the curriculum and deliver information literacy instruction, the library could not serve the function it was intended to serve as a learning support institution.

One of the most harmful policy gaps was the deliberate marginalization of school librarians from national CBC orientation and training programmes while the classroom teachers received systematic training. This exclusion puts librarians in a situation where they could not integrate library resources and services into the CBC competency requirements and, thus, become a sideline to the reform process. Wine et al. [16] in their research on school librarians' impact on student achievement had shown that professionally qualified, curriculum-engaged school librarians had measurable positive impact on student achievement. On the other hand, when librarians were not involved in the curriculum-level aspects, there was a tendency of the library potential to be structurally suppressed, resulting in "implementation myopia" as described by Assey [17] in the context of CBC reform in East Africa, where support structures were often ignored in favour of classroom-based interventions.

4.3 Constant Underinvestment in Library Services: A System-Mechanism Analysis

In addition to the limited resources, this study has shown a chain of structural mechanisms which steadily marginalized school libraries, while CBC called for enhanced institutional library support. The results indicated that there were three reinforcing aspects of underinvestment: Policy Exclusion, Budget Structure Failures, and Organizational Marginalization, all of which tended to reinforce each other in a vicious circle.

No CBC trainings were provided nationally for the professional development of school librarians. This policy gap resulted in a lack of competency knowledge by librarians to connect resources with CBC requirements, or to support information literacy at the level required by the curriculum. This condition was exacerbated by the fact that the librarians' knowledge about the CBC requirements was non-formal, or as Assey [17] put it in similar Tanzanian reforms, implementation myopia, which is the failure to consider any support infrastructure in the process of changing curricula.

Budget Structure Failures: The extremely low levels of funding that were reported at the sampled schools were not unusual, but rather the logical outcome of the lack of mandatory minimum funding guidelines for secondary school libraries. Unlike tertiary institutions, where NCHE had enforceable guidelines for library investments [14], secondary schools had no similar guidelines at all. This regulatory vacuum meant that library budgets could be categorized as "discretionary," and thus were the first to go when institutional finances were tight. What this meant, as Odong et al. [13] affirmed, was a scenario of under-funding of the library services even in institutions that rhetorically appreciated the services.

Organizational Marginalization: Lack of teacher-librarian collaboration was widespread and was a result of organizational structures that marginalized the library. Often, librarians were not involved in developing the curriculum; there was no dedicated time for collaboration; and librarians did not have formal academic leadership positions. This was similar to what Mutungi et al. [18] referred to as the institutional orphaning of the library in Kenyan Secondary School management systems. There must be institutional reform in the form of formal collaboration between the school and the library, and time for co-planning mandated by policy and not by individual goodwill.

Lack of formally deployed qualified librarians and Library Science graduates working in demoralizing conditions were indicative of general letdowns in professional recognition and career management, rather than training issues. If qualified practitioners were not institutionally supported, the issue was one of professional governance and not capacity building. Inadequate professional frameworks, not necessarily lack of CBC trained staff, were also identified by Ogunniyi et al. [15] as significant factors contributing to the underperformance of libraries in secondary schools in developing countries. The problems of not integrating CBC into teaching and learning and the lack of collaboration between teachers and librarians were common to both public schools and private schools, but the former had more severe resource limitations. This cross-cutting nature of the problem agreed that the mere investment in resources would not be enough: in addition to resources, complete policy reform and organizational restructuring were also prerequisites for functional library support of CBC, irrespective of institutional funding.

This was a vicious circle: the policy's parts all reinforced one another, what librarians knew was limited if they could not show value, value was perceived as less, librarians were more marginalized, which justified more budget cuts, which reduced their capacity even more, and so on. To break this cycle, a coordinated multi-level intervention was needed that simultaneously acted at the policy, professional development, funding and institutional governance levels.

4.4 The Digital Divide and Technology Infrastructure

The study revealed that there was a great digital divide in the secondary schools in Kabale Municipality which impedes the capacity of libraries to facilitate the implementation of technology mediated and inquiry-based learning as prescribed in the CBC. The ratio of computers to students in sampled schools varied significantly from any internationally accepted ratio for effective integration of Educational Technology and students in sampled schools were academically disadvantaged when compared to those in better resourced schools. These findings aligned with

Churchill's [19] proposed idea that for digital integration to be meaningful in the context of education, there was a need to have proper device provision as the very first step. The shortages reported here also reflected those reported by Mojapelo and Durodolu [20] for school libraries in rural South Africa where limited connectivity, lack of devices and poor infrastructure demarcated a constant challenge to digital service delivery. For what it meant for the implementation of CBC in Kabale, the direct implication was that digital exclusion meant that the online resources, digital databases, and competency development using ICTs that the curriculum increasingly assumed could not be accessed.

This also exacerbated the digital deficit because of the universal deployment of unreliable electricity supply across all schools sampled, a contextual infrastructure challenge that technology deployment strategies generally did not address. Reliable power was essential in providing digital library services, and without reliable power even available technology might be of no use at certain times. Such power supply instability had direct impact on academic achievement and institutional project completion in African educational contexts, as Owolabi et al. [21] had shown. Meeting the challenge of the digital divide in Kabale's school libraries thus needed context-specific infrastructure solutions, like solar energy systems, and technology provision approaches that were appropriate for a grid environment.

Poor power supply was illustrated in all the sampled schools, which was a contextual factor that required a new solutions when considering traditional technology (e.g. solar power system, that addressed the issue of unreliable grid electricity).

