

Communication and collaboration: The paradox of the new competency-based curriculum in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Successful implementation of any curriculum is built on the foundation of teamwork among all stakeholders. The new competency-based curriculum in Kenya encourages teachers and parents to cooperate and communicate in order to implement the curriculum effectively. Being a new innovation, the channels of communication and collaboration used to involve parents in their children's education have not been empirically documented. The purpose of this study is to explore communication and collaboration between teachers and parents for effective implementation of the competency-based curriculum in Kenya. Schramm's interactive model of communication was adopted as a theoretical framework for this study. This study adopted a qualitative approach that used a grounded theory research design based on a relativist–interpretivist paradigm. The study focused on teachers and parents in 395 primary schools in Vihiga County. Purposive and snowball sampling strategies were used in selecting 12 teachers and 20 parents. Data was collected using interviews and analysed inductively using the grounded theory method of analysis through the constant comparative technique. The study established that teachers and parents were reported to be using several communication channels. These channels proved ineffective because each one used them separately. These frequently led to breakdowns in communication and insufficient teacher-parent cooperation in the implementation of the curriculum. Therefore, this study suggests using a number of complementary communication and cooperation methods. It is hoped that the implementation of the findings of these studies will enhance parent-teacher communication and collaboration.

Keywords: Communication and collaboration, Competency based curriculum, Curriculum implementation, Engagement, Parental empowerment, Parental involvement, Parental sensitization.

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Highlights of this paper

- This study explored communication and collaboration between teachers and parents for effective implementation of the competency-based curriculum in Kenya.
- The findings indicated that teachers and parents were using several communication channels. However, these channels were found to be ineffective because each one of them was used independently at a time.
- The study recommends the use of a variety of communication and collaboration channels in a complementary manner.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Kenya's basic education curriculum framework (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), 2017a), the goal of education is to develop capable, active and ethical citizens which is accomplished by implementing a curriculum that prioritises the development of competencies over rote memorization of content knowledge (IBE-UNESCO, 2017). IBE-UNESCO (2017) further expounds that the new curriculum places emphasis on the teaching of skills such as self-efficacy, creativity and imagination, critical thinking and problem-solving, citizenship and digital literacy.

According to Joyner (2021) and Njeru (2021), among the seven abilities listed, communication and collaboration are frequently taught. For Dingili and Yungungu (2022), the adoption of the suggested activity-oriented strategy to instruction is the cause of the teaching of the competency. For instance, the approach provides for a range of instructional activities such as conducting group discussions, role play, working in groups and carrying out field excursions that provide a suitable platform for instilling the competencies of communication and collaboration.

Rogers (2003) defines communication as the way in which the participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding. Similarly, Mwaka, Nabwire, and Musamas (2014) view it as the process by which information is exchanged and understanding is facilitated through a system of symbols, signs or behaviour. On the other hand, collaboration refers to the process of two or more people or organizations working together to realize shared goals (IBE-UNESCO, 2017). According to the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) (2017a), communication and collaboration are interrelated since strategies for effective communication enhance the attainment of greater collaboration among groups which ultimately increases the success of teams as they engage in collaborative problem solving.

The most important aspect of the process of developing curriculum is communication and collaboration. According to Syomwene, Nyandusi, and Yungungu (2017), effective communication encourages participants in the curriculum to accept changes to the curriculum and adopt favourable attitudes. Similarly, Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) view a curriculum development process as a collaborative effort where peer support is vital for success because a successful curriculum development process entails curriculum stakeholders working together, sharing ideas, jointly solving problems and cooperatively creating materials. Henson (2001) and Carl (2012) further caution against exclusion of various stakeholders in the curriculum development process as it often results to lack of ownership and commitment to the new curriculum by the excluded stakeholders.

Communication and collaboration are the key stages of the curriculum development process. For instance, Carl (2012) identifies four main steps in the curriculum development process: design, dissemination, implementation and evaluation. He states that the dissemination stage comprises the preparation of curriculum users through the distribution or promulgation of information, thoughts and concepts in order to make them aware of the envisaged curriculum. Carl (2012) further emphasizes the collaborative effect created by the dissemination of information to stakeholders. Similarly, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) (2017b) emphasizes the

preparation of implementers and other stakeholders during the curriculum development process. The preparation involves communication about the new curriculum, training the implementers and sensitization efforts for attitude change and commitment (Syomwene et al., 2017).

Communication and collaboration among curriculum stakeholders are greatly emphasized at the curriculum implementation stage as demonstrated by various curriculum implementation models that emphasize the same. For instance, according to Havelock's (1982) Research, Development and Diffusion (RD&D) model, the scholar recommends the dissemination of information on curriculum change to curriculum stakeholders. Similarly, Havelock's (1982) second model of social interaction advocates for the transmission of curriculum change information through the social interaction of group members through communication channels. Comparably, curriculum implementation models from Schon (1971), Kotter and Cohen (2002), Fulan (2007) and Herold and Fedor (2008) all prominently incorporate communication and collaboration.

The new curriculum has made a concerted effort to improve communication and collaboration among curriculum implementers in light of the previously studied research. For instance, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) (2017a) proposes a comprehensive capacity building for curriculum implementers aimed at empowering them with the necessary information, skills and capacities to embrace and implement change. Moreover, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) (2017b) provides an elaborate teacher training program for efficient curriculum implementation. According to the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) (2019), partnerships between parents, the community and schools are necessary to support children's learning and improve learning outcomes. Thus, it suggests that parents should be empowered and involved. These guidelines provide strategies on how institutions can communicate with parents and create an enabling environment so that parents are fully involved in their children's learning (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), 2019).

Studies conducted on the level of communication and collaboration amongst curriculum stakeholders for effective implementation of the new curriculum reveal contradictory results. For example, studies by Amunga, Were, and Ashioya (2020) and the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) (2017b) suggest that teachers were adequately prepared to communicate and collaborate with parents in the implementation of the new curriculum. Similarly, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) (2019) found that there was adequate communication and collaboration among curriculum implementers. On the contrary, the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) (2019) reported that communication and collaboration among parents and other education stakeholders' in the curriculum reform process were below expectation. Additionally, no public awareness campaigns had been launched by KICD, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) or the Ministry of Education (MOE) on the competency-based curriculum by the time it was being implemented. This study therefore sought to explore the effectiveness of communication and collaboration between teachers and parents in the implementation of the new competency-based curriculum in Kenya.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore communication and collaboration between teachers and parents in the implementation of the competency-based curriculum in Kenya.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study sought to:

- i. Assess the effectiveness of communication and collaboration between teachers and parents in the implementation of the competency-based curriculum in Kenya.

4. RESEARCH QUESTION

This study aimed to answer the following research question:

- i. How effective is the communication and collaboration between teachers and parents in the implementation of the competency-based curriculum in Kenya?

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was based on [Schramm's \(1954\)](#) interactive model. According to this model, communication is a process of sharing views and not the transmission of ideas. Specifically, the model proposes a circular communication process in which both the sender and receiver fulfil the same functions at different levels. Similarly, communication and collaboration between teachers and parents in this study were perceived to be reciprocal. To achieve effective implementation of the new curriculum, there was a need for information to reciprocally flow between teachers and parents.

6. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Successful implementation of any curriculum is built on the foundation of the teamwork of its members ([Syomwene et al., 2017](#)). Therefore, the development of curriculum implementers' capacities as well as the provision of opportunities and activities encourage healthy interpersonal relationships ([Syomwene, 2022](#)). In this paper, empowerment and engagement were construed as communication and collaboration because it is through effective communication that curriculum implementers are empowered with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for effective engagement.

The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) has developed two policy documents that are aimed at enhancing communication and collaboration amongst curriculum implementers. The [Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development \(KICD\) \(2019\)](#) developed the facilitators training manual for the Early Years Education (EYE) curriculum which intends to train curriculum implementers particularly teachers on effective curriculum implementation. Secondly, there is the competency-based curriculum: Guidelines on parental empowerment and engagement ([Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development \(KICD\), 2019](#)). This document provides recommendations on how schools may empower parents and foster an environment that encourages parental involvement in their children's education.

In order to enhance clear communication channels between teachers and parents, [Epstein \(2001\)](#) advocates for the use of conferences, report cards, memos, phone calls and newsletters. Similarly, [Koch \(2018\)](#) identifies weekly and monthly reports, phone calls, report cards, parent conferences and meetings, academic clinics, home visits and newsletters as suitable mediums for teacher-parent communication. Moreover, teachers and parents can also communicate through social media platforms such as SMS services, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp etc. ([Syomwene, 2022](#)).