4.5 Financial Constraints

The inadequate funding of school libraries observed in this study was not an accidental shortcoming of the individual schools but was a systemic problem concerning the compulsory minimum requirement for funding school library services in Uganda. Funding for libraries at schools sampled was significantly lower than that required for an active curriculum delivery and it showed that library funding was a residual rather than a strategic priority. The situation was similar to the trend reported by Odong et al. [13] that the persistent existence of sub-threshold level of library funding in educational institutions in Uganda owed not to the indifference but the lack of any binding standards that compelled adequate funding of libraries. In the absence of any enforceable minimum requirements that mirrored those of the NCHE on the investment of tertiary libraries [14] secondary school libraries would remain one of the first lines of budgetary expenditure that would be cut when the going got tough hence a situation that impeded the implementation of CBC would continue to repeat itself.

4.6 Organizational Resistance to Integration

The widespread lack of effective collaboration between teachers and teacher-librarians revealed in this study suggested that school libraries were organizationally marginalized, and not seen as partners in delivering the curriculum. The schools surveyed did not provide any dedicated time for collaborative work; librarians were not included in school curriculum planning meetings; and library services were considered an add-ons; not part of the instruction. This result was consistent with Shonhe [6] who noted that one of the most common problems that school libraries in developing countries faced was the "structural orphaning" of school libraries in the school management system. This marginalization of organization, especially when library resources needed to be actively aligned with competency outcomes and information literacy needs to be integrated into subject areas, was especially harmful to CBC. Structural inclusion was a necessary institutional change, not a cultural hope, via formal co-planning mechanisms, librarian involvement in curriculum committees, and policy-mandated co-planning time.

5. Study Limitations

There were a number of methodological constraints of this study. The cross-sectional design did not allow making conclusive causal claims. With the narrowing of the geographic scope to one municipality, the results, though most likely reflective of regional trends, could not be generalized with much certainty to non-similar Ugandan settings.

Qualitative sample size: Only 6 of the 18 schools being investigated were sampled in qualitative data-gathering, a one-third sample, which might reduce the contextual richness, especially in the area of institutional heterogeneity. Despite the fact that the phenomenon of saturation was achieved in the group of interviewed schools, the views of the other twelve schools would have potentially revealed additional implementation barriers or localized adjustments. A longitudinal study involving the whole cohort would thus enhance the understanding of the issue of institutional variance and dynamics over time.

Disaggregation constraints: The limited number of public/government schools ($n=6$) limited the statistical power to make a thorough disaggregated quantitative evaluation of all the variables. As a result, some findings were presented in the aggregate form with the complement of qualitative insights that outline school-type patterns. Instead, a broader, district-wide sample with equal representation of the public and private would allow to conduct a more credible comparative analysis.

Stakeholder gaps: This research study never contacted the district education officials, the policymakers of the Ministry of Education, the staff of the NCDC, and the Uganda Library and Information Association members. This restricted the

explanation of the entire range of systemic processes such as policy development, financial expenditure, and normative enforcement that upheld underinvestment in library resources.

Although the results help to shed light on the current problems and provide initial answers based on the school-level perspectives, a deeper understanding would be provided with the inclusion of high-level decision-makers. Future studies should then utilize multi-level stakeholder analysis to implement holistic interventions that deal with school, district and national-level barriers.

Response bias: Self-reported data is prone to social desirability. However, the technique of methodological triangulation (quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews) and the presence of different types of respondents (students, teachers, librarians, and head teachers) contribute to the increased credibility of the findings.

Irrespective of the restrictions, the study makes significant empirical contributions and practical lessons that can be tapped into policy formulation and capacity building in situations that face similar curriculum implementation issues in the East African region.

6. Conclusion

The conditions in secondary school libraries within Kabale Municipality are mostly unsupportive of CBC implementation due to insufficient resources, mismatched qualifications and low morale among staff, a shortage of technology, and restricted funding. Libraries possess minimal capacity to function with restricted currency of collections, librarian CBC skills, technological infrastructure, and organizational integration. Conversely, they face significant constraints on their ability to facilitate the independent research, collaborative learning, and skill development that CBC requires. This research indicates that difficulties are present in various kinds of schools. While public schools experience a more pronounced scarcity of resources compared to private institutions, the shortcomings in policy related to CBC training and the integration of school libraries are alike in both categories of schools. Consequently, any successful intervention must address resource shortages and weaknesses alongside essential policy, educational, and professional shortcomings. The essential steps include: (1) the Ministry of Education and Sports in partnership with the Uganda Library and Information Association establishing baseline library standards in secondary schools (regarding resource levels, staff qualifications, and infrastructure); (2) compulsory CBC training courses for school librarians; (3) hiring Bachelor's degree holders as school librarians to align with CBC standards and mentor junior library employees; (4) minimum library funding should be at least 5-7% of school budgets; (5) setting up technological infrastructure, including reliable internet access and adequate computer availability; and (6) creating policy structures to include libraries in curriculum development activities.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the respondents from selected schools in Kabale Municipality and school administrators who granted permission to access data collection centers and cooperation during data collection for this study.

Funding

The study did not receive any particular grant from any funding agency, either public, commercial, or not-for-profit.

Availability of Data Statement

The data generated and analysed in this research was availed by the respective authors on reasonable request and with requisite ethical approval.

Ethical Statement

Ethical approval was obtained from Kabale University Research Ethics Committee (KAB-REC), and written informed consent was secured from participants. Participants' confidentiality was maintained through coded anonymity, protected data storage and aggregate reporting.

Conflicting Interests

The researchers declare that they have no such conflicts of interest, and the study's findings are impartial and unbiased. Furthermore, they do not reveal any possible conflicts of interest regarding the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Generative AI Statement

The authors declare that generative Artificial Intelligence powered tools such as Quilbot were used exclusively for paraphrasing and proof reading this manuscript especially in introduction and methodology sections. Other sections such as discussion and conclusion were written and confirmed by the authors and they take full responsibility for all the content.

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