[Caulfield \(2001\)](#) encourages the use of newsletters since they offer opportunities to communicate information, suggest activities and promote future events. On the other hand, [Catron and Allen \(2008\)](#) recommend the

organization of conferences as a way of encouraging the exchange of information about children's progress. They opined that the use of conferences enabled teachers to learn from the parents about their expectations, culture, beliefs, values and build upon their strengths and competences.

The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) guidelines on parental empowerment and engagement advocate the investigation of various routes of communication to ensure that parents are able to be involved in their children's learning. The policy document ([Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development \(KICD\), 2019](#)) further lists phone conversations, in-person meetings, SMS services, school websites and social media sites such as WhatsApp and Facebook as key channels. In addition, teachers need to timely share with parents the ministry of education and school calendar events and programme activities ([Syomwene, 2022](#)).

There is also a need to strengthen feedback channels. According to the guidelines on parental empowerment and engagement, this can be achieved through the maintenance of a diary where teachers and parents regularly communicate. For instance, parents can sign assignments completed by their children ([Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development \(KICD\), 2019](#)).

Mwarari, Githui, and Mwenje (2020) opine that teacher-parent cooperation is necessary for the new curriculum's successful implementation because its requirements go beyond the confines of the classroom. Hall (2021) expounds that this collaboration can be in terms of recognizing and encouraging special talents helping the learners make informed career choices, motivating them to fulfil their potential, disciplining errant children, providing required aids and materials for practical activities and enhancing children's learning experiences through participation in school assignments such as homework and projects. Moreover, teachers and parents should work together in instilling and developing morals and values, monitoring children's growth and development while identifying any signs of disability for early intervention and collaborating in the planning, development and decision making process of school activities ([Amunga et al., 2020](#); [Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development \(KICD\), 2017b](#); [Pale & Amukowa, 2020](#)).

According to the guidelines on parental empowerment and engagement ([Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development \(KICD\), 2019](#)), collaboration between teachers and parents is possible in decision-making, resource-mobilization and the learning process. Teachers and parents are expected to share ideas for developing school programming and activities together before making any decisions. Such discussions may focus on the identification of the learner's natural abilities, academic capabilities, career guidance and choices. This may involve talent identification and nurturing, choice of subjects, course selection and learners' achievements ([Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development \(KICD\), 2019](#)). Moreover, the policy document ([Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development \(KICD\), 2019](#)) notes that there is a need for teachers and parents to have deliberations on children's observed character, behaviour and indiscipline issues and make necessary corrections and adjustments. Furthermore, there is a need for consultations on observed behavioural anomalies in the child aimed at detecting or identifying learning or transition challenges; placement of the learner or formulation of performance improvement strategies.

In relation to resource mobilization, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) states that teachers and parents are expected to work together to identify, quantify, prioritise and approve the resource needs of schools. Additionally, they must take part in fundraising to improve the school's facilities and services, establish helpful connections with relevant governmental and non-governmental organisations to secure funding, give

students affordable classroom supplies and encourage and facilitate their participation as volunteers in scheduled school activities ([Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development \(KICD\), 2019](#)).

Finally, teachers and parents are required to collaborate on the introduction and upbringing of values in their children to promote moral and social development as well as active participation in educational activities at school such as academic clinics, music and drama festivals and conferences ([Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development \(KICD\), 2019](#)). The guidelines on parental empowerment and engagement further outline that parents can reinforce what is learnt at school by assisting learners with school assignments, involving them in play and age appropriate family and community activities that enhance learning, providing adequate resources and enabling environment for children to grow and learn in as well as taking children to places of worship and encouraging them to share their experiences with their teachers.

The literature review presented in the foregoing discussion provides quality discussion on the strategies for enhancing communication and collaboration between teachers and parents in the implementation of the competency-based curriculum in Kenya. This study extends this discussion by providing insights on the role of communication in teacher-parent collaboration.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research approach was used in this study. Specifically, a grounded theory research design was used to explore views on the phenomenon under study from 12 teachers and 20 parents in Vihiga County, Kenya. The study endeavoured to collect varied view by recruiting participants from diverse settings such as rural, semi-urban and urban settings. Purposive and snowball sampling strategies were used in selecting the participants. Pseudonyms of T1, T2 and T3 for teachers and P1, P2 and P3 for parents were used in place of their real names. The pseudonyms protected the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents.

In this study, interviews formed the main method of data collection. The method entailed direct interaction with participants in the study allowing for in-depth exploration of the research topic through open-ended and flexible questioning techniques ([Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018](#)). According to [Merriam and Tisdell \(2016\)](#), this enabled the researcher to easily follow up on ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings from the interviewee. A semi-structured interview was used as a means of directing the interview process. [Appendix A](#) and [B](#) present questions that guided the interviews with teachers and parents respectively. Moreover, simultaneous data collection and analysis were done. Therefore, immediately data was collected, transcribed, coded and categorized. The emerging categories were then compared using the constant comparative technique to form core codes. The quality of the entire research process was ensured through the application of several techniques such as peer debriefing, member checking and triangulation.

8. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study revealed that messengers, short message services, social media platforms (in particular WhatsApp groups) and written documents such as diaries, report cards, newsletters and receipts were frequently used by teachers in communication. Similarly, parents revealed that they also used messengers and wrote in students' diaries while communicating with teachers. Additionally, parents made phone calls or arranged face-to-face meetings with teachers while seeking clarification on their children's learning.

It was further established that the communication channels favoured by either teachers or parents differed depending on the geographical setting in which the communication was taking place. For instance, teachers and parents in rural schools favoured traditional channels of communication such as messengers and face-to-face meetings while those in urban schools preferred modern digital communication channels such as WhatsApp groups, telephone calls and short message services (SMS).

The difference in preference for communication channels between rural and urban schools was occasioned by several factors including time, cost, availability, network coverage and digital skills. For example, parents in rural areas disclosed that they preferred to send their children or visit schools to seek clarification on their learners' progress. This is because doing so incurred no monetary costs as compared to digital communication channels such as WhatsApp groups, telephone calls and short message services (SMS). The parents' sentiments were confirmed by teachers who further disclosed that most parents lacked digital devices such as phones and laptops. Moreover, weak network coverage and low digital skills were noted as some of the discouraging reasons for parents not embracing digital communication channels in rural areas.

On the other hand, urban parents preferred digital communication channels. Some parents highlighted that the majority of parents in urban areas were busy with other competing duties such as job commitments. Thus, they had limited time to plan face-to-face meetings with their children's teachers. Similarly, one of the teachers in an urban school reported that schools in urban settings had high enrolment. Consequently, digital communication channels were economical compared to the traditional ones. For instance, digital communication channels such as SMS and WhatsApp groups required minimal time and limited financial costs for communication.

In this study, it was further established that home visits, school websites, sending of electronic mail, social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook and written documents like sharing of ministry of education circulars, sending of memos and publication of school magazines were the least used communication channels. The reasons for the rare use of these channels were high costs, unavailability, poor network coverage and low digital skills.

Contradictory findings were recorded on the effectiveness of the communication channels selected. The following excerpts depict this discussion:

P2: I find the communication process to be poor. For example, most of the time, the teacher sends my son information on what I should buy for their learning at school. But they are small kids. They will definitely forget. So when the child goes back to school without the required items, I am faulted for not providing.

P5: Nowadays, teachers communicate through diaries. But they assume that all parents are literate. I do not know how to read. So unless the child informs me of what the teacher requires, there is very little I can do.

P11: At times children are sent information that they need to find certain materials for their class work. But as you know these small children often forget only remembering in the morning when they want to go back to school. In my house, Monday mornings are usually crazy days (laughing). My daughter cannot accept anything else apart from what the teacher said or requested. Even if it is not feasible to provide, as a parent you just have to find it.

P17: In my case, I am a busy business lady. I rarely meet with my children unless it is on weekends or holidays. Sometimes, I come late and leave early or I am just out of town. So I depend largely on my house-assistance to communicate to me what the child has been sent from school. But as you know when the chain of communication is long, information is prone to distortion. In fact, there was a day, I bought a ream of photocopying paper yet

students were required to carry pepper for their home science project. I was misinformed by my house assistance. In my opinion, teachers should just send direct messages to our phones instead of using children.

In contrast, teachers complained of lack of feedback from parents especially when they used methods favoured by parents such as SMS, WhatsApp groups and conferences. Specifically, the teachers shared the following:

T1: Most parents are disinterested in their children learning. They will ignore your phone calls and messages, fail to attend parent conferences and later complain of late communication. There is one who blocked my calls thinking that I was calling to inquire about fee payment yet I wanted to inform him that his child had been involved in an accident while coming to school.

T5: Parents will always complain. Even if you post the take-home assignments on class WhatsApp groups, they will not share the assignments with their children. You inform them of an upcoming project but they still will not respond. So we discovered that these children have a way of forcing parents to do what is required. They never stop pressurizing them until they do what the teacher requests to be done.

T6: Parents will willingly come to school if you inform them that a certain politician like the area MP (member of parliament) will attend. On such occasions, they attend in masses even those who do not have kids here. Since they know they will receive some handouts. But if you call them for a CBC sensitization meeting then suddenly everyone becomes busy (laughing).

T9: Some parents do not care to know how their children perform in school. You will only see them actively demanding report cards during applications for bursaries such as CDF bursaries (constituency development fund). Yet at the end of every term, we send a progress record to the parents both in text and hard copy.

Both teachers and parents felt that their preferred communication channels enhanced teacher-parent collaboration in the learning process. The foregoing excerpts reveal a communication breakdown as a result of the ineffectiveness of the communication channels selected. This communication breakdown limits parental engagement in their children's education. For instance, parental engagement in activities like the provision of learning materials and offering assistance with take-home assignments was limited by ineffective communication between teachers and parents.

The aforementioned sections further highlight difficulties in teacher-parent collaboration and communication. The use of only one communication channel at a time by both teachers and parents contributed to the inefficient channels of communication. For instance, the majority of teachers in rural areas revealed that they often used messengers to communicate with parents and they would only call parents if the first channel had failed. Similarly, parents in urban areas disclosed that they only relied on diaries and newsletters to communicate with teachers. They further stated that they only visited schools to inquire about their children's learning progress during official meetings. According to teachers and parents' perspectives, it was expensive and time consuming to use more than one communication channel.

Ineffective communication channels often led to a delay in the relaying of information due to the long chain of communication. Additionally, the ineffective communication channels resulted in distortion and misinformation among informants as was the case with the parent who bought a ream of paper instead of pepper for home science project. Moreover, some of the communication channels such as face-to-face meetings and conferences failed to happen due to the cost and logistical challenges involved in arranging them. This further resulted in delayed decision making.

The ineffective communication channels were closely linked with the negative attitudes exhibited by parents during the communication process. For instance, the majority of parents disliked being involved in their children's take-home assignments. According to parents' perspectives, teachers were neglecting their duties by involving them in the instructional process. Specifically, one parent shared that "a parent's responsibility is to pay school fees while the teacher has the responsibility to teach". The issue was made worse by instructors' failure to organise parental sensitization workshops for the competency-based curriculum. Technological challenges also emerged as a major obstacle to teacher-parent communication and collaboration. For instance, the use of digital communication channels was limited in most rural areas. Both teachers and parents decried the inadequacy of digital communication devices such as computers and mobile phones. Moreover, the majority of rural areas had poor network coverage and parents' and teachers' use of modern digital gadgets had been hampered by a shortage of airtime.

Inadequate communication skills are strongly related to technological challenges. This challenge was clear both in traditional and digital communication channels. For example, though teachers relied on students to deliver information to their parents, the information often reached them late or was distorted. On the other hand, parents especially in rural areas were unable to communicate using digital communication channels because of inadequate digital skills. In particular, several parents confessed to never visiting the school website due to a lack of digital skills. Moreover, written communication channels such as diaries and newsletters offered little communication to the illiterate parents.

Finally, other competing job obligations limited effective teacher-parent communication. For instance, teachers lamented the absence of parents during parent meetings and conferences. The majority of the teachers further confessed to never conducting home visits due to inadequate time and a huge school work load. Similarly, parents complained of what they referred to as numerous school meetings that often disrupted their personal activities. Paradoxically, the said meetings according to teachers were only organised occasionally and not even sufficient in enhancing parental collaboration.

Further data collection and analysis revealed that the challenges of negative attitudes, technological challenges, inadequate communication skills and other competing job obligations had a close link to the challenge of ineffective communication channels. Besides, the challenges of inadequate communication skills and technological challenges often limit the range of communication channels used by teachers and parents. This led to over dependence on a few communication channels even in instances where these channels were not suitable.

Both teachers and parents unanimously agreed that communication breakdowns limited parental collaboration. They further gave examples of parents who due to a communication breakdown did not give their children the necessary learning resources, help them with their homework, participate in decision-making or discipline their children when they displayed poor behaviour.

9. DISCUSSION

The study revealed that the use of messengers, SMS services, social media platforms (in particular WhatsApp groups) and written documents like diaries, report cards, newsletters and receipts were the most common communication channels between teachers and parents. Similarly, the guideline on parental empowerment and engagement ([Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development \(KICD\), 2019](#)) advocates the use of communication

channels that include telephone calls, bulk SMS services, social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook and the sharing of documents such as circulars, newsletters and receipts.

On the other hand, home visits, parental conferences, school websites, sending of electronic mail, social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook and written documents like sharing of ministry of education circulars, sending of memos and publication of school magazines were the least used communication channels. This is against the views of scholars such as [Caulfield \(2001\)](#); [Epstein \(2001\)](#) and [Koch \(2018\)](#) who identify weekly and monthly reports, phone calls, parent conferences and meetings, academic clinics and home visits as suitable mediums for teacher-parent communication. [Catron and Allen \(2008\)](#) recommend the organization of conferences as a way of encouraging the exchange of information about children's progress. They claim that conferences enable teachers to gain insight from parents about their expectations, culture, beliefs and values as well as recognise their skills and competencies.

According to teachers' and parents' perspectives, communication channels differed in the geographical setting in which they took place. For instance, teachers and parents in rural schools preferred traditional channels of communication while on the other hand, in urban schools, they preferred modern digital communication channels. Similar findings were recorded in a study by [Dingili and Yungungu \(2022\)](#) on parental involvement in grade four take-home assignments in Vihiga County, Kenya. Specifically, the study noted that the challenges that limited parental involvement in take-home assignments manifested differently depending on the context in which parenting was taking place. To further exemplify this, the scholars pointed out that accessibility to instructional resources manifested differently between parents in rural areas and those in urban areas.

[Mwaka et al. \(2014\)](#) note that the sender's choice of communication channel can be influenced by several factors such as the urgency of the message, the need for immediate feedback and the receiver's communication skills. On the other hand, this study established that time taken in the communication process together with the sender's and receiver's digital skills influenced the choice of communication channel used. This study improves the discussion by looking at other elements that affect the choice of communication channel employed such as communication channel cost, communication device accessibility and network coverage.

Contradictory findings were also recorded on the effectiveness of the communication channels selected and used. For instance, teachers and parents assumed that their preferred communication channels were effective in enhancing communication and collaboration in the learning process. Further data analysis revealed instances of communication breakdowns due to ineffective communication channels. [Mwaka et al. \(2014\)](#) warn against the use of ineffective communication channels. In particular, they caution that the use of an ineffective communication channel leads to the loss of the intended message.

This study also revealed limitations due to negative attitudes, technological difficulties, poor communication abilities and other conflicting employment duties. Similar findings have been recorded by earlier studies by [Amunga et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Mwarari et al. \(2020\)](#) in which it was established that parental involvement was limited by inadequate knowledge and skills, insufficient resources, a lack of adequate time owing to competing duties and a negative parental attitude. [Dingili and Yungungu \(2022\)](#) revealed that the majority of parents were of the opinion that their involvement in their children's work was reverting their roles from parenting to learning. This study further established that parental communication and collaboration were also limited by the negative attitude of teachers as some of the teachers argued that their work was to teach children and not sensitize parents.

This study also established technological challenges as a major obstacle to teacher-parent communication and collaboration. This challenge was more pronounced in rural areas than urban areas. Similarly, a study by [Hall \(2021\)](#) observed that several parents did not own a smartphone to use for communication with teachers concerning their children learning progress. This study further expounded on this challenge by establishing that low network coverage in most rural areas and a lack of airtime further undermined the use of scarcely available modern digital devices by both teachers and parents.

According to [Syomwene \(2022\)](#), the educational background of parents has an influence on communication, awareness and understanding of educational matters. Comparable findings are shared by this study in which it was established that inadequate communication skills hindered teacher-parent communication and collaboration. The study further found out that the challenge was not only experienced by illiterate parents as suggested by [Syomwene \(2022\)](#) but also by literate parents and even teachers. According to a study by [Koch \(2018\)](#), parents with busy inflexible work schedules may lack time to be involved in their children's education. On the other hand, a study by [Omariba \(2022\)](#) established that the challenge of insufficient time was common in those families where both parents had formal employment. Similarly, this study noted that the majority of parents failed to attend conferences and academic clinics organised by the school due to inadequate time. The study further found that the challenge of time also affected teachers with the majority of them confessing to have never engaged in home visits due to inadequate time and a huge school work load.

10. CONCLUSION

Communication and collaboration are not only key competencies that are integrated into the new curriculum but also important pillars for the effective implementation of the curriculum because successful implementation of any curriculum is built on a foundation of teamwork of all stakeholders. Paradoxically, this study reveals an ineffective communication and collaboration process between teachers and parents in the implementation of the competency-based curriculum in Kenya. The new curriculum envisions the development of communication and collaboration in students. Ironically, teachers and parents who are supposed to role model these skills suffer from inadequate mastery of the skills. What is even puzzling is that teachers who are supposed to be at the frontlines of instilling various competencies like digital literacy are the prime advocates of traditional communication channels. Although policy guidelines recommend the use of various communication channels in a complementary manner, this study established an overreliance on one communication channel at a time. The end result is a communication breakdown and low teacher-parent collaboration in the implementation of the competency-based curriculum.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to mitigate the challenges discussed in this paper, this study makes the following recommendations:

1. Use of various communication and collaboration channels in a complementary manner.
2. Sensitization of teachers and parents to the need for effective communication and collaboration in children's education.
3. Enhanced cooperation between the government and other education stakeholders on the provision of digital devices to schools, network coverage and lowering costs of communication.
4. Equipment of both teachers and parents with proper communication skills.
5. Adoption of flexible communication channels such as online meetings for teachers and parents with busy schedules.

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Appendix A. Semi structured interview guide for teachers.

1. Kindly, talk about how you communicate with the parents about learners' education progress. (If possible sight examples).
2. Which communication channel/s do you frequently use to communicate with parents? What makes the channel/s suitable?
3. How effective is/are the communication channel/s that you have identified in question 2 in relation to;
 - i. Clarity of the information delivered.
 - ii. Prompt delivery of the message.
 - iii. Provision of feedback.
4. Of the communication channels available, which one/s do you rarely use (or have never used)? Why is this the case?
5. While sighting relevant examples, briefly talk about how you utilize the following communication channels in communicating with parents.
 - i. Messengers (using pupils to deliver information to their parents).
 - ii. Telephone calls.
 - iii. Face to face meetings, parent conferences, academic clinics.
 - iv. Bulk SMS services.
 - v. School website and e-mails.
 - vi. Home visits.
 - vii. Social media platforms like WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook.
 - viii. Written documents like diaries, circulars, memos, school magazines, report cards, newsletters and receipts.
6. Which communication channel/s do parents prefer to use to communicate with you on their learners' education progress? Why do you think they have a preference for it/them over others?
7. How have the communication channel/s you have talked about enhanced parental collaboration in their children's education? (Kindly expound on your answer)
8. Kindly talk about the challenges you encounter while communicating with parents (elaborate with examples if possible)

9. Do the communication challenges you have cited in question 8 above hinder parental collaboration in their children education? (Kindly expound on your answer)

Appendix B. Semi structured interview guide for parents.

- 1) Kindly, talk about how you communicate with the teachers about learners' education progress. (If possible sight examples).
- 2) Which communication channel/s do you frequently use to communicate with teachers? What makes the channel/s suitable?
- 3) How effective is/are the communication channel/s that you have identified in question 2 in relation to;
 - i. Clarity of the information delivered.
 - ii. Prompt delivery of the message.
 - iii. Provision of feedback.
- 4) Of the communication channels available, which one/s do you rarely use (or have never used)? Why is this the case?
- 5) While sighting relevant examples, briefly talk about how you utilize the following communication channels in communicating with teachers.
 - i. Messengers (using pupils to deliver information to their parents).
 - ii. Telephone calls.
 - iii. Face to face meetings, parent conferences, academic clinics.
 - iv. Bulk SMS services.
 - v. School website and e-mails.
 - vi. Home visits.
 - vii. Social media platforms like WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook.
 - viii. Written documents like diaries, circulars, memos, school magazines, report cards, newsletters and receipts.
- 6) Which communication channel/s do teachers prefer to use to communicate with you on their learners' education progress? Why do you think they have a preference for them over others?
- 7) How have the communication channels you have talked about enhanced your involvement in your child's education? (Kindly expound on your answer)
- 8) Kindly talk about the challenges you encounter while communicating with teachers on your child's education progress. (elaborate with examples if possible)
- 9) Do the communication challenges you have cited in question 8 above hinder parental collaboration in their children education? (Kindly expound on your answer)

